# Growing Up On an Interface

## Findings and Implications for the Social Needs, Mental Health and Lifetime Opportunities of Belfast Youth

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# Acknowledgement

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# Summary

In this research we aimed to find out what types of risk (if any) affected young people and children growing up in places of high religious segregation or what we normally call interface communities. This is important as we know that risk and experiences of harm and violence can have negative impacts upon development, emotional well-being and future prospects. It is important to understand what types of risk affect young people and children so as we can respond to these in terms of aiding better personal and community development with regard to health, work, education and wider opportunities.

One of the reasons this research was interested in risk is that opinion generally views risk in interface neighborhoods as linked to sectarianism and inter-community conflict. That is important but it does not tell us about other risks or what the impact of risk is upon individual development, coping with harm and if risk is linked to emotional well-being, anxiety, sectarian behaviour and adjustment problems. It also does not tell us why some youth and children engage in risky behaviour such as sectarian violence, crime or anger related behaviour. As expected we find that many young people's lives are negatively affected by risks tied to violence within and between communities, exposure to drink and drugs, conflict within the home, transgenerational exclusion, behaviour problems in school and low aspirations. However, we must be mindful that all that is explored within this report does not mean that every young person and child is at risk. This is an important point as some of our respondents felt that their communities were understood negatively and for them such opinion was a reputational risk in terms of how people responded to them when they engaged with people from other parts of the city.

One of the links that we find between those most at risk and their behavior and attitudes is linked to the relationship young people and children have with their families. What we generally find is that children and young people from families in which there is trust and interaction, and an ability to confide with siblings and/or parents and in which there are low levels of family conflict (rows and arguments) the likelihood of engaging in risky behaviours is low. Such persons are also more likely to experience emotional well-being but that does not mean that they do not experience risk, such as inter and intra community violence, but unlike those from families in which there are poorer relationships and for those with adjustments problems the experience of risk is usually coped with.

What this research shows is that there are links between emotional and mental well-being, and engagement in sectarian and other anti-social behaviours and crime. We also observe that those who engage in sectarian behavior tend to identify much more strongly with being Catholic or Protestant than those who never or rarely engage in such activity. In terms of anti-social behavior, mental well-being, sectarian behavior, and anxiety are linked to family relationships. This would suggest that in terms of tackling issues of risk within interface communities that it is important to assist families to deal with risk, anger and emotional and mental health issues. The link between issues within the home and their impact upon community and vice versa is

important to both acknowledge and deal with. In the past conflict within and between communities was linked to ideology, experiencing harm and the role of groups in shaping forms of community response to violence. What is found here is that the link to identity, sectarianism and violence is related to family cohesion, emotional well-being and levels of risk aversion. We could argue that we have moved into a different era of community relations in which sectarian violence has declined, paramilitary groups largely demobilised and in which the expression and actions of intra-community violence and disharmony is now linked to family functioning, emotional well-being and adjustment problems. If this is the case then it may be relevant to direct community relations building into the sphere of family coping and risk reduction.

Findings include:

- Youth and children who were closer to their parent(s) or siblings are less likely to display **adjustment problems** (stress, emotional distress, adjustment problems) especially when coping with risk. It seems that being able to confide in family, share experiences and seek advice aids the capacity of youth and children to deal more positively with risk;
- Those young people and children who expressed strong loyalty and bonding with their communities were most likely to express **adjustment problems**; Suggesting that having a strong sense of Catholic or Protestant community identity does not protect individuals from poor emotional well-being, anger and engagement in risk-laden behaviour;
- With regard to experiences of sectarian risk (assaults, attacks, intimidation and harassment) we find that those who respond and do not respond experience virtually the same level of risk. Interestingly the likelihood of experiencing sectarian assault and reacting to it in terms of engaging in sectarian actions is **not linked to experience per se** but is most common among those experiencing poor family relationships, poor emotional well-being and wider adjustment problems;
- Those who **do not respond** tend to have a low in-group (community) identity and react to sectarianism towards them by being anxious and avoiding reaction. They also tend to be those who have positive family relationships;
- Those **who do respond** tend to have a high in-group identity, experience family conflict and have other adjustment problems. Unlike those who do not respond this group are not as anxious about sectarianism and do not weigh risk of harm from sectarian assault as a deterrent;
- Those engaged in sectarian actions tended to experience higher family conflict and greater insecurity within their family. These insecurities were linked with greater risk for a wide range of adjustment problems in youth;
- By comparison to those with adjustment problems, multiple forms of analysis within this study supported the view that greater emotional security within the family and community was linked with reduced risks of youth adjustment problems and heightened well-being;
- A lower ability to deal with risks such as sectarianism and poor family dynamics, the more likely a youth or child exhibited anger management problems, aggression and conduct problems, especially among males;

