Community Cohesion and Social Inclusion: Unravelling a Complex Relationship

Frank Gaffikin and Mike Morrissey

[Paper first received, December 2007; in final form, January 2010]

Abstract

In a global context of an emphasis on identity politics and a ‘cultural turn’ in social analysis, deep concern has been expressed about multiethnic Britain becoming a broken society with many ‘sleepwalking’ into segregation and separatism. Given the close correspondence between areas of acute ethnic segregation and those of multiple deprivation, intercommunal tensions have included disputes about the equitable allocation of scarce urban resources across ethnicity. This creates the possibility that urban programmes may inadvertently accentuate intercommunal tension and confound efforts to synchronise cohesion and inclusion agendas. Following recent debates about the implications of increased diversity, influenced by arguments that multiculturalism has encouraged ‘parallel lives’, an emergent policy framework emphasises more proactive integration to promote ‘common belonging’. Criticism of this agenda includes its confusion between community and social cohesion, and its disproportionate focus on cultural aspects such as identity formation and recognition, relative to structural issues of income and class. In exploring this contested terrain in Britain, the article suggests that the longer-term debate about segregation, deprivation and community differentials in Northern Ireland can offer useful insight for Britain’s policy discourse.

Introduction

This article addresses the interface between policies about community cohesion (dealing with intracommunity and intercommunality tensions) and social inclusion (tackling inequalities and long-term poverty). The contention is that effective intervention needs to appreciate the complication of this interface. One line of argument suggests that intercommunal inequalities may be the ultimate source of such tensions, thus prioritising work on
inclusion. However, other arguments stress the lack of engagement and relationships, the overindulgence of multiculturalism or, indeed, the role of fundamentalist ideologies (Islam or British nationalism), thus prioritising effort at building cohesion. In addressing this dilemma, the article makes three main arguments

— There is a debate going on about these issues in Britain both in the theory and policy environments.
— A similar debate has been going on in Northern Ireland for a much longer period and there is a substantial body of literature/evidence, which has relevance for the British debate.
— It is not sensible (as the Northern Ireland experience demonstrates) to separate community cohesion and social inclusion policies—indeed, doing so can inadvertently exacerbate, rather than reduce, community tensions.

Across the globe, contentions around issues of identity and territory abound, making it a defining issue of the new century. In Britain, this global problem has found recent expression in debates about the efficacy of multiculturalism and linked issues about the creation of community cohesion (Hall, 2000; McGhee, 2005; Larden and Owen, 2006; Rogers and Muir, 2008). Such discourse comes to ground most visibly in the urban arena, where socially polarised communities co-inhabit cities also marked by divergent ethnic loyalties. The relationship between the two is complicated where social disadvantage is disproportionately concentrated among ethnic groups who also experience social and cultural estrangement based on religious or racial identity (MacLeavy, 2008). In turn, this confounds arguments about causality and solution. For instance, do disadvantaged ethnic groups endure social exclusion primarily due to a combination of structural and discriminatory factors, or is their marginalisation mostly the outcome of a self-imposed politico-cultural isolation? Equally, can community cohesion be improved by targeting compensatory intervention to disadvantaged ethnic groups, or does such a focus on equity and social differential inadvertently accentuate intercommunal animosities?

Such controversies have resonance with the debate about division in Northern Ireland. There, the Catholic community’s alienation from the state has been attributed in significant part to its socioeconomic disadvantage relative to its Protestant counterpart. To redress this historical subordination, a considerable volume of reformist legislation has emerged around what has been dubbed ‘the equality agenda’. Simultaneously however, the outcomes of such interventions have been interpreted in very different ways. For example, the Sinn Fein Equality and Human Rights spokesperson claimed that

More than 35 years after the Civil Rights Movement launched its campaign to highlight the nature of structural discrimination in housing, voting and jobs, these same issues remain at the core of continued inequalities (An Phoblacht, 2005).

In contrast, the Democratic Unionist Party has long argued that the equality agenda has disproportionately benefited nationalists (Campbell, 1987). Its then MEP, commenting on Northern Ireland’s peace programmes (Peace I and Peace II), suggested that “the Unionist Community has not been given what I consider our fair allocation of available resources” (December 2007, jimallister.org).

Some may suggest that Northern Ireland and Britain are not comparable with respect to the issues of inclusion and cohesion. The danger with this argument is that it can readily collapse into an ethnocratic view of Northern Ireland as a place apart. In this article, we challenge this conventional view. For instance, Northern Ireland has persistently experienced intercommunal violence centred on contested identity.
COMMUNITY COHESION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

and territory. Following intercommunal riots in Oldham and Bradford, there has been an intensive discourse in Britain about the causes of this disturbance, with prominence also attached to the issues of identity and territory. It may be said that the former division is rooted in ancestral disputes about sovereignty, whereas the roots of the ethnic hostilities in Britain are not. Even here, however, the latter contains ‘traces’ of a sovereignty dimension, since, for some of the Islamic protagonists in Britain, there is a ‘sovereignty’ quarrel—in their conviction that sovereignty rests ultimately with the divine rather than secular authority. Similarly, for some of the White protagonists, there is a dimension of English nationalism, whose sovereignty they see as diluted by the presence of ethnic groups with a putative foreign origin and culture. Again, it is not argued here that the two contexts are identical, merely that they have enough in common with respect to intercommunal tensions and the linked issue of competitive access to urban resources to make Northern Ireland relevant to the debate in Britain.

Despite these nuanced considerations, reference to the Northern Ireland context has to acknowledge two main types of contest around identity and territory in the urban arena: the first relates to pluralist disputes involving diverse ethnic, religious or cultural groups about issues of recognition, distribution and enfranchisement; the second concerns ethno-nationalist conflict around sovereignty. So, while the first raises issues about the equity of the state, the second raises issues about its very existence. While there is this significant distinction between cities divided on socioeconomic or ethno-religious difference and those fractured around mutually incompatible nationality, there are some features that they can share, such as deep patterns of segregation and protracted disputes about intercommunity disparity that validate some comparison between cities like Belfast and multiethnic English ones.

Allowing for this important distinction between pluralist and sovereignty conflicts, the article explores the potential for some features of Northern Ireland’s experience to enlighten Britain’s debate about diversity. However, it is not the intention to revisit the extensive literature on community differentials and discrimination in Northern Ireland (see, for example, Murphy and Armstrong 1994; Gudgin and Breen, 1996; Osborne and Shuttleworth, 2004; Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, 2006). Rather, scrutiny of Northern Ireland data on the links between deprivation, changing patterns of segregation and the impact on community differentials from ‘equality’ interventions offers an illustrative case study relevant to the analysis of Britain’s policy discourse on a harmonised approach to cohesion and inclusion.

Emerging from this appraisal is the following core argument: close correspondence exists between the spaces of the most acute deprivation and those where difference around identity and belonging is most trenchantly contested. In such contexts, public intervention for community cohesion and for social inclusion is in each necessary but insufficient. Both policies have to be closely aligned. Specifically in the urban context, strategies for compensatory regeneration and intercommunal reconciliation have to operate as twin processes. Yet, the redistributive interventions of social inclusion designed for equity can inadvertently accentuate rather than ameliorate the conflict, thereby confounding the reconciliation interventions of community cohesion.

This dilemma can be seen in Northern Ireland, where government policy claims not only to be fair but also to be seen to be fair to both sides of a contested society. Underpinning this is reliance on ‘evidence-based’ policy, rooted in objective data and rational analysis that putatively capture the ‘reality’ of intercommunal social disparities. Whatever the ‘detached’ data may claim (see
later), many Catholics remain convinced that their community continues to endure largely unchanged discrimination, while many Protestants feel that government policy has made their community more disadvantaged through its indulgence of the ‘real’ Catholic agenda to ‘get even’ rather than to get equal. To add to this ambivalence, the ‘evidence’ produced by conventional data-gathering is itself inconclusive. Consequently, since disputes persist about the nature of intercommunal inequalities and about the impact of programmes designed to redress them, such quarrels are a particularly intractable challenge for conflict resolution in contested cities.

