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SEGREGATION AND DAILY LIFE IN  
NORTHERN IRELAND**

**Neil Jarman and John Bell**

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## ABSTRACT

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### **ROUTINE DIVISIONS SEGREGATION AND DAILY LIFE IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

In September 2008 the Institute for Conflict Research (ICR) published the findings of a seventeen-month research study funded by the Community Relations Council through the European Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (Hamilton et al, 2008). The primary aim of the research was to analyse the ways and means that sectarianism and segregation are sustained and extended through the routine and mundane decisions that people make in their everyday lives. This paper summarises some of the key aspects and outcomes of this research. The paper begins with a brief introductory overview of the aims and objectives of the study, and offers a brief review of the wider theoretical and methodological context of the research. The second part of the paper focuses on methodological issues involved in researching issues related to sectarianism and segregation, it discusses some of the methodological approaches utilised in the research and analyses some of the challenges encountered by the researchers during the course of the study. Finally the third second part of the paper presents some of the key findings which have been generated from the overall study and which highlights something of the developing nature of sectarianism and segregation in Northern Ireland ten years after the signing of the Agreement.

#### ***Publication information***

Paper presented at the conference, "The Impact of Devolution on Everyday Life: 1999-2009", Newman House, Dublin, 6 February 2009.

The conference was part-sponsored by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

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***The Institute for Conflict Research*** is an independent research organisation with charitable status, which has been based in Belfast, Northern Ireland since 1996. ICR currently has a team of eight staff and associates and has a board of directors drawn from the academic, community and statutory sectors. ICR's main areas of research experience are conflict transformation; equality; human rights; public order; policing; young people; hate crimes; minority ethnic communities; migration; LGB issues, housing and segregation.

***Neil Jarman*** is the director of the Institute for Conflict Research. He has a PhD in anthropology from University College London and has written extensively on issues associated with the political transition in Northern Ireland, including visual displays and political rituals; violence, policing and public order; hate crimes and migration; human rights and equality issues.

***John Bell*** is a researcher with ICR. He has a Masters in Politics from Queens University Belfast. He has carried out various research projects at ICR including work on mixed residential communities and recent migration to Northern Ireland. He was part of the research team on the Segregated Lives project.

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## **ROUTINE DIVISIONS SEGREGATION AND DAILY LIFE IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

**Neil Jarman and John Bell**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu noted that we live as social beings in a world of “structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures” (1972: 72), by this we can understand that the social elements of our world direct, constrain and enable us in what we do and how we act, but also that what we do and how we act in turn affects our world and the world of other people around us. Our choices are bounded, but not so much that we lose our capacity to have an impact on our social environment. We always remain active agents in helping to reproduce, sustain and develop our culture and society. From this starting point the research therefore sought to document and analyse the ways and means that sectarianism and segregation are sustained and extended through a wide range and variety of routine and mundane decisions that people make in their everyday lives. Research on the practice of segregation and sectarianism in Northern Ireland has taken two main forms: anthropological and geographical. The anthropological school (which includes the work of sociologists and political scientists) has placed an emphasis on gathering qualitative data through forms of participant observation to explore the practices of both segregation and engagement of the two communities (Burton, 1978; Darby, 1986; Donnan and McFarlane, 1986; Wilson and Donnan 2006; Harris 1972). The geographical school had traditionally focused on mapping and quantifying residential segregation, but the approaches began to converge with the work of Boal (1969), who brought anthropological methods into the geographical school through using everyday life activity patterns as an indicator of segregation on the Shankill-Falls divide. This work has subsequently developed by exploring people’s routine experiences to deepen our understanding of practice across a wider range of society that helps to sustain the divisions (Boal, 1982; Murtagh, 1999; Shirlow, 2003; Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006).

The research aimed to explore a variety of routine practices in a variety of settings and locations across Northern Ireland and to that end six broad locations were identified as sites for field research. These included two villages in rural settings (Castlederg and Newtownstewart in West Tyrone, and Kilrea in County Londonderry); two estates in urban areas (Dunclug in Ballymena and Shandon Park in Newry); and sites in north and south Belfast, this included two neighbouring interface communities (New Lodge and Tigers Bay) and a middle class area (Stranmillis). Consideration was given to researching Ballynafeigh in South Belfast, however previous and ongoing work has highlighted an element of “research fatigue” within the area (Byrne, Hansson and Bell, 2006; Murtagh and Carmichael, 2005), and it was decided that research would be conducted in Stranmillis as a viable alternative, an area where little research has been carried out to date. These six

areas were identified to give a diversity of locations including rural-urban settings; geographical diversity across Northern Ireland; a variety of sectarian balances and also an attempt to explore the impact of sectarianism on a middle class environment, an issue that has been subject to limited consideration.

