



Community identities and a shared future for N.Ireland?

Executive Summary
March 31st 2011

Ipseus 
IDENTITY EXPLORATION SOFTWARE

**Workplace
Community
Academia**


Trademark
training research evaluation

Introduction and Methodology

1. This research report explores attitudes and behaviours of residents of six areas in Northern Ireland with respect to their views on their 'own' community and the communities around them. In particular the research sets out to provide socio-psychological 'explanations' of the intransigence of sectarian attitudes and behaviours within networks in these communities.
2. The research was funded by the Office of the First Minister/ Deputy First Minister during the period March 2010 to March 2011. Fieldwork in each area took place during April to July 2010. Six residential areas formed the investigative areas of the study, four in Belfast and two outside. Two 'influential networks' within each residential area were contacted, the participants of which were interviewed using semi structured interviews and focus groups. Residents in each area then completed an identity instrument which had been customised based on the findings of the primary ethnographic stage of the research. The identity instrument quantifies and measures a series of identity processes, allowing for precise analysis of similarities and differences between individuals and groups.
3. The research was carried out using an ethnographic approach. The term *ethnographic* has been used interchangeably with qualitative research and allows researchers the scope to access the everyday experiences of the participants indigenous to that environment.¹ The goal of ethnographic research is to produce a detailed description of the focus of the research within a research practice that "places researchers in the midst of whatever it is they study"².
4. The areas were chosen in consultation with the commissioning body. A framework for selection was drawn up to include: rural and urban areas; areas which were deemed relatively peaceful in recent times; areas which had witnessed recent community stress; areas around 'peace lines'; and areas which belonged to one community. The areas selected are detailed overleaf.

¹ Glesne, C. (2006). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. Boston: Pearson and Allyn and Bacon

² Berg, B.L. (2007). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (6th ed.). Boston: Pearson and Allyn and Bacon, 172

Areas selected for the study

Area	Type of area (interface/ single identity/ mixed)	Other characteristics of area
Southville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ PUL majority ❖ CNR / PUL interface ❖ historical and current conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ parading a particularly contentious issue ❖ urban area
Mileville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ PUL majority ❖ historical conflict ❖ BME communities present high profile racist incidents in recent years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ strong PUL community ❖ urban area
Rowville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ CNR majority ❖ CNR / PUL interface ❖ historical and current conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ dissenter and traditional faction in CNR community ❖ parading a particularly contentious issue ❖ urban area
Tigerville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ mixed area ❖ historical conflict, quieter in recent years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ urban area ❖ Surrounding area largely PUL
Ashville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ mixed ❖ CNR / PUL interface ❖ recent conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ CNR / PUL rural interface ❖ significant rise in sectarian attacks and intimidation ❖ small village
Townville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ mixed area ❖ CNR/ PUL interface ❖ historical and current day conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ CNR / PUL Interface ❖ significant sectarian tension ❖ dissident activity ❖ small town, surrounded by rural area

5. Two influential networks in each area were identified by the research team in consultation with gatekeepers in the community. In turn each gatekeeper identified participants for the research. A total of 115 individuals took part in the study. Each completed an identity instrument. The identity instrument is the primary data collection tool of Identity Structure Analysis (ISA).
6. The outcome of the analysis is dependent to one degree or another on the unique contexts of each area. However common themes are identified throughout the study, allowing for a broad generalization of the findings. This is an innovative approach which provides a type of analysis not previously available from typical ethnographic or survey methodologies. It is fundamentally driven by the concept of group aspirations and identifications as expressed by selecting preferences across a set of pre-defined alternative perspectives, tailored to the specifics of each research project. These 'selections' are made across a range of contexts covering the individual themselves and those groups around them which are most relevant to the research.
7. An ISA based analysis is driven by providing study participants with a series of

choices as to which behaviours or perspectives they feel are most desirable for them and their community. These choices are provided as behavioural opposites, not necessarily always universally recognised as 'right' or 'wrong' so allowing us to identify to what extent certain perspectives are shared or not across the study participants. An example would be 'for people from different traditions to live peacefully in the same place, they have to get to know and respect each other' versus 'people from different traditions can live peacefully in the same place simply by ignoring each other'. This contrasts with most survey approaches where respondents are asked to indicate to what extent behaviours which are recognised as positive are actually in place or not e.g. 'would you like to work in an area belonging to the other community?'.