In terms of structure, the article first examines changes in the socioeconomic position of Northern Ireland’s two main communities (known as community differentials) and complements this analysis with a case study of socioeconomic change within a set of small areas in the deeply contested and segregated city of Belfast, supplemented with data about attitudinal change. Secondly, it draws together the insights from these empirical data for their potential relevance to central dilemmas about the relationship between cohesion and inclusion in Britain. Thirdly, it relates these particular features to Britain’s policy discourse about identity, diversity and equity in its multiethnic context, and then concludes with some reflections about these issues in both places.

Cohesion and Inclusion in Northern Ireland

Central to the Northern Ireland conflict has been a set of interpenetrating issues around identity, territory and nationality, with political and intercommunal violence an important part of the mix (Wright, 1992; Cash, 1996; McGarry and O’Leary, 1996; Murtagh, 2002; and Tonge, 2006). Claim and counter-claim have been made about the causes of the inequalities disproportionately experienced by Catholics (Booroah, 2000) and the extent to which the issues of equity and exclusion helped to feed the political conflict. Insights on the Catholic/Nationalist/Republican perspectives on these issues are to be found, for example, in Farrell (1980), Purdie (1990), O’Connor (1993) and Coogan (1995). Insights into the perspectives of the Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist side are evident in, for example, Bruce (1994), Porter (1996), Shirlow and McGovern (1997) and Aughey (2005). There is no intention here of reviewing the voluminous literature about this issue, but rather to explore an additional dimension. A range of policy initiatives, claiming to address such differences, were launched over two decades. It is of interest to assess their impact and, indeed, whether the outcomes generated had a positive influence on community cohesion.

The Targeting Social Need (TSN) strategy was introduced in 1991. As its title suggests, the strategy was ambiguous about whether it was primarily designed to address differences between Catholics and Protestants or to prioritise the needs of the most disadvantaged in statutory provision. The assumption was that directing resources at the ‘most needy’ would ameliorate community differentials since the poverty risk for Catholics was greater than for Protestants (Finnegan, 1998). It was a strategy rather than a programme because its objective was to ‘TSN-proof’ mainstream statutory services rather than to develop new ones. Following a critical review by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights (SACHR, 1997), it was subsequently relaunched as New TSN, which proceeded to broaden the scope of the strategy (OFMDFM, 1999) but continued to suggest that targeting those most in need would simultaneously reduce community differentials. This theme was also embedded in the Belfast Agreement (1998)—“progressively eliminating the differential in unemployment rates between the two communities by targeting objective
need”—and was translated into the Northern Ireland Programme for Government (2001) which explicitly referred to New TSN as “tackling community differentials”. Yet, New TSN presented itself as being ‘religion-blind’. Its core elements have been described as follows:

— it has a particular focus on tackling unemployment and increasing employability;
— it aims to tackle inequalities in areas such as health, education and housing; and the problems of disadvantaged areas; and
— it includes Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) through which Departments work together and with partners outside Government to identify and tackle factors which contribute to social exclusion; and to undertake positive initiatives to improve and enhance the life and circumstances of the most deprived and marginalized people in our community (OFMDFM, 2003, p. 4).

Thus, it has gradually evolved into a general strategy for social inclusion with the continuing assumption that shifting resources to the poor will also erode community differentials. This shift became most apparent when it was rebranded as an anti-poverty strategy (OFMDFM, 2006). Nevertheless, as a result of TSN, efforts to reduce socioeconomic differences between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland have been underway for almost two decades, complemented by extensive fair employment and equality programmes with an even longer history. In the light of this explosion of policy initiatives, it is reasonable to ask whether such differentials have actually changed.

Table 1 provides data on three key indicators of labour market difference between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. The employment gap measures the difference between a group’s share of the total number economically active and its share of total employment. In 1992, the employment gap was substantially greater for Catholic males than females, but over the subsequent decade fell by almost two-thirds. The unemployment differential is the ratio between the unemployment rates of two groups. Thus, in 1992, the Catholic male unemployment rate was 2.4 times that of Protestant males and, by 2001, this had fallen marginally to 2.1, while over the same period, the rate of improvement for Catholic females was greater (2.1 to 1.6). However, in a comparative analysis of the 1991 and 2001 census results, Shuttleworth and Lavery (2004) argue that the unemployment differential fell from 2.2 to 1.7 over this period. Moreover, at ward level, while Catholic religion/community background predicted about 42 per cent of the variance in unemployment rates in 1991, this had fallen to 22 per cent in 2001, albeit with the qualification that comparative unemployment rates do not fully capture relative labour market disadvantage. Nevertheless, the Shuttleworth/Lavery analysis suggests greater improvement in the comparative labour market position of Catholics in Northern Ireland. As illustrated in Table 1, the unemployment gap (the absolute difference in unemployment rates) fell dramatically for both genders, although that has to be contextualised within falling overall unemployment.

As indicated in Table 2, the data on other indicators of community differential produce a mixed picture. For example, for the ‘proportion of working-age adults in workless households’, there was steady improvement in both religious groups, but the rate of improvement was marginally better for Protestants. In contrast, the improvement for Catholics for the variable the ‘proportion of adults in work-rich households’ (where every adult works) was almost twice that of Protestants. This might suggest that some Catholics benefited from the economic growth and jobs’ increase of the 1996–2006 period, but that others were still characterised by extreme labour market disadvantage.
In short, neither Catholics nor Protestants can be characterised as a fully homogeneous group within Northern Ireland—different strata within each are either benefiting or being excluded from existing opportunity. Thus, Protestant lone parents (a group generally with the highest poverty risk; see Rowntree Foundation, 2007) improved their participation in employment at almost twice the rate of Catholic lone parents, while Protestant working-age economic inactivity increased alongside a decrease in the Catholic rate.

Finally, the percentage of working-age Catholics without educational qualifications (or geographical location) might account for some of the community differentials that appear in the data. Dignam (2003a), for example, concludes that perhaps half of the differential can be explained by such structural factors. At the same time, other researchers, like Shuttleworth and Lavery (2004), suggest that differences in educational qualifications have all but disappeared.

While much of the analysis has focused on differential access to the labour market and qualifications, the impact of such differences also appears in comparatively lower incomes and relatively greater deprivation. For example, the family expenditure survey (NISRA, 1999) pointed to lower average incomes for Catholic households (but relatively similar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Employment differentials, 1992–2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment gap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment differential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment gap</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Other community differential indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of working-age adults in workless households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of working-age adults in work-rich households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of lone parents of working age in employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-age economic inactivity rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons of working age without qualifications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

expenditure averages) made worse by their greater average size. The family resources survey (NISRA, 2006, p. 75) found higher percentages of Protestant households on very low incomes (for example, 57 per cent of households with incomes less than £100 per week, while Catholic households made up 27 per cent) and on very high incomes (53 per cent of those with £1000 or more per week, while Catholic households accounted for 36 per cent of this group), which can be accounted for, in part, by differential household structure.

However, Dignam’s (2003b) analysis of households in the bottom 30 per cent of the income distribution (i.e. 60 per cent of median household income) found that the respective Catholic and Protestant participation in that income group did change over time. Dignam calculated both low-income risk (the percentage of the group whose incomes fell within the bottom 30 per cent) and low-income concentration (the former weighted by its share of the total population). He found that the low-income risk for Catholic households fell over the decade, as did their low-income concentration, (despite an increase in their share of the population)

Considering all individuals, therefore, the picture presented ... is one of a steady, albeit slow narrowing in community differentials in low-income risk and concentration (Dignam, 2003b, p. 84).

Elsewhere, he suggests that the relative improvement had much to do with increased economic growth in the 1990s

— Total regional employment grew at an average rate of 1.8 percent per annum. Amongst Catholics the average rate of growth was 2.7 percent per annum while Protestant employment expanded by 1.2 percent per annum.

— The regional unemployment rate was more than halved, from 15 percent to under seven percent. Unemployment fell amongst both Catholics and Protestants, but the fall was steeper for Catholics (Dignam, 2003a, p. 27).