The research focused on exploring four main themes:

1. The breadth and depth of different approaches developed and adopted by individuals in response to patterns of segregation and the fundamental sectarian divisions of society;
2. How people have changed or adapted their behaviour over recent times;
3. How patterns of behaviour are replicated through social and family networks; and
4. Changes in policy and practice that might encourage people to move away from more segregated approaches to living.

The field research was carried out between May 2007 and March 2008 and utilised a qualitative and anthropological approach, this included carrying out nearly 170 in-depth, semi-structured interviews and conversations with a broad range of individuals. Some people were also asked to complete a diary of their daily activities for a week, recording their routine movements and activities, while others were asked to map their impressions of territoriality and segregation in their communities. In some cases the researchers also accompanied people in a walk around their environment, in part to gain some knowledge of the local environment and in part to gain a sense of how subjective perceptions are translated into daily routines of shopping, work and accessing services and other facilities.

The research participants were selected through discussions with community representatives, largely by drawing on previous contacts in the area and then through “snowballing”, a process whereby interviewees asked friends, colleagues and acquaintances to take part in the project. In areas such as Castlederg and north Belfast the researchers were able to draw upon the extensive existing network of community organisations within the areas, which were able to act as gate-keepers, and thus facilitate interviews and focus groups with local residents. In other areas the researchers faced greater difficulties in accessing individuals to participate in the research. Indeed, in Stranmillis generally it proved more difficult to access local residents to be interviewed for the research because the area is primarily residential with a limited community infrastructure to act as gatekeepers and facilitate interviews and with less apparent interest in the research. The following section discusses the various research methods which were used throughout the project and highlights some of the challenges faced in applying some of the methods to certain geographic locations with different histories and diverse experiences of sectarianism and segregation.



## METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

### *Engaging with Sectarianism*

The geographical location in which the interviews were conducted, the impact which the Troubles had impacted on the area and on people's lives and experience of living with the direct manifestations of sectarianism and segregation appeared to have a significant impact upon an individual's willingness to discuss what they perceived to be very sensitive and emotive issues. At the beginning of the project the research team provided an information sheet for interviewees, which provided some background information on the research and on ICR. This made clear that the aim of the research was to focus directly on the issues of sectarianism and segregation, and how they impacted on people's lives. Although this openness about the subject area of the research project proved to be uncontentious in most areas, it proved to be problematic in middle-class Stranmillis, where gatekeepers and some residents were reluctant to be involved in discussing these issues. As a result a slightly different approach was developed in this area. ICR devised a small flyer, which emphasised our interest in exploring the routine practices of everyday life in Stranmillis, but without explicitly referring to sectarianism and segregation. This was distributed on a door-to-door basis to all houses in to inform people of the research and provide contact details for those who were interested in taking part. This shift in focus onto the more mundane aspects of daily life was deemed to be necessary given the overwhelming reluctance of many individuals to discuss issues related to sectarianism and segregation, which they felt were an anathema and irrelevant to the area. Indeed, a number of individuals spoken to referred to moving into the area "to get away from all that nonsense". Some interviewees also appeared to be reticent to talk about the impact of the Troubles and a common perception amongst many individuals approached was that Northern Ireland had moved on from the "dark days" and individuals were unwilling to talk about what they felt was in the past, and of limited relevance to Stranmillis.

Thus in Stranmillis the initial discussions with interviewees did not directly focus on issues related to sectarianism and segregation but rather explored less contentious issues related to daily routines, but as the conversations developed and interviewees felt more comfortable talking about their daily lives, issues that were associated with sectarianism and segregation were often raised and explored. As a result of this more nuanced approach it became apparent that although a number of interviewees in the area initially suggested that the geography of Stranmillis and their spatial routines were not affected by sectarianism and segregation it was clear they were aware of the sectarian geography of other parts of Belfast, and would at times alter their daily routine, route to work or place to shop accordingly. The presence of segregation and sectarianism may have been less immediate and evident in this environment, but nevertheless they had a significant, if less direct, impact on people's lives.