8. Our approach captures how participants appraise themselves and others in the current time as well as different contexts such as how they would like things to be both on an individual basis but also with reference to the group to which they belong. This allows us to build a picture not only of group aspirations but also of the extent to which people feel that they are currently living in line with these aspirations. The approach then further requires that they make the same choices in respect of other people and groups that are pertinent to the research. In this way, we build up a rich picture of the group's own identity and the extent to which that group see other groups as similar or different, positive or negative.
9. Finally, we report on the participants' sense of change over time. Our analysis in this case indicates whether people feel that their world was better or worse five years ago and whether they feel it will become better or worse five years into the future.

Post research intervention

10. Following completion of the initial analysis and report writing Trademark staff, at the request of groups within study areas, have met informally with community gate keepers to discuss the implications of the research findings. At the time of report writing this has included 5 areas. These discussions have included preliminary plans for the design of intervention work on community relations issues. In one area this work has already commenced and builds upon previous engagements led by Trademark.

Analysis

11. One of the characteristics of an ISA analysis is the richness of results that emerge. Each participant responds to up to 525 queries and our Ipeus software allows extensive analysis of this data at an individual and group level. The analysis formed two key stages, firstly a thematic analysis was conducted. The themes corresponded with those detailed in the OFMDFM's consultation document for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration³. Secondly each area was taken in turn and a comprehensive analysis was conducted of the two networks with respect to a range of identify parameters, such as identification conflict, idealistic identification and empathetic identification. These terms are explained in the technical report. The analysis allows for insight into how each network viewed themselves and the other community.

Thematic Analysis

12. The results highlight opportunities to engage in **community relations** interventions across all communities within local contextual parameters.
13. All participants agreed that the **peace process has reduced sectarianism** and showed a strong desire to have a **positive effect on cross-community relations**. Most agreed that **increased contact with the other community reduced sectarian tension**.
14. The high levels of at least some **shared values and aspirations** across all communities provides some evidence of common ground on which to build a sense of mutual understanding. There are, in particular, shared and very positive aspirations on **shared living and working space**.
15. There was little evidence of fear of travelling outside of core residential areas for work and developing shared workplaces.
16. On the issue of **shared education**, the results show a similar pattern to that seen on the issue of mixed residential areas, namely a positive aspiration in all networks which is prevented by short term fears over security and vague fears over 'loss of identity'.
17. A number of areas highlighted the ongoing **negative influence of paramilitarism** in terms of community development and as an obstacle to cross community engagement.
18. The research indicated that **young adults'** high aspirations for greater **cross community contact and sharing** were as positive as older adults but that their short-term majority view is sharply one of wishing to remain separate from the other community.
19. It is clear that many from both communities aspire to share in 'Irish sports, language and arts' but that **Loyal Order parades were considered exclusive to the**

³ Programme for cohesion, sharing and integration; Consultation document; OFMDFM July 2010.

Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist (PUL) community. Controversial parades still pose significant problems in addressing sectarian tension and conflict.

20. With regards to the importance of a local parade, the **PUL** networks all show **majority support for parading** but, when measured on our scale of real psychological 'buy-in', there is clear evidence that many of the respondents in these networks are not at all sure of this stated perspective. This is really a 'yes...but' position where, when forced to choose, they opt to support parading but with underlying reservations.
21. In contrast, five of the six **Catholic/Nationalist/Republican (CNR) networks** **express strong views against parades**. The Southville CNR network was the only CNR network that felt a local parade was important, perhaps reflecting realism on their part.
22. Significantly, two PUL groups expressed positive attitudes to **Irish language and other cultural activities** indicating potential for the investigation of shared heritage and linguistic programmes.
23. The results on the issue of whether or not 'a bit of trouble at parades is OK' point towards a **realisation** among PUL networks **that trouble is really not acceptable**. So, although the majority of PUL networks state that trouble is acceptable when asked for a yes/no answer, their true position is actually not so black and white and they may well respond to initiatives aimed at reducing trouble at parades.
24. Attitudes to **immigration** were positive in all CNR networks, whilst the Townville PUL network was unaccommodating to immigrants living in or moving into the area, it was the only network with an aspiration to keep immigrants out. Whilst the Mileville PUL One showed a positive aspiration to welcome immigrants, they exhibited a deep concern as to their immediate presence, due to perceptions of anti-social behaviour amongst young male migrants in neighbouring areas.
25. Both the PUL and CNR communities viewed their respective main **political party** as largely important. Each community also viewed the **local council** in a similar manner. However the extent to which the political parties and the councils were viewed as positive varied. For instance in some PUL areas Sinn Fein were viewed more positively than the DUP.
26. There was no clear sense of a constructive role being played by **local councils** in resolving current tensions. The ethnographic research in Townville and Ashville suggested that capacity in local government was viewed as poor. In other areas councils were viewed as playing a useful role in providing grants for community relations work but with limited roles noted in proactive cross-community engagement.
27. There is a marked difference in the evaluation of the **local community groups** - with the CNR networks being much more positive about local community infrastructure than the PUL networks. This might suggest a more sophisticated community infrastructure within CNR areas and a dearth of similar structures in PUL areas. In PUL areas, it was felt that ongoing paramilitary influence was stifling community development.