Community differentials are most visible in segregated urban areas. Belfast offers the classic example. This city accounted for about 40 per cent of all deaths resulting from political violence between 1969 and 1999 despite containing less than 20 per cent of the regional population. Its experience of intercommunal violence is exemplified by the fact that almost two-thirds of all sectarian killings happened within its boundaries (Fay et al., 1999; Morrissey and Smyth, 2001). At the time of the 2001 census, over half of its population lived in areas that were either 90 per cent of Catholic community background or 90 per cent Protestant community background. Moreover, nearly half of the region’s most deprived Super Output Areas (the most deprived 10 per cent) are found within the city (NISRA, 2005). Thus, it is an important case study for exploring the relationship between cohesion and exclusion.

While research at individual and household levels suggests a relative improvement in the socioeconomic position of Catholics in Northern Ireland, analyses of multiple deprivation within Belfast have continued to show high concentrations of Catholics in the most deprived areas. Different spatial units of analysis complicate comparison of measures of multiple deprivation over time. Moreover, different studies employ different variables as indicators of deprivation and different methodologies to group their variables into an aggregate index.
Nevertheless, such measures of multiple deprivation are used in the targeting of important social and urban programmes. Thus, those who qualify for these resources are made eligible by their location in areas deemed to be deprived, even though evidently not all deprived people live within their boundaries and not all those who do are actually individually deprived. Because of the use of such measures as targeting instruments for policy, it is important to see how the relative position of Catholics and Protestants has changed over the period in which such deprivation studies have been undertaken.

A simple comparison for Belfast is shown in Figure 1, based on the Northern Ireland multiple deprivation measure (MDM). Here, super output areas have been differentiated as mainly Catholic community background (75 per cent or more Catholic), mainly Protestant community background (75 per cent or more Protestant) and mixed community background (no less than 30 per cent or more than 60 per cent of either community background). Figure 1 compares the MDM scores for each super output area in each set (54 mainly Catholic, 58 mainly Protestant and 26 mixed).

Remembering that higher scores signify greater levels of deprivation, it can be seen that, in general, the distribution of scores within mainly Catholic super output areas is higher than for Protestant super output areas, even though some of the latter have scores at least as high as in the top of the scale. There are far fewer mixed areas, although these are concentrated at the lower end of the distribution, suggesting that such integrated areas have less extremes of deprivation than those either mainly Catholic or mainly Protestant.

How have the patterns of spatial deprivation between religions changed over time? Because of differences in spatial units and methodologies employed, some caution must be expressed about making such comparison. The method employed here was to compare two deprivation studies (1994 and 2005) selecting the smallest spatial unit used in each (enumeration districts in the former and census output areas in the latter) to capture

Figure 1. Multiple deprivation measure scores in Belfast.
as many ‘pockets’ of deprivation as possible; ranking them from most to least deprived; selecting the top decile of most deprived and the bottom decile of the least deprived; and, calculating the respective percentages of all Catholics/of Catholic community background and Protestants/of Protestant community background in the most and least deprived deciles.

In both years, Catholics/of Catholic Community Background make up a majority of those in the most deprived decile and a minority of those in the least deprived decile (Table 3). However, by 2005, their share of the least deprived decile was about equal to their share of the city population. Moreover, the percentage of all Catholics living in the most deprived decile fell by four percentage points, while the percentage living in the least deprived decile grew by over four percentage points. Despite all of the inherent difficulties in making such comparisons over time, there is some indication of an improvement in the relative position of Catholics/of Catholic community background with respect to deprivation. Moreover, there is a significant association between deprivation and political violence in Belfast. If ward rates for deaths from political violence per 1000 population are correlated with ward deprivation scores (Robson et al., 1994), the coefficient is 0.7—in short, the level of deprivation in a local area predicts about half its experience of political violence.

To explore further how such issues materialise within some of the city’s segregated, micro spaces, data were generated for six local communities. Four were selected from within north and west Belfast where both deprivation and intercommunal violence have been concentrated. Two were selected from within south Belfast, which is the most affluent and least residentially segregated part of the city. The six communities chosen should be seen as three spatially contiguous pairs

- Protestant Tiger’s Bay and Catholic New Lodge in north Belfast;
- Catholic Markets and Protestant Donegall Pass in south Belfast; and
- Catholic Lower Falls and Protestant Shankill in west Belfast.

Their size and composition by community background (religion) are described in Table 4. Considerable variation in population size is apparent with, for example, the Shankill area (the largest) being almost five times that of the Markets (the smallest). All are characterised by high levels of residential segregation—five have over 90 per cent of their population of one or other of the dominant community backgrounds. The exception is Donegall Pass where just less than one in seven of the population were registered with Catholic community background — due to the more porous boundary with nearby Catholic areas. It

Table 3. Comparison of religion and spatial deprivation, Belfast, 1991 and 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Deprivation 1991</th>
<th>Deprivation 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Protestant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage living in most deprived decile</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage living in the least deprived decile</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of the most deprived decile (ENDs or OAs)</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of least deprived decile (ENDs or OAs)</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>80.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: calculated from Robson et al. (1994) and NISRA (2005).
should be noted that areas of predominantly Protestant community background tended to have higher percentages of their populations recorded with no community background (i.e. born outside Northern Ireland—mainly other parts of the UK, although in Donegall Pass, with almost 10 per cent of its population of neither Catholic or Protestant community background, there is a considerable number of ethnic Chinese). The economic activity of these populations is described in Table 5.

In five of the six areas, the share of the 16–74-year-old male population economically inactive is greater than 50 per cent, compared with 37 per cent for Belfast. In the same five areas, the economic inactivity rate for women was over 60 per cent—at least 10 percentage points higher than the city average. The exceptional area in this respect was Donegall Pass, with an economic activity rate similar to Belfast as a whole. The same was true for the percentages of males and females in employment, possibly explainable by the area’s proximity to the city’s main centre for restaurants and leisure services. The employment rates in all other areas were lower than city averages for both genders.

**Table 5.** Economic activity of the population aged 16–74, 2001 (percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Employee</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
<th>Full-time student</th>
<th>Economically inactive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Males</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiger’s Bay</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Lodge</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>52.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Falls</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shankill</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>53.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markets</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>50.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donegall Pass</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Females</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiger’s Bay</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>62.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Lodge</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>66.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Falls</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>68.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shankill</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markets</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>68.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donegall Pass</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>52.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, employment rates in areas of predominantly Catholic background were lower as unemployment and economic inactivity rates were higher. Five of these areas have lower economic activity than that for the relevant population in the city as a whole. Yet, even within this group with labour market disadvantage, predominantly Catholic areas appear to be more so. Within the unemployed, the long-term percentages were higher in the predominantly Protestant areas, but the percentage of the unemployed who had never worked was higher in the predominantly Catholic areas—possibly associated with their lower average ages.

Interestingly, the population percentages for the economically active in full-time study appear to be higher in the predominantly Catholic areas. However, there does not appear to be a clear educational attainment advantage for the predominantly Catholic areas. Figure 2 depicts the percentage of the 16–74-year-old population possessing educational qualifications ranging from GCSEs (level 1) to 'A' levels and degrees (levels 3, 4 or 5).

The Shankill area's population had the highest percentage without any qualifications, followed by the Catholic areas—New Lodge and the Lower Falls. In five areas, over 60 per cent of the 16–74-year-old population had no educational qualifications. In four, less than one in five had educational qualifications at level 2 or above. Once again, Donegall Pass stands out with the lowest percentage without qualifications (although 51 per cent compared with a city average of 41 per cent) and the highest with level 3 or above. However, there were no systematic differences by the community backgrounds of these areas.

Because each area is composed of idiosyncratic collections of census output areas, it is difficult to apply multiple deprivation scores. To get an indication of the relative deprivation position of each area, the ranks for each set of census output areas were averaged. This exercise puts New Lodge, the Lower Falls and Shankill within the most deprived decile of census output areas; Tiger’s Bay would be in the second and the remaining two in the third decile. Given that two of the predominantly Catholic areas were in the most deprived decile, it might be argued that these suffer greater relative disadvantage. However,
Shankill is also in the most deprived decile and Tiger’s Bay is in the second most deprived. Thus, on the most recent deprivation measure for Northern Ireland, there is no clear evidence of even greater Catholic disadvantage within a set of relatively deprived micro areas.