### ***Community Interest versus Research Fatigue***

The level of interest in participating in the research tended to vary from area to area. In places such as Castlederg and Newtownstewart where there was a strong community infrastructure to serve as gatekeepers and identify potential interviewees, there was a considerable interest and willingness amongst interviewees to take part in the research. The local consensus was that most research tends to focus on Belfast and Derry Londonderry, and being asked to participate in the research provided an opportunity for more marginalized voices to be heard. A particular reference was made to a general perception that the area west of the River Bann tended to be ignored by most researchers. A more strictly anthropological research methodology emphasises the process of the researcher immersing his or herself in a locale and building a wide range of personal relationships, which will serve as the basis for developing subsequent in depth knowledge through observation, conversation and participation in the routines of a community. But this is rarely possible, due to constraints of cost and requirement of timetabling, for more policy-orientated action research. As a result the presence of a basic level of accessible community infrastructure or network of activists, who are willing to assist and facilitate with the development of a research project and can serve as a viable means of accessing potential research participants in an area should perhaps be taken into account when selecting specific geographic locations to be studied. However, the work in west Tyrone also highlighted that there are many communities in Northern Ireland that remain under-researched and who remain keen to have the opportunity of having their experiences heard.

Virtually the opposite situation occurred in north Belfast, where community representatives and residents spoke of a general “research fatigue” in the area, as a result of a number of studies analysing the dynamics of interface communities which have been produced in recent years. In particular it was also noted that people felt that such research often involved people taking from a community but giving little back, and this increased a reluctance to respond positively to subsequent requests. Despite the research fatigue, ICR’s diverse network of contacts in the area enabled us to gather a broad range of voices and experiences. In Stranmillis there was a similar initial reluctance to participate in research, but this was based on an apparent resistance or “middle-class apathy”, rather than due to perceived over research. Here residents felt that they had little to contribute or gain from participating in such a project. This was perhaps most clearly illustrated in the aftermath of the local residents association AGM, which was attended by around 300 people. ICR were able to make a brief presentation about the research and invited local residents to take part in the project. However, only one local resident provided their contact details and felt that they would like to take part, while several other people approached ICR staff after the event to comment that in Stranmillis the focus of resident’s concern was on “bread and butter” issues such as the lack of car-parking, or incidents of burglary within the area rather than issues such as sectarianism and segregation, which one resident believed “would be the preserve of north Belfast and the like”.

### ***Contentious Issues***

Throughout the course of the research a number of individuals initially remained reticent about discussing what they perceived to be contentious issues and particularly in some of the smaller areas, a number of potential interviewees were reluctant to participate for fear of “rocking the boat”. This was particularly the case in smaller more geographically contained areas such as Kilrea and Newtownstewart where it was felt that “everyone knew everyone” and despite reassurances, there were concerns amongst some interviewees that they would be identifiable by their age, gender or even their profession. In the past anthropological research has often striven to anonymise not only individuals, but also the location of research area by giving towns and villages made-up names and identities (Buckley, 1982; Darby, 1986, Harris, 1972). ICR did not go to this length to conceal identities but the researchers tried to reassure the interviewees that they would not be able to be identified by any comments that might be cited in any publication and which might be attributed to them, this was done by excluding any reference to a specific job title or any other factor which may jeopardise their anonymity.

### ***Diaries and Mapping***

The outline research methodology proposed asking participants to complete a short diary of their daily activities for a period of a week, to record their routine movements and activities and comment on why certain decisions were made, such as to describe the route they took to work and reflect on why they decided to take that particular route. This was an attempt to replicate a methodology that had been used successfully in a previous research undertaken by one of the members of the small project advisory group. However, in practice it proved somewhat difficult to encourage interviewees to undertake this aspect of the research. There were a variety of reasons for the lack of success of this approach. Some of the interviewees thought that the effort it would take to complete the diaries would be too time consuming, whilst a number of others who did agree to complete the diaries, subsequently failed to respond to ICR requests to complete them with adequate or useful descriptions of their routines, while some simply failed to deliver a diary despite agreeing to do so. There appeared to be a sense in which the participants viewed the diaries as “homework” and a number of individuals “forgot” to complete them on a number of occasions. In Stranmillis, none of the interviewees was willing to complete a diary, ostensibly because participants viewed their area as mixed and thus they would be unable to map any evidence of segregation within the area. One particular issue, which appeared to be specific to the Dunclug estate in Ballymena, involved adult literacy issues, which naturally inhibited willingness of interviewees to complete a diary. Despite these difficulties, a small number of diaries were completed by participants in north Belfast and Newry. However, reading the diaries revealed that the information provided tended to be kept to a bare minimum and this added little if anything in terms of analysing the dynamics of sectarianism and segregation which impact upon individuals daily routines.