Area Specific Conclusions

Mileville (PUL majority area, urban)

32. The community **is not opposed to** the idea of inter-community working since, in terms of security, they feel no immediate threat from the CNR community. The evidence also clearly demonstrates that the participants want to see a reduction in the influence of paramilitarism in the area.

Ashville (Mixed area, rural village)

33. The Ashville PUL group have a strong desire for greater cross community contact and sharing. They recognise the importance of the local parade but are also clearly conflicted about it; these internal conflicts suggest potential for movement in resolving the problem. The Ashville CNR group hold negative views of the PUL community generally and the parading issue in particular but are open to the development of shared spaces and a shared society if that meant an end to parading.

Townville (Mixed area, small town)

34. The high levels of established segregation in Townville appear to militate against any desire for shared living space and integration. The PUL group do not appear strongly cohesive however whilst the CNR group are very cohesive around Irish cultural issues but remain open to cross community working. There is also a strong dissociation from dissident republicanism. The separation created by a major transport route cannot be underestimated; it creates feelings of geographical isolation for large sections of CNR community, particularly the young, and is thought to contribute to economic under-development in that part of the town. The levels of social exclusion are considered intense and leave young adults potentially victim to dissident influence. According to ethnographic research there has been a recent injection of funding in single identity capacity building and cross community initiatives at a youth level but they are thought unlikely to have any major impact on community relations due to the levels of segregation.

Rowville (CNR majority area, urban)

35. Both groups possess strong core ethnic identities but also evidence positive attitudes towards a range of integrationist values in comparison to other groups in the study. This is particularly the case for the PUL group which also exhibits a wish to see less influence from paramilitaries. The CNR group were a very cohesive group with strong ties to the local area, broad support for mainstream republicanism and a negative view of their PUL neighbours.

Southville (PUL majority area, urban)

36. The Southville PUL population reflects a confidence in identity whilst exhibiting some conflicted aspirations around parading which, with high aspiration for integrationist values, may suggest potential for compromise. The CNR group is a relatively cohesive community; though this is balanced by significant tension and pressure as result of the parades issue.

Tigerville (Mixed area, urban)

37. These two CNR groups viewed themselves in a positive and confident manner in the face of a larger majority PUL neighbour. They hold strong beliefs and values whilst aspiring to live in a more shared and integrated society whilst remaining aware of the difficulties in achieving any long term development.

Recommendations

38. The desire for separation and segregation suggests that worryingly more sectarian views are emerging amongst younger networks (within the study three groups contained predominantly young people - Millville PUL One, Townville PUL, Ashville PUL). More research is necessary among younger people in these and other areas to explore why they hold these views and to what extent they are based upon experience, communal memory, influence of community leaders or an absence of genuine community relations initiatives.
39. The experience of Rowville suggests the potential positive impact of prejudice reduction, inter-cultural and anti-sectarian initiatives in areas of high segregation and paramilitary influence. Intervention projects should be directed to adopt these approaches.
40. Given the deep levels of misunderstanding and mistrust witnessed across all the networks studied, greater emphasis must be placed on the design of local interventions and the measurable development of local capacity. Future emphasis should be on direct mediation and anti-sectarian work at a local level including a greater involvement by local councils in the delivery of community relations initiatives, particularly in those areas where local council intervention was identified as weak (Townville and Ashville).
41. The research has highlighted that local contexts are crucial in understanding the identity concerns of local residents and the potential for more integrationist approaches. The technical report considers each network in detail and makes broad recommendations tailored to each area regarding local interventions.