In summary, having selected six inner urban areas that were either predominantly of Catholic or Protestant community background and compared them across a range of key economic variables in the 2001 census, analysis shows evidence of economic disadvantage in terms of economic inactivity and low employment rates in all, compared with the city average, but points to more acute economic disadvantage within the predominantly Catholic areas.

It is important to explore how such communities have changed over time. As explained in the methodology (see the Appendix), data were extracted for three censuses—1971, 1991 and 2001. Over that period, while populations of inner urban communities declined faster than in the city as a whole, the rate of decline was even greater in the predominantly Catholic areas.

It can be seen from Figure 3 that, in five of these areas, population decline was greater than in Belfast. Simultaneously, however, there were greater rates of decline in the three predominantly Protestant areas. Over the past three decades, the Catholic share of the Belfast population has steadily increased and this process is manifest in the differential rates of declines between these two sets of areas. It is difficult to measure whether population change consolidated the dominance of a single religious group within these areas since the most reliable religion indicator in the 2001 census is community background rather than the simple religion variable in the 1971 census. There are, nevertheless, indications that population change reinforced homogeneity in religious background. For example in 1971, 79.6 per cent of the population of the Falls area were recorded as Catholic. In 2001, the comparable figure for Catholic community background was 96.9 per cent. The New Lodge moved from 65.3 per cent Catholic in 1971 to 98.1 per cent Catholic community background in 2001. In 1971, the population of the Shankill area was already 87 per cent Protestant and, 30 years later, the figure for Protestant community background was 92.1 per cent.

Using the same evidence from geographically consistent census data, Shuttleworth and Lloyd (2009) explored segregation across the region as a whole and concluded that, while Northern Ireland became more...
residentially segregated between 1971 and 2001, segregation did not intensify significantly in the period 1991–2001. It should be noted that measures of residential segregation are essentially ‘snapshots’, taken at particular points in time. Hence, areas that are defined as ‘mixed’ may be actually in transition (Poole and Doherty, 1995; Boal and Royle, 2006). Utilising a spatially consistent database over a 30-year period offers a more consistent picture of change. Yet, there are limits to using census-based empirical data to understand fully the dynamics and symbolic meanings of territory, especially within a sectarian frame of reference (Anderson and Shuttleworth, 1998; Douglas and Shirlow, 1998).

How did economic activity change within these communities? In order to permit comparison across three censuses, it was necessary to simplify the variables so that like would be compared with like. This produced two key economic variables: the percentage of those economically active in employment (full-time, part-time and self-employed) and the percentage out of employment. Consequently, the variables in Table 6 are not strictly comparable with those in Table 5. Moreover, as a result of rounding errors, some of the totals are not 100 per cent.

For men, the percentage of the economically active in employment fell in five areas whereas unemployment rose, with the Markets area an exception, possibly because the boundary used here captures some of the new nearby apartments, likely to house people of medium-to-high social status. The greatest change happened in the Protestant Shankill area where employment fell from 84 per cent to 71 per cent of economically active males and the out of employment percentage almost doubled. A lower-order magnitude of change occurred in Catholic New Lodge and lower again in Protestant Tiger’s Bay, Catholic Lower Falls and Protestant Donegall Pass. There is still no evidence of distinctively different trends between the predominantly Catholic and predominantly Protestant areas. However, if each set is aggregated, there is an indication of marginal relative decline in employment in predominantly Protestant areas. In 1971, if the employment rate in the three Catholic areas is taken as 100, then the figure for the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>In employment as percentage of economically active, 1971</th>
<th>Out of employment as percentage of economically active, 1971</th>
<th>In employment as percentage of economically active, 2001</th>
<th>Out of employment as percentage of economically active, 2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiger’s Bay</td>
<td>88.2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>81.0</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Lodge</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Falls</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>65.1</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shankill</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markets</td>
<td>74.7</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donegall Pass</td>
<td>84.5</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiger’s Bay</td>
<td>93.9</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>95.9</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Lodge</td>
<td>89.9</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Falls</td>
<td>87.3</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>81.0</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shankill</td>
<td>93.7</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markets</td>
<td>86.4</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donegall Pass</td>
<td>93.7</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: calculated from the Northern Ireland Census of Population.
Protestant areas is 116. The equivalent figure for 2001 would be 111, a slight erosion of a previous advantage.

In short, analysis of change over time suggests increasing segregation by religion/community background and a marginal deterioration in the initial socioeconomic advantage of the three Protestant areas. These data point to less clear-cut conclusions than were possible from the analysis of regional socioeconomic change, but hint at a similar trend—continuing Catholic disadvantage feeding an impression of no change but marginal deterioration in the position of Protestants engendering a sense of loss. Yet, these changes occurred in the context of an ambitious framework of equality and anti-poverty measures. There is, thus, an indication that while Catholics in general have benefited from such programmes, sections of the Catholic population remain amongst the most severely deprived. Simultaneously, higher numbers of Protestants have appeared within the most deprived, measured either by income or spatial deprivation measures.

This link between segregation and policy on deprivation and regeneration is acknowledged by government targeting the most acute deprivation ... will probably result in particular neighbourhoods being predominantly one section of the community or the other, simply as a result of historical segregation between the two main communities (DSD, July 2005, p. 19).

Specifically addressing the situation in Derry/Londonderry, it is noted (DSD, 2005, p. 6) that “in many neighbourhoods, deprivation is exacerbated by religious segregation and community conflict”.

At Northern Ireland level and within some of the most segregated micro spaces of Belfast, the evidence points to a shift in the socioeconomic differences experienced by Northern Ireland’s two main communities. Such changes are not universal and suggest growing inequalities within each community as inequalities between the two have moderated, but differentials in employment, social conditions and deprivation are less stark than they once were. However, it is difficult to argue that such socioeconomic changes over the past couple of decades have produced improvement in intercommunal relations, at least as reflected by changes in community attitudes.

Changing Attitudes?

A key source for evidence on changing attitudes in the region is the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey, an annual survey carried out jointly by its two universities. The survey has contained a ‘community relations’ module that holds a set of questions about the position and treatment of the two main religious communities. Because these questions are asked in different years, there is some indication of changing attitudes over time.

In 1994, in response to the question ‘Do you think that, in general, Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland are treated equally?’ 43 per cent of Catholics and 61 per cent of Protestants replied yes. By 2003, the respective yes responses had changed to 54 per cent and 50 per cent. In short, the percentage of Catholics who believed that equal treatment operated increased while that of Protestants declined. With another question, ‘Who is usually treated better—Protestants or Catholics?’ only 1 per cent of Catholics thought Catholics were treated better and 12 per cent of Protestants thought Protestants were treated better. In contrast, 70 per cent of Catholics said that Protestants were better treated and 48 per cent of Protestants replied yes to better treatment for Catholics. Each community contained significant sections who assumed that the ‘other side’ was treated better.

Within segregated spaces, attitudes may be more pronounced. In a survey undertaken in 2001 (reported in PSC Management
COMMUNITY COHESION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Consultancy, 2003), respondents in six Belfast areas were asked how things had changed since the ceasefires

- Fifty-two per cent of those living in predominantly Protestant areas and 47.9 per cent in predominantly Catholic areas concluded that these relationships had worsened.
- A mere 14.5 per cent of those in Catholic places and 11.5 per cent in Protestant places indicated that social and economic conditions had improved.
- Just over a third indicated that such conditions were similar or unchanged.

Such divergent views are echoed in other research. For example, Jarman comments that

the hardening of territorial boundaries and conflict between communities has further increased the scale and the depth of segregation between the two major communities. Many nationalists and unionists live ever more segregated and separated lives (Jarman, 2002, p. 16).