The general lack of success of the diaries led to the development of an alternative methodological approach. This involved asking the interviewee to take a few min-

utes at the end of the interview to indicate on a basic map which areas of the town they perceived to be predominantly Protestant, Catholic, or Mixed. The fact that this exercise took only a few minutes, and could be completed “there and then”, rather than taken home and forgotten about, encouraged interviewees to undertake this exercise. While the personal nature of the diaries in asking about someone’s daily routine appeared to be one of the factors in the poor response to this approach, it became clear that interviewees felt comfortable highlighting on a map their perceptions of the patterns of segregation and division and the completion of this exercise appeared to be less contentious than the diary exercise. The mapping method proved to be very successful and supported a number of the themes that emerged from the interviews. The maps provided an visual indication of an individual’s perceptions of the social space in the area or town in which they live, and a further analysis of the maps illustrated that an individual’s community background, age, gender, and personal experiences all impacted upon their “mental map” of their local area, and produced some considerable variety of the differing perceptions of the identity of public spaces, where they felt safe and the areas they would avoid due to factors relating to sectarianism and segregation.

### ***Methodological Conclusions***

The research highlighted some of the difficulties that can be faced when trying to engage with people around contentious issues such as sectarianism and segregation particularly within the context of the current political dispensation in Northern Ireland. For some interviewees this “was all in the past” and any discussion or re-opening of old wounds would be more trouble than it was worth. Perhaps somewhat ironically it was the residents of those areas which had been impacted the most by the Troubles such as north Belfast and Castlederg who were the most forthright in engaging directly with the topics of sectarianism and segregation, while the residents of Stranmillis, which was relatively sheltered from the worst excesses of the violence, displayed a reluctance to talk about issues which they felt had no relevance to their own area and which they had “left behind” in other parts of Belfast when they moved into the area.

Despite the initial difficulties faced in some of the research areas in directly engaging with the dynamics of sectarianism and segregation, a more subtle approach certainly proved more fruitful. A general discussion of what it was like to live in an area and why it had been chosen as a place to live in often resulted in the interviewee discussing issues relating to sectarianism and segregation without really being aware of it, but once they had settled into the interview the participants were open to engage with the topics more directly. The mapping exercise in particular proved to be extremely useful in documenting the “mental maps” that individuals had of their own area, but their perceptions of the social space in which they lived tended to be dependent on an individual’s age, gender, community background, socio-economic grouping and personal experience of the impact of the Troubles.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

The aim of the research was to explore how far, and to what extent people's daily routines were affected by the social divisions within Northern Ireland, by the often extensive segregation of Catholic and Protestant communities, by sectarianism and the legacy of the conflict, how far people's routines help to reinforce and thus help to sustain these patterns of segregation and division and to identify any positive changes in the levels of segregation and division. The six case study areas highlight some variety of differences in people's experiences and understandings of these issues, and identified something of the diverse impacts that segregation and sectarianism have on people and which, the research suggests, often depends on factors such as the age, gender, social background, place of residence and the personal experiences of the individual. This variety of both personal and communal factors, and individual experiences are used to construct the "mental maps" that are used to guide and structure personal routines and practices, and the mental maps are in turn reinforced, and at times challenged by routine experiences. The routines of separation and division are thus sustained through practice, but the routines can and do change as people's perceptions of their social environment change. The experience of segregation thus always has a degree of fluidity rather than being rigid, fixed, unchanging and outside the experiences of individuals.

The following section outlines a number of generalised findings from the research. These do not all apply to each area and there are some apparently contradictory findings, but this serves to highlight the need to look beyond the stark contrasts of division and demands that a more nuanced view is taken of how segregation and sectarianism impacts on everyone, while acknowledging that for some the impact is more immediate and intense than for others. Furthermore the research suggests that although some people believe that in some contexts the situation may be improving, for others the scale, extent and intensity of segregation is increasing.

### ***1. Segregation and division impacts upon all, but at differing levels and intensities.***

People offered diverse interpretations of the levels of segregation and the quality of relationships between members of the two communities in different areas. In Castlederg and north Belfast, people described high levels of segregation and separation; those in Kilrea and Newtownstewart described some degree of mixing but little genuinely warm interaction between the two communities; in Dunclug and Shandon Park people spoke of higher levels of mixing and more positive relationships between members of the two main communities; finally residents of Stranmillis considered their area to be largely mixed and fairly well integrated, but with little public recognition of communal identities. There are thus a variety of experiences on a continuum between highly segregated and divided areas with little positive interaction among members of the two main communities, to areas where there was much higher levels of integration. Furthermore, people in mixed areas identified two distinct ways of integrating. This could take place through a recognition and acknowledgement of each person's communal background and ethno-national identity, or by avoidance and disinterest of the same. In smaller or more rural communities,

where people were long established residents communal identity was always a factor in personal identity and status in the community, but in urban areas the larger scale and relative transience of the population made a level of communal anonymity a real possibility.

## ***2. Segregation and sectarianism are a continuing legacy of the Troubles.***

The impact of the Troubles on the areas in Belfast were very different and had a significant impact on the scale to which segregation and sectarianism were felt to impose themselves on daily routines. Many people in Stranmillis felt that they had scarcely been affected by the Troubles and struggled to name any specific Troubles related incidents in the area, this was in stark contrast to New Lodge and Tigers Bay, which remain divided by an physical interface and whose residents had experienced extensive violence and trauma throughout the Troubles, and which has continued through the period of political transition. It is difficult to state categorically the nature and scale of the legacy of the Troubles on segregation and sectarianism in any area. Two of the rural areas, Kilrea and Castlederg, were both badly affected by the Troubles and some people and public interactions displayed sectarian attitudes and biases, which helped sustain high levels of segregation, while inter-communal tensions and antagonism were recurrently renewed during the Marching Season when local parades and visual displays further polarised relations. However, through the rest of the year the two communities appeared to co-exist on a day-to-day basis, although with limited socialising or interacting. Thus while the experiences of the Troubles had create a degree of mutual suspicion and hostility, it was the ongoing annual cycle of commemorations that ensured that tensions remained raw and unresolved.

## ***3. Levels of sectarianism and segregation have changed in recent years.***

Residents in Dunclug suggested that in general Ballymena had been relatively untouched by the Troubles, and relations within the estate were generally positive. However, the levels of segregation and sectarianism in the wider town were felt to be higher than previously and people highlighted the murder of Michael McIlveen, in May 2006, as a defining event that had had a serious impact on relations, particularly among younger age groups. This deterioration in relationships in Ballymena, contrasts with the experiences of residents of Newry, an area badly affected by the Troubles but which appears to have “moved on”. Interviewees in the Shandon Park estate felt that the city of Newry was “on a high” and had progressed enormously since the end of the conflict. In contrast to residents of Dunclug, residents of Shandon Park increasingly felt safe and welcomed in the city centre, although as with many areas, concerns remained about the negative impact of the night-time economy<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The night-time economy refers to the growing commercial development around leisure and social environments such as bars, pubs, clubs, restaurants, fast-food outlets and related venues and activities which have transformed the economy of most urban areas in recent years. See Hobbs et al 2003, Hadfield 2006.

**4. Economic regeneration can have a positive impact on segregation, but economic change can also have a negative impact.**

Economic regeneration across Northern Ireland has been a positive factor in the ending of the conflict and an important foundation of the wider process of peace-building. Little consideration has been given to exactly how economic regeneration may contribute to breaking down divisions and levels of segregation, but there is some indication from this research that economic regeneration can impact on a personal level. Participants noted that the economic regeneration of the city of Newry and the opening up of the border has had a perceived positive impact on the ways that members of the Protestant community in Shandon Park engage with, and relate to the commercial centre. Similarly the development of new spaces like the Odyssey complex have provided a shared social space for people in the segregated interface areas of north Belfast, providing of course they can access and afford the facilities. More generally people appear to increasingly be willing to choose their location for shopping on the basis of price and value for money, and are prepared to cross sectarian boundaries in the process. However, in contrast to Newry, the opening up of the border area is perceived by some people in Castlederg to have had a negative impact on the local commercial sector, and many interviewees perceived that trade and the prosperity of the town had suffered now that people had a wider choice of facilities and services elsewhere in the vicinity. The absence of violence has encouraged people to cross the border for goods or to travel greater distances to larger centres a few miles away, rather than shop within the safer confines of their home environment.