Other assessments have been equally stark. For example, a consultation document on improving relations in Northern Ireland summarised the situation as follows

- Violence at interfaces between communities continues to affect lives, property, businesses and public services.
- Whilst levels of tolerance and respect for diversity within the Protestant and Catholic Communities had been improving, there is evidence that they have decreased recently.
- Housing has become more segregated over the last 20 years. More than 70% of Housing Executive Estates are more than 90% Protestant or more than 90% Roman Catholic.
- Around 95% of children still attend separated schools. Despite evidence that more parents would prefer this option, there has only been a small increase in the number of children attending integrated schools.
- There is little change in the extent of inter-community friendship patterns.
- In some urban areas further divisions are emerging within local communities. This is linked to paramilitary influence, especially at interfaces.
- People’s lives continue to be shaped by community division, which in some areas, plays a large part in the choices that people make about where they work, and how they use leisure facilities and public services (OFMDFM, 2003a, p. 3).

As indicated earlier, an extensive literature elaborates these features: the role of fear and safety in spatial practice (Basten and Lysaght, 2003); the durability of segregation in Belfast and the ‘ratchet’ effect whereby each conflict period has produced new and higher levels of segregation (Boal, 1995); the association between segregation and violence without inference of an uncomplicated causal relationship (Poole and Doherty, 1995); and the debilitation of regeneration effort at the most acute interfaces with their persistence of ‘peace walls’ (O’Halloran et al., 2004). Given the entrenched and intricate nature of the division, it is perhaps unsurprising that one study of European-funded interventions designed to improve inclusion and cohesion was compelled to conclude that

It is difficult to find macro indicators of the impact of the PEACE Programmes on the overall attitudes and opinions of the Northern Ireland population (Building on Peace, 2005, p. 29).

Other studies confirm a picture of entrenched attitudes (Hughes et al., 2003; Hewstone et al., 2008) and these underpin the divergent perceptions in each of the main communities about respective community capacity for development and the distribution of funding support (Cairns et al., 2003). As explained by Graham and Nash (2006),
attempts to connect equity and ‘good relations’ are problematic since such terms are understood and applied differently by each side. They note that another complication in regeneration strategies for deprived areas is that, since these same areas are most caught up in the conflict, policy can be represented as rewarding violence, thereby sustaining the predicament it is intended to solve. In their review of the consultation feedback to the main policy for creating a shared future, they detect an opposition to pluralism, an avowal of difference and a possessive sense of territory. This is borne out in a recent study of Protestant perceptions of change in Derry/Londonderry (Murtagh et al., 2008, p. 68): “In terms of equality and access to resources, 86.4% stated that Catholics are treated better in terms of provision”. From these studies, two contrary narratives are apparent: a Protestant one of loss and alienation, and a Catholic one of change, yet insistence on the need for greater equity.

**Pertinence of the Northern Ireland Experience to Britain?**

Taking this analysis, 10 key issues in the Northern Ireland arena can be identified as having possible resonance in, and relevance for, policy debate about cohesion and inclusion in Britain.

1. Intervention has been vexed by policy ambiguity, with the original scheme for ‘targeting social need’ starting out as a cohesion strategy and evolving into an inclusion strategy, without clear rationale for the transformation.

2. Close correspondence exists between those areas of acute deprivation, deepest segregation, and those that have been most vulnerable to the worst of violent conflict. Accordingly, as indicated here, the state has to pay regard to intercommunal division when applying policies of inclusion. Yet, this is not to imply any simplistic sense of state management of sectarian relationships, since such a concept implies a conspiratorial model of an undifferentiated state, which is untenably determinist.

Yet, factors such as segregation are very complex, so that, for instance, apparent increases or decreases in segregation may be due to population dynamics and transitional processes, rather than to deliberate community intention further to separate or integrate.

A range of socioeconomic indicators points to an improvement in the relative position of Catholics in general over time. However, evidence of the social mobility of sections of the Catholic population does not suggest that the disproportionate concentration within the most disadvantaged groups has been eliminated. Accordingly, it is still possible to claim that efforts to redress intercommunal differentials have not gone far enough. Simultaneously, however, Protestant participation in more disadvantaged groups has increased, feeding the belief that the relative position of the Protestant community has deteriorated.

One outcome of these changes is that the concept of Catholic and Protestant community as two homogeneous socioeconomic blocks is more inaccurate than ever before, even if the political conflict continues to be characterised mostly in terms of such polarity of religious identity.

Evidence points to very different interpretations of the nature of the changes that have occurred in Northern Ireland over the past two decades. Attempts to present ‘objective’ evidence about inter-community differentials as a means of demonstrating the impartiality of government intervention in these issues fail
because the complexity of the evidence allows each side to ‘cherry pick’ the bits that best serve a partisan perspective on relative need. Moreover, continued debate flourishes among academics and researchers about how the data can be best generated and interpreted.

(7) Such factors of problem definition, data analysis and community perceptions problematise regeneration interventions, since compensatory resource allocation demanded by the ‘community differential’ may inadvertently accentuate intercommunal enmity. At the same time, resource allocation based on ‘single identity’ development can be seen to risk encouragement for separate development.

(8) What narrowing of the ‘community differential’ that has occurred has been based on sustained intervention over considerable time, underpinned by an equality agenda and related legalistic framework, and operated through a period of mostly economic and fiscal expansion.

(9) In many analyses of attitudinal survey data, segregation is seen to be related to separatism and insularity, which in turn are taken to be linked to hardening of attitude to the other community.

(10) No clear evidence emerges that improvement in the equity and inclusion target, as reflected in the narrowing of the community differential, has achieved a corresponding improvement in cohesion, at least as reflected in attitude surveys and related research.

The second main section of the article turns now to current debates in Britain about community cohesion and social inclusion to examine the extent to which their intersection echoes many of the difficult engagements in Northern Ireland about the links among community relations, equity and inclusive governance, and to identify whether any aspect of our analysis has bearing on policy in Britain.

Cohesion and Inclusion in Britain

As a multi-ethnic, multifaith society, Britain has 10 per cent of its population who cast themselves as from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background, with some 8 per cent of the population having been born in another country. Yet these average figures cover great regional disparity. One in every three people in London is from a minority ethnic background, compared with less than one in 20 people who reside in the South West and North East regions (CLG, 2009a).

The past decade in Britain has witnessed disturbances in places like Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in 2001, and in Birmingham in 2005; tabloid headlines about extensive economic and political migration; electoral advances by the British National Party in places like Burnley, Blackburn and Halifax; and terrorist bombing in London. Such issues have been congregated in a restricted but persistent debate about identity and citizenship in a pluralist society within a transnational world. Similar agendas have emerged elsewhere in Europe (Dunkerly et al., 2002). Although these have been most notable in Holland and in France (Baruma, 2006), across Europe there has been a pronounced concern about protecting cohesion amid increasing diversity (Council of Europe, 2000; European Commission, 2001).

While these disputes have often assumed a particular focus—for instance, about the wearing of burqas, veils or other faith symbols in public spaces—overarching much of contemporary controversy is a macro discord. Usually represented as a cultural collision between revolutionary Islamic sects and those they regard as infidels, and champions of a new global hegemony rooted in acquisitive materialism and secularism, this
dimension escalates the stakes involved. No longer is the concern simply about sporadic racial riots and public disorder at urban and national levels. Rather, it can now be framed in terms of ‘global terrorism’ and new mega geographies such as the ‘axis of evil’.

Thus, although the *leitmotif* of ‘community cohesion’ has an obvious local connotation, the genesis and ramifications of such conflict are seen increasingly from a global perspective. The concept entered the political lexicon in Britain following the 2001 disturbances there (CRE, 2002). Although a precise definition has remained elusive, critical components include: the need to steer isolated and insular communities towards a mutual vision of a shared future; a sense of common attachment; a positive appreciation of different cultural backgrounds; and equity and opportunity for all (Local Government Association, 2002). An examination of the challenges facing a multiethnic Britain (Parekh, 2000) emphasised that building such social adhesives should not imply a coercive uniformity rooted in one dominant culture. Rather, it should be based on common values such as democratic dialogue, equality, tolerance and compromise.