**5. Mixed or neutral spaces are more available than in the past, but they co-exist with heavily segregated spaces.**

There was an acknowledgement that there had been an increase in the number and variety of mixed or neutral areas and spaces in many locations. In Castlederg for example, people noted the growing number of mixed social spaces and shared resources, including bars and leisure facilities; while in north Belfast people noted that a growing number of spaces that were not defined by the orange and green divide, even though some of these were further removed in the city centre or spaces like the Odyssey complex. Similarly residents of Shandon Park perceived that the centre of Newry was increasingly safely accessible, particularly during the day, and residents of Newtownstewart accessed shops and other facilities in an ever-wider range of locations. Residents in Dunclug stated that the local estate was reasonably well integrated, but regarded access to resources in the centre of Ballymena as increasingly problematic, with a growing “them and us” division between the residents of Dunclug and the larger population of Ballymena. Similarly the residents of Stranmillis felt that they lived in a mixed and shared environment, but they were only too aware of, and adapted their movements to, the territorialism and sectarian divisions beyond the boundaries of Stranmillis. The mixture of shared space with segregated spaces was noted: in Castlederg mixed bars coexisted with the established segregated patterns of socialising and drinking and in Kilrea shops that were shared by both communities were interspersed with bars that only one section of the community would use. Thus the bold stark divisions of orange and green

spaces were being broken down into a more fractured mosaic of resources, facilities and spaces, some of which could be accessed by all, while others were avoided by sections of the community. Individuals are thus required to operate on the basis of an ever more complex series of mental maps that guide and inform them where to go and where to avoid, and while this knowledge is learned in part from experience, people also base their local knowledge on interaction and discussion with members of their peer and identity groups.

#### ***6. The direct impact of segregation relates to social class.***

While some people believe that their daily routines are not greatly affected by segregation, others understand that segregation has become such a way of life that it is now viewed as “normal”, and routines and practice that is established as a norm is perceived both as less necessary and more difficult to challenge. The two areas in Belfast typify this contrast in experiences and perspectives. The residents of the interface communities in the north of the city were only too aware of the highly segregated and divided nature of space and resources and the extent to which they adapted their movements and avoided certain spaces. This can be considered as an example of the direct impact of sectarian division. In contrast residents of Stranmillis, who lived in a generally mixed and unmarked area, believed that the sectarian divisions did not impact upon their lives to any extent. However, the conversations and discussions often revealed how far people were actually acutely aware of segregated areas and adapted their behaviour through acts of avoidance or through forms of caution. This is evidence of the indirect impact that segregation and division can have on people’s lives. In a somewhat different way the residents of Dunclug also lived in a mixed and shared environment, as long as they remained on the estate, but the wider town centre had become a problematic and divided setting. Thus people in Stranmillis and Dunclug had, in very different ways, begun to move beyond the stark simplicity of orange and green divisions, but only in relatively small areas, once they move beyond the confines of their communities they were forced to interact with the realities of a highly divided and sectarian society. Yet despite these similarities residents of Dunclug were more open to the realities of living in divided society, while those in Stranmillis preferred to try to ignore the impact that sectarian divisions had on their lives.

#### ***7. Living in a small community highlights identity and difference; anonymity on the other hand helps dissipate community identity.***

The ability to ignore, avoid or escape from a personal collective identity impacts on social division. In a transient and essentially dormitory community such as Stranmillis, there appears to be a limited degree of contact between neighbours and a strong potential for remaining “anonymous”, this in turn facilitates the reduction of a negative impact that identity politics might have at a communal and individual level. This was in stark contrast to the situation in smaller and more geographically contained communities in rural areas (Castlederg and Kilrea) or on an interface (north Belfast), where the majority of interviewees believed that “everyone knew everyone” and it was relatively easy to “tell” someone’s community background, from their family name, which part of the area they came from, or from the school



school they attended. This sense of being “known” resulted in interviewees restricting their movements in and around the area that they lived. However, once again the degree of impact was uneven, spaces that were considered safe and neutral during the daytime could be perceived as unsafe and territorial at night, while spaces that were safe most of the year might be unsafe at times of political tension. This had an impact on how and where people moved about and socialised, when they might use a leisure facility, access a doctor, or obtain money from an ATM. Mental mapping also reveals that division can have a gendered perspective, and in Castlederg for example the research highlighted that males were more likely than females to perceive the town to be heavily segregated, and they were therefore more inclined to alter their routes or limit their movements accordingly.

***8. The work environment is generally neutral, but dominated by avoidance, but accessing work can raise issues of safety and sectarianism.***

In general interviewees felt that the work environment was a largely neutral space. Some people recounted how during the Troubles few would give their opinion on an incident and even today people were reluctant to raise political or religious matters due to reluctance in identifying one's community background. Thus while mixing within the workplace was largely accepted, it was also based on a presumption of avoidance of contentious issues, rather than any strong sense of integration and sharing. The recognition of the workplace as “neutral” also highlights and reinforces the emphasis on avoidance and exclusion of symbols of identity and activities that raise tensions or mark out communal difference. Nevertheless some interviewees remained wary of working in an area that was dominated by people from the other community background, and a number said they would base their decision on where to apply for a job on their community background because they felt that some businesses would simply refuse to employ them and that the process would be a “waste of time”. This was another aspect of segregation, which was regarded as self-evident and “normal”. Furthermore, some interviewees in north Belfast and Kilrea cited a “fear” of travelling outside the area due to the areas they would have to pass through, most people in Belfast however felt this was becoming less of an issue than during the Troubles, and only one interviewee in Kilrea felt that it was still an serious area of concern. But even in Stranmillis people were aware of potential trouble spots that they ensured they either avoided or gave extra attention to on their way to work.

***9. Education remains largely segregated, although some informal integration is occurring, but wearing school uniforms in public can create problems.***

Many interviewees chose their children's schools based on their religious affiliation, and thus education is still highly segregated, and some cited this as a factor in furthering the wider social divisions. However, in some areas people noted that informal integration had begun to develop through schools: in Stranmillis many Catholics chose one of the perceived Protestant schools (particular those with a good reputation), in Newry both Protestants and Catholics attend Newry High, and even in Kilrea some Catholics attend Protestant grammar schools outside of the village. It is worth noting however, that each of these examples is of Catholic children at-

tending “Protestant” schools, and for some people this reinforced a sense of being pushed out or excluded from their traditional social spaces. In areas where there was less integration through schooling, school uniforms were cited as a problematic issue. In Castlederg and Dunclug as they were seen as a marker of a young person’s community background, and a number of young people avoided certain areas when they knew pupils of the other school in town would be around. Some young interviewees also felt that wearing their school uniform during the day meant that they could not venture into certain shops or shopping centres within their towns. In contrast however, while there were cases in Belfast and Castlederg, where young people referred to segregated school transport or attacks on school buses based on community background, the overall impression is one of a general improvement in safety and security in travelling to and from schools.

#### ***10. Shopping environments are increasingly neutral.***

Increasingly people consider the main shopping areas as a “neutral space”, and for many people the choice of where to shop was based on value for money, convenience and quality, rather than on allegiance to community. Research conducted by the Rural Community Network (2004) also found that choice of where to shop was based more on variety, options and price than on religion or perceived religion of the owner of the shop. However, while the central areas of Belfast and Newry were generally considered accessible to both communities, in Ballymena some young people felt unsafe in accessing one or other of the main shopping centres because of their community background. There were differences in different areas however, in north Belfast some people avoided certain shops that were perceived to be used more by the other community, and “corner shops” in particular were regarded as servicing people within the community, rather than for meeting a more general need or as a resource for the “other side”. In smaller centres like Castlederg and Newtownstewart, smaller shops were readily identified as being either predominantly Protestant or Catholic, and although most interviewees said this would not affect where they shopped, some preferred to avoid shopping in stores owned by the “other” community.