These views were developed further in the Cantle Report (2001). Recounting their study visits across the country, the team expressed surprise not at the degree of segregation, but rather at the extent of polarisation. In their ‘parallel lives’, people living in divided communities were seen to operate in mutual ignorance and fear. Cantle argued that, while there was little current evidence of open honest debate about this separatism, a new agenda had to be initiated, designed to define citizenship in a multiethnic Britain. The central purpose was to generate an intercommunal bond “based upon a greater knowledge of, contact between, and respect for, the various cultures” (Cantle Report, 2001, p. 25). Yet elsewhere in the report, the formidable challenge of this objective is conceded Community cohesion ... is about helping micro-communities to gel or mesh into an integrated whole. These divided communities would need to develop common goals and a shared vision. This would seem to imply that such groups should occupy a common sense of place as well. The high levels of residential segregation found in many English towns would make it difficult to achieve community cohesion (Cantle Report, 2001, App. C, p. 70).

Recent years have witnessed a series of conferences and publications which have explored these themes in greater detail, concluding that alienation and division stem from a complex interplay of factors such as: deficits in civic identity; fragmentation of communities; disengagement of youth from decision-making; weak community and political leadership; high levels of unemployment and deprivation; activities of extremist groups; and the role of both police and media (Clarke, 2001; Home Office, 2003; 2004; Ager and Strang, 2004; Ritchie, 2001; Denham Report, 2001; Runnymede Trust, 2002 and 2003). In the following review of the policy discourse, the issues raised earlier from the Northern Ireland experience are used as a lens through which to examine the way government in particular has framed the debate in Britain.

First, there has also been policy ambiguity. In part, this is due to an ahistorical analysis, ignoring lessons from earlier research and previous interventions such as Scarman in the 1980s, and inventing new tags such as ‘community cohesion’, which may add little nuance beyond familiar terms such as ‘race relations’. Long term, there has been a shift from assimilationist to multicultural positions; to concerns that multiculturalism has encouraged identity politics and an incongruent set of disparate communities; to critics of current policy who think that a more genuinely transnational and intercultural pluralism is demanded in a globalised world.

Moreover, there is a conflation of four distinctive themes: social distance among
diverse groups; political radicalisation within militant Islam; growing political distrust and attrition of electoral legitimacy; and the value of community empowerment. In short, understanding of cohesion stems from a jumbled composite of themes about 'community pathology', the alienated underclass and 'radicalised' Muslim youth. The effect is to problematise certain populations, elevate religion and ethnicity over other pertinent categories such as class and gender, and invest undue confidence in the restorative power of community (Forrest and Kearns, 2001), as government sources the solution to all these issues in the redemptive capacity of 'community cohesion' (Robinson, 2005).

In promoting community capacity for conflict resolution, the focus is on a consensual approach. Yet, some prescriptions contain highly contestable features. For instance, the assimilationist assumptions underpinning it indicate the value-laden aspect of the term (Robinson, 2005) that recalls simplistic notions of unitary national identity as defined by the 'host community' (Soysal, 1994). Then, there is a problem of policy consistency. Strategies to reduce ethno-spatial segregation do not easily accord with government support for more faith schools, which may intensify social distance between ethno-religious groups. Another example comes from the policy on social mixing. If this is associated with gentrification

It is ironic that a process that results in segregation and polarisation—gentrification—is being promoted via social mix policies as the ‘positive’ solution to segregation (Lees, 2008, p. 2463).

Finally here, ‘community cohesion’ is not an automatic precursor to wider social cohesion. Policies designed to build bonding capital in the local community may unintentionally impede the bridging capital for wider civic mutuality. Ferlander and Timms (1999, p. 9) talk about social rather than community cohesion, suggesting that the former requires participation to extend across the confines of local communities, knitting them together into a wider whole. This is important given that it is feasible to find cohesion within increasingly divided neighbourhoods (Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Bollens, 1999). This confusion besets government strategy. As explained in the White Paper, the objective is to create

thrusting places in which a fear of difference is replaced by a shared set of values and a shared sense of purpose and belonging ... [a process of] resolving tensions and bringing people together (CLG, 2006a, p. 153).

Yet, elsewhere, it is argued that

Stronger local leadership, greater resident participation in decisions and an enhanced role for community groups can help all local areas to promote community cohesion (CLG, 2006a, p. 12).

While there is a similar recognition about the need to understand the links between deprivation and cohesion, many reports acknowledge the complexity. For instance

Deprivation remains a key influencer of cohesion, but the fact that some areas have high deprivation and high cohesion shows that local action can build resilience to its effects (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007, p. 8).

Yet, the linked issue of segregation often is not contextualised sufficiently within historical frames such as the legacy of colonialism and the disputatious meanings attached to identity communities.

Overall, much of the discourse has emphasised the risk of ethnic and cultural diversity threatening social solidarity and connectedness (Cheong et al., 2007). In contrast, Flint and Robinson (2008, p. 1) dispute the alarmist sentiments expressed in some reports and media, remarking how “Britain is more and more often portrayed as a
broken society”. Indeed, some studies (Phillips, 1998; Johnston et al., 2002; Simpson, 2004; Dorling and Thomas, 2004; and Burgess et al., 2005) suggest a counter-narrative of growing acculturation by those communities with an immigrant origin.

Finney and Simpson (2009) go further in their repudiation of government thinking, arguing that the retreat from multiculturalism can become a regressive agenda about race. Their *riposte* includes a series of rebuttals about how data about segregation and inter-ethnic animosity are being mis-used to infer the burden of diversity. Their counter-evidence asserts the growth of mixed-ethnicity friendship groups, greater tolerance rather than rampant racial unrest, and a demand for more mixed schooling and mixed neighbourhoods rather than ethnic isolation. Taking Bradford as an example often cited about growth of the ghetto, they claim that only 3 of the 30 wards in the district contain half or more of a population from ethnic groups other than White, and each of these has over a quarter of White residents.

Yet, some critics on the left are not mourning the apparent demise of multiculturalism since they see in its appropriation by the state a form of pacification

as the politics of black communities became radicalised, mere survival in Britain was not enough. Those who were born and grew up here wanted to remake society, not just be tolerated within it ... Multiculturalism now meant taking black culture off the streets—where it had been politicised and turned into a rebellion against the state—and putting it in the council chamber, in the classroom and on the television, where it could be institutionalised, managed and reified (Kundnani, 2002, p. 4).

Similar to Northern Ireland, what such arguments show is that in conditions of division there will be contested readings of the ‘evidence’ and an understandable dispute about the politics of cohesion.

Also similar to Northern Ireland, the ‘cohesion’ agenda is supposed to be tied to the regeneration one. Thus

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit has refocused its efforts on mainstreaming community cohesion and conflict resolution within the neighbourhood renewal policies (CLG, 2009b, p. 1).

As noted by a recent study of community attitudes

Deprivation and disadvantage played a pivotal role in neighbourhood relationships. Racial tensions were often driven by struggles for resources such as employment and housing. Respondents talked about the ‘unfairness’ of resource allocation (Hudson et al., 2007, p. 1).

This echoes an earlier Rowntree Foundation study (1999, p. 1), which found that “regeneration initiatives had sometimes reinforced existing divisions”. Moreover, these are not always just between the White settled population and others. Competition for urban resources can also be acute between Blacks and Asians (Latchford, 2006). Importantly, there is increasing recognition of the need to ensure that public programmes do not themselves create or exacerbate community conflict in the context of greater diversity. For example, the Commission on Integration and Cohesion states

A new issue that we need to address is that settled communities are worried about the fair allocation of public services—with some thinking immigrants and minorities are getting special treatment. (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007, p. 9).

And,

urban areas that have two segregated and entrenched communities (such as the Northern Towns) alongside a picture of multiple deprivation have issues with cohesion—particularly where communities
feel they must compete to access sometimes scarce resource (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007, p. 31).