#### ***11. Asserting community identity can undermine social cohesion, but denying opportunities to display identity can erode a sense of belonging.***

Visible displays of belonging, such as flags, were an issue in all of the areas apart from Stranmillis. Flags, parades and bonfires, which were used to mark territory or display communal strength, were all considered as potential or actual sources of tension, which impacted negatively on community relations. In Castlederg and Shandon Park such tensions were mainly viewed as problematic during the marching season and there were ongoing attempts to “manage” the situations, while in Kilrea the flying of a Tricolour in the village sustained a persistent undercurrent of tension throughout the year. One factor to be considered in relation to communal displays and cultural events is the relative population balance. Both Castlederg and north Belfast contain a relatively even balance in population numbers and there appears to be an element of vying for “control” or territorial dominance within the area. In contrast in Newry city the Protestant community make up less than ten per cent

of the population and are perceived to lack the “critical mass” to threaten the majority Catholic community, although the need to assert identity can still serve to disrupt relations in the short term. In rural areas where demographic change had left one community in a minority there were strong feelings that wider elements of their culture were being eroded. This was noted to varying degrees in Castlederg, Kilrea and Newry where Protestants felt that their culture and rights were being taken away and they were being “pushed out”. While some residents viewed Shandon Park as a positive example of the two communities sharing and mixing, others regarded it as something of “a last stand”, which thus highlighted the importance of asserting one’s cultural identity, even if this was initiated by people from outside the estate. In the case of both Castlederg and Newry the location near the border appears to contribute to a “frontier” mentality amongst some interviewees, and the presence of visual displays of cultural and community background such as flags, parades and murals were seen as indicators that despite the Troubles, the minority community “are still here” and they intended to remain.

### ***12. Sectarianism and segregation impacts most heavily on young males.***

We have already noted how sectarianism and segregation impacts particularly on young people in relation to wearing school uniforms and access some forms of public space. In many of the areas it was noted that sectarian attitudes appeared to be more deeply entrenched among young males (a finding also noted by Shirlow, 2003). Some interviewees in north Belfast highlighted that young males were perceived to be more of a threat to other people than any other group, and young males were also generally perceived to be the ones most involved in violence and sectarian attacks in Dunclug and thus as more threatening. But the counterpart to this was that young men were also more likely to be the victims of sectarian attack and similarly to the findings of Lysaght and Basten (2003), this research found that spatial perceptions and a sense of safety were often gendered, with men more reluctant to travel between areas as they were perceived as more at risk. This came out quite clearly in the case of Castlederg where the mapping exercise indicated that young males were less inclined to identify areas in the town as mixed or shared but rather saw them as predominantly belonging exclusively to one community or the other.

### ***13. People will socialise together if the space is safe and or anonymous, but the night-time economy can be more problematic.***

Socialising was still heavily segregated in some areas, and some people chose to travel some distance to avoid locally divided bars or clubs. In Belfast city centre many pubs were now seen as mixed and interviewees in north Belfast felt safer socialising in the city centre than they did during the Troubles. Some young people from Ballymena also preferred to travel to Belfast rather than go out in Ballymena, in part for safety and in part because it gave them a degree of anonymity away from their own environment. In Kilrea and Newry young Protestants reported some fear of using the town at night because of safety concerns and in Castlederg the large number of segregated pubs were believed to fuel alcohol-related violence, but in neighbouring Newtown Stewart this was not the case, although this may in part be

due to the fact that young people from Newtownstewart often socialised elsewhere because the town was perceived as too quiet. Although the central areas of towns may be theoretically presented or considered as neutral, this may also be partly related to the scale of a town, and the degree of anonymity people can experience. In smaller centres and more intimate environments any sense of shared or neutrality of space appears to disappear after dark, as the erstwhile shared or common "civic" space is claimed or dominated by one community while being largely avoided by the other.

## CONCLUSION

The research highlights how segregation and sectarian attitudes impact on different aspects of everyday life, in differing ways and in different areas. In some areas there are positive signs of greater levels of mixing, sharing and integrating, while in others the legacy of the past, of hostility, fear and mistrust dominate the wider social environment. In most shared social environments the process of avoidance still appears to dominate interactions between members of the two main communities, and concerns for safety appear to be a constant presence in the back of many people's mind. But while segregation and division remain dominant aspects of daily life in areas across Northern Ireland, it is not a completely stark binary division, rather the research illustrates something of the diversity of experiences that are affected by factors of age, gender, class and location. The legacy of the Troubles and recent experiences of violence remain factors in how people act as social beings, but people are not solely constrained by their past and there is some evidence of positive change and greater levels of mixing in some aspects of social life in many areas across Northern Ireland.

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