In its review of how regeneration policy met its race equality duty, the Commission for Racial Equality was very critical: overall, government commitment did not always filter down into the specific regeneration programmes and policies we examined, which were rarely developed on the basis of hard evidence of their possible implications for racial equality and good race relations (Commission for Racial Equality, 2007, p. 3).

An even more pointed view of the conflictive relationship between regeneration and cohesion comes from Kundnani's analysis of the role of ‘gatekeeper’ community leaders in the process since the mid 1980s. The surrogate voice for their own ethnically defined fiefdoms ... entered into a pact with the authorities; they were to cover up and gloss over black community resistance in return for free rein in preserving their own patriarchy. It was a colonial arrangement, which prevented community leaders from making radical criticisms, for fear that funding for their pet projects would be jeopardised. Different ethnic groups were pressed into competing for grants for their areas. The result was that black communities became fragmented, horizontally by ethnicity, vertically by class (Kundnani, 2002, pp. 4–5).

This relates to another debate in Northern Ireland about the relative efficacy of single identity over cross-community development. Although affirming that those communities with bonding social capital are more prone to bridge, the Commission for Integration and Cohesion notes

We have also looked closely at the approach being taken in Northern Ireland, which clearly states that approaches that reinforce segregation must be challenged. Although the policy recognises that in order to address fears, suspicions and concerns it may first be necessary to develop single identity projects, it is clear that single identity work can entrench attitudes and stereotypes and can only ever be partial in a community where others share the public space (Commission for Integration and Cohesion, 2007).

While there is a tendency in Northern Ireland to view segregation as irredeemably negative, some analysis has distinguished the ‘cleansing’ and ‘polarisation’ forms from the more voluntary clustering across a ‘spectrum’ of segregation (Boal, 1999) and such appreciation of differential spatial congregation accords with much of recent literature (Varady, 2005). Yet, in Britain’s recent discourse about this aspect, some connotations hold a hint of ‘moral panic’ about ethnoreligious fanaticism, reinforced in the wider debate by hyperbolic rhetoric about a society ‘sleepwalking’ into deepening socio-ethno segregation. For instance, one recent report acknowledges the superficiality of some of this stark analysis

the mood of pessimism that some hold is not justified. Excessive coverage about residential segregation for example serves to spread a view that the whole of England is spatially segregated. It overstates and oversimplifies the problem and leaves us ‘sleepwalking into simplicity’ (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007, p. 3).

Moreover, as in Northern Ireland, a more sophisticated view of segregation recognises that the proposed alternative of ‘mixed community’ does not offer a utopian prospect of improved relations. As Amin notes

The distinctive feature of mixed neighbourhoods is that they are communities without community ... [they] need to be accepted as the spatially open, culturally heterogeneous, and socially variegated spaces that they are, not imagined as future cohesive or integrated communities (Amin, 2002, p. 972).
Nor does the shift to tenure mix automatically deliver social mix (Camina and Wood, 2009).

Another criticism raised in Britain is that emphasis on culture can understate the significance of structure, including factors such as economic dislocation, racism and discrimination (Zetter et al., 2006). The deceptively hegemonic connotation of cohesion can mask the expedience of its ecumenical political appeal. As noted by Maloutas and Malouta (2004, p. 452).

Taking it at face value limits its scope to a vague positive target, on which almost anyone can agree, but which can at times legitimize policies that do not really face issues of oppression and inequality (Maloutas and Malouta, 2004, p. 452).

This 'empty signifier' character of the term is similar to other related terms such as social inclusion, which contains potentially contradictory redistributive, integrationist and underclass dimensions (Levitas, 2005). Such ambivalence can deliver crude analysis of the links between diversity and cohesion (Wetherell et al., 2007). For instance, one study has disputed the assumption that disturbances in Bradford were due to the cultural distance of the ethnic minority population from 'the host community'. Rather, it was the very fact that the former shared the aspirations of the latter that made their actual experience of marginalisation the cause of deep resentment (McGhee, 2005). While the mood music of urban deprivation is still playing audibly in the background, is the policy here intended to subordinate class-based disparity to cultural differentiation and, rather than promote greater equality, to settle for a more modest and less measurable equality of opportunity? This consideration is part of a wider concern that the identity politics that marks contemporary public discourse is often detached from wider distributive issues (Yacobi and Tzfadia, 2009).

This is reflected in a series of reports which note people’s concern that equality, particularly racial inequality, has become subordinated to community cohesion (Institute of Community Cohesion, 2006). The ‘community differential’ in Britain needs to be contextualised in the dislocations attending the new global economy, including rising social inequality (Carr, 2006). While inequality in Britain became more pronounced in the Tory years of the 1980s and 1990s, it has not shifted significantly since then. As stated by Brewer et al.

Despite a large package of redistributive measures, the net effect of seven years of Labour government is to leave inequality effectively unchanged (Brewer et al., 2005, p. 1).

This conclusion is endorsed by the most recent analysis from the Office for National Statistics which claims that:

Income inequality still remains high by historical standards—the large increase which took place in the second half of the 1980s has not been reversed (ONS, 2007, p. 1).

Indeed, recent evidence suggests that UK income inequality may be increasing again (Jones, 2007). Yet, within this pattern of deprivation, the risk of social exclusion is greater for those from ethnic minorities, who are more likely to be poor and unemployed, live in disadvantaged areas among unpopular and overcrowded housing, and endure the impact of racial discrimination (Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, 2000 and 2003; Rowntree Foundation, 2007; CLG, 2009b). In an extensive research literature review since 1991, Platt (2007) found a clear ‘ethnic penalty’ (the disadvantage associated with a particular ethnic category that persists once controlling for relevant characteristics). Thus, she concluded that all identified minority ethnic groups in the UK experienced higher rates of poverty than the average for the population, with rates reaching nearly two-thirds for the worst afflicted group, the Bangladeshi.

Again, the work factor is significant here and
a recent study of the relationship between diversity and the dynamics of the labour market confirms the ‘ethnic penalty’ (Clark and Drinkwater, 2007). However, there is some evidence of a narrowing of Britain’s ‘community differential’. In terms of key indicators such as employment, housing, educational attainment and health, the most recent data show a reduction of the gap between ethnic minorities and the rest of the population. Yet, despite positive trends, disparities remain marked and, just as in Northern Ireland, differences are apparent within these broad population categories (CLG, 2009b).

However, attitudinal polling evidence in England (CLG, 2009a) suggests that ethnic minority populations do not feel less attachment either to their local community or to the country than their White fellow citizens.7 In fact in 2007/08, compared with White people, those from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background were slightly more prone to feel a strong sense of attachment to their neighbourhood (77 per cent compared with 75 per cent) and to Britain (85 per cent and 84 per cent). Moreover, within a notably very low sense of political power among the public, 48 per cent of people from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic population believe that they can influence decisions impacting on their local area, compared with 37 per cent of White people. The figures for influencing decisions affecting Britain as a whole were 34 per cent and 19 per cent respectively.

Thus, Britain’s issue of community cohesion has to be seen in a context of the general persistence of social inequality, itself unequally experienced by ethnic minorities. Although only some reduction of this gap is detectable, research and government data show strong and growing social attachment and sense of inclusion on the part of ethnic minorities, rather than the putative disaffection in the more foreboding depictions. In this regard, there is a difference with Northern Ireland. Partly, this is due to the different emphasis on cohesion in both places. Whereas in Britain, there has been concern about ‘common belonging’ and the greater integration of society, in Northern Ireland, given its durable sovereignty contest, there is a more modest ambition of ‘good relations’ between the traditional contesting communities, while they sort out their nationalist attachments in the longer term. Yet, even when the focus in Britain does turn to interethnic relations, there is convincing evidence of mixing. For most ethnic minority young people, half or more of their friends are White, with less than 20 per cent of minorities born in Britain having friends only from their own racial background (Finney and Simpson, 2009). Moreover, successive British social attitude surveys over the past quarter of a century show the White population to be growing less racially prejudiced. However, a substantial survey (Abrams and Houston, 2006) discovered a more textured response to these issues. Whereas 18 per cent of Whites reported suffering prejudice or discrimination, the figures for Blacks and Asians were 64 per cent and 66 per cent respectively; acceptance as British was higher when a person was White, a native English speaker and from a Judeo-Christian background; fewer than 40 per cent of the population expressed positive feelings about Muslims; and a sizeable minority considered that attempts to give equal employment opportunity had gone too far in favour of Black and Muslim people.

Final Considerations

Despite difference in extent and intensity of division in Northern Ireland compared with Britain, both places show that there is no simple connection between interventions to redress inequalities and enhance inclusion and those designed to promote social cohesion. While both places have cultural and equity policy components, it may be argued that, for most of the past decade, the equity
issue has been more prominent in Northern Ireland and the cultural concern more prominent in Britain. For those in Britain who insist that there should be greater attention to deprivation and inequality in the cohesion agenda than hitherto, the example of Northern Ireland does not yet show conclusive proof that improvement in equity and social inclusion yields corresponding improvement in cohesion—although the equity drive is essential in its own terms.

The narrowing of ‘community differential’ in Northern Ireland—however modest or marked it may be considered—has had a long time-lag in showing results and has operated in a Keynesian state that, over much of the past decade, has enjoyed improved economic circumstance. By contrast, the cohesion-inclusion agenda in Britain is rolling out now in much less favourable economic and fiscal circumstance.

Similar patterns to Northern Ireland—such as competitive frictions about the distribution of urban regeneration resources—are most discernible in the limited examples of strongly segregated communities in Britain. In both places, regeneration policy targets investment at small spatial units of ‘neighbourhood renewal’. Apart from losing the spatial economy of size and scope demanded by the new urban economics, this narrow spatial focus also means that emphasis can be on single-identity communities and the inadvertent accentuation of intercommunal division that can attend rivalry over the relatively modest allocations. Again in both cases, while social exclusion and inequality are significant drivers of intercommunal tensions, the complication of the relationship between exclusion and cohesion is also evident in the way rival communities can view the same ‘evidence’ about disadvantage and disparity, and arrive at contrary interpretation.

In both cases, the problem with the rubric of ‘community’ is that living in the same place does not automatically confer common identity. The link between the situational and relational is more ambiguous than that (Wolch and DeVerteuil, 2001; Delanty, 2003).

Where ‘community’ in such places is primarily about boundary, it is inherently an exclusionary concept, thereby offering a problematic spatial scale for the inclusive objectives of cohesion (Imrie and Raco, 2003). For instance, one definition of community cohesion suggests that an observable sign of progress would be if groups who reside in a local area get together to advance or defend some common local interest (Cantle Report, 2001). Yet, such communitarianism can yield partisan outcomes in contested cities.

In both places, building a more shared identity has been taken to entail three main strands: first, a robust set of equality, anti-discrimination and hate crime legislation that demonstrates the state’s unequivocal protection of equity; secondly, improving socio-economic opportunity to tackle entrenched interethnic disparity; and, thirdly, a cultural dimension to the promotion of cohesion, that prioritises proactive approaches to greater interaction among diverse populations, emphasising shared values, and amplifying the mutual attachments and solidarities that can create shared identity. Many advocates of this composite strategy acknowledge its potential shortcomings: that increasing contact among diverse groups does not guarantee improved relations since it may be either too insubstantial to make any impact or too threatening to reverse the mistrust and anxiety that feed prejudice; that attention to cultural aspects can distract from redress of socioeconomic inequality; that ‘shared identity’ may be misconceived as a master identity that surpasses all other components of a multiple identity; that the disquieting exclusivity behind some identity formation may stigmatise the outsider; and that the multiculturalism that respects diversity may be misconstrued as a separatist alternative to social integration (Muir, 2007). Such
reservations serve to confirm yet again the difficult interface of cohesion and inclusion in contested space.

Notes

1. It is acknowledged that the terms ‘Catholic’ and ‘Protestant’ are inexact proxies for more complicated categories of ethno-nationalist difference. However, these are the standard terms used in the data generated about both main communities (for example, religion has been a variable in the Northern Ireland censuses since 1971) and it would be inconsistent if we did not apply them in our analysis of those data.

2. For instance, capturing intercommunal social and economic differences relies, in the main, on small-area data generated from the census. The changing structure of wards and different variables sets in different censuses make comparison across time difficult. Yet, although the imperative is to capture changes in patterns of inequality over decades, there remain substantial difficulties in identifying such changes from datasets that are, themselves, changing over time.

3. Because of the numbers who declare ‘no religion’ in the Northern Ireland census (14 per cent in 2001), a supplementary question was asked in 2001 about the religion the individual was ‘brought up in’. This generates a variable known as ‘community background’ that covers a significantly higher proportion of the Northern Ireland population.

4. For example, the Northern Ireland 1990s study (Robson et al., 1994) was based on census enumeration districts and a ward structure developed in 1984, whereas the 2000s’ study (NISRA, 2005) was primarily constructed around super output areas: subsets of wards defined in 1992. In Belfast, ward changes between 1984 and 1992 involved the creation of a new ward (Musgrave), the extinction of an old one (St Annes) and the redrawing of boundaries of wards with the same names.

5. The Northern Ireland multiple deprivation measure (2005) does give a deprivation score for each census output area—economic deprivation that is made up of three domains: employment deprivation (weighted 41.7 per cent), income deprivation (weighted 41.7 per cent) and proximity to services (16.6 per cent). Thus, each census output area has a deprivation score and rank within Northern Ireland.

6. The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey samples from the general population rather than those living in areas of intercommunity tension. These data were employed, however, to explore whether there have been measurable impacts of decades of ‘community relations’ work. Since Life and Times contains a module on community relations with identical questions asked in successive years, it can be used as an indicator of changes in attitude. Surveys in ‘interface areas’ tend to utilise micro samples and are not repeated in successive years. They are consequently less useful in tracking attitudinal change.

7. It is recognised that ‘White’ increasingly includes populations from places such as eastern Europe.

References


1114

FRANK GAFFIKIN AND MIKE MORRISSEY


Appendix. Methodology

Empirical evidence on the relationship between cohesion and exclusion in Belfast was generated as follows. First, a review was undertaken of available data on the relative social position of Catholics and Protestants in 


Northern Ireland—a core focus of a strategy to address intercommunity inequalities, known as Targeting Social Need. The issue considered here is whether recent evidence (over the past decade) suggests that economic and social differences between these religious groups have widened or narrowed.

In reviewing six Belfast communities, many difficulties beset the profiling of small geographical areas over time. For instance, they do not fit conveniently into common administrative spatial units such as wards. In this case, each spatial community was constructed from sets of Census Output Areas that best approximated their geographical coverage and these were identified using maps provided by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. Data from the Census Output Areas were then aggregated to give a set of values for each of the six communities. There are two main problems with this exercise: first, even output areas may cover some territory that is outside what is regarded as a particular community; secondly, at this micro level, some data values may be changed for confidentiality reasons—the aggregation of data to ward level cancels out such changes, but this does not necessarily happen when the aggregation refers to spaces other than administrative boundaries. Despite such problems, the method chosen was still regarded as offering the best approximation of actual spatial communities.

At the same time, ward designations change over time, making it difficult to capture the important changes in such communities through analysis of successive censuses. Here, the exercise was made possible by the creation of a dataset within Queen’s University that linked the Northern Ireland censuses between 1971 and 2001 by 100-metre square grids. The areas in question were compared for a range of variables between 1971 and 2001 using this database. Not all the difficulties were overcome. Since the 1981 dataset for Catholic areas was regarded as unreliable because of non-census returns linked to protests associated with the then Republican hunger strike, it was decided to exclude this year from the analysis and to concentrate on 1971, 1991 and 2001. Moreover, the census questions changed over time so that comparison was only possible for those variables that were common to the three censuses. These related to population size, gender, age, tenure, religion and economic activity. While more limited than originally anticipated, the exercise nevertheless permitted comparison of a set of communities over time.

Assembling the material from these sources makes it possible to compare actual communities across Belfast in 2001 and to explore change within and amongst them over a 30-year period.