- **Intra-community** conflict (non-sectarian conflict) was **more frequent** than intercommunity conflict, (sectarian conflict). This tends not to be appreciated in the analysis of conflict in Northern Ireland.
- Mental health problems reflecting internal symptoms were especially pronounced among early adolescent children, including **low self-esteem** and mood.
- Coming to the attention of the police was, for some, generally **not** viewed as potentially risky (i.e. the impact of gaining a criminal record). Although some young people from both communities, especially those in conflict with the 'other' community and the police, felt the 'other' community was treated more favourably by the police;
- Knowledge of or issues regarding paramilitary activity were experienced by a minority but experience was more pronounced **within Loyalist/Unionist areas**. Experience of paramilitaries was most common among older males.
- **Paramilitaries** were generally viewed as **unwelcome** within their own communities, and were generally viewed as 'unnecessary'.
- Younger participants tended to view antisocial behaviour within the community as a challenge to their sense of safety and security. As some get older this anxiety, which steers individuals away from risk, declines;
- Higher family cohesion and support within families and lower levels of family conflict and available network of peer support, were also linked with more positive youth functioning. Many reported that **peer support** had beneficial effects in terms of coping. Therefore, youth and children responded less well to risk in terms of adjustment problems linked to the level and extent of peer support accessible to them;
- **Community youth workers** were perceived as having the potential to contribute to better outcomes. Multiple flaws and limitations of currently available resources were identified by organizations engaged in frontline youth work. The impact of community led youth training initiatives remained time limited and restricted by the funding resource constraints.
- Greater emotional security in the community was identified as a protective or buffering factor against youth adjustment problems and low well-being. Low sense of **individual well-being** was related to multiple **internalizing mental health** problems, including emotion problems, depression and anxiety. Males were slightly more likely to cite these issues than females.
- Inter-community contacts were viewed favourably but remained relatively uncommon outside of school. Participation in these programmes was related to sustained improvements in inter-group relations. However, evidence was mixed with regard to the quality of intergroup relations.
- Many youth **did not regard underage drinking** or binge-drinking as problems or as forms of risk taking. Most expressed no feelings of remorse or 'guilt' about their drinking. Similar patterns were evident with regard to drug use. The use of marijuana and prescription drugs was more problematic among older adolescents.

# Glossary

**Adjustment Problems**, this term refers generally to maladaptive problems including but not limited to mental health difficulties (anxiety, depression) behaviour problems (aggression, delinquency), academic problems, and other negative youth outcomes

**Emotional security,** or the degree to which one feels safe and secure in the family system and in the community system/neighbourhood, protects youth from developing maladaptive outcomes (like mental health problems and/or aggression) when they experience sectarian antisocial behaviour. Intervention may increase emotional security in both the family and the community, despite experiencing on-going threats.

**Social identity**, or the degree to which one identifies as Catholic or Protestant, operates as both a benefit and a burden to young people growing up in interface communities. That is, stronger group identification can be protective or buffer young people from internalizing (i.e., depression) as they grow up and are exposed to intergroup threat, but exacerbates or increases the amount they act out aggressively toward the other community. Social identity works in both positive and negative ways; interventions need to take this key factor into account.

**Family cohesion,** or the degree to which there is support within the family, buffers or protects children from developing aggression, and in particular, also lessens the amount they will act out against the other community. Strengthening family and community, and in particular how family members support each other, may decrease overall adolescent aggression, as well as those acts that are directed at the perceived 'other' group.

**Youth experience** regarding in-group antisocial behaviour may be more likely to help the out-group if they also have positive intergroup attitudes. By focusing on improving attitudes about the 'other' group, interventions may lead over time to an increase in helping and prosocializing acts between 'self' and 'other'.

# Research Themes

Following a brief introduction and outline of the study design and methods, we address the following themes emerging from this study, based on a synergistic merging across the qualitative and quantitative data that were collected:

**Experiences of risk for children and youth**
- The diversity of experiences of risk facing children and youth living in interface areas were examined.
- Risks included violent inter-community conflict and alcohol and drug use.
- Additional risk factors were evaluated relating to youth mental health and well-being, including internalizing problems, aggression and conduct problems.
- Data were also presented on adjustment and well-being as function of age and gender.
- The change in the "traditional" family unit and factors beyond the family were also evaluated as impacts associated with intracommunity risks for youth's adjustment problems.

**Interfaces and shared spaces**
- Factors related to youths' experiences living in interfaces and shared spaces were examined.
- Data were presented concerning the strength of in-group identity (i.e., Catholic and Protestant group affiliations) in interface communities and youth's strong sense of belonging and attachment to neighbourhood.
- The data regarding the challenges and hopes of youth and children living in interface areas were also evaluated
- Age and gender differences in participating in sectarian/violence and anti-social behaviour were considered.
- Data were presented on intergroup relations and inter-community contact, including the quality, quantity and persistence of inter-community or intra-community (for example, nonsectarian antisocial behaviour) relationships.

**Security and safety in the community**
- We also explored security and safety in the community including the prevalence and impact of sectarian (e.g., intergroup) and non-sectarian (e.g., within community) antisocial behaviour on youth's concerns about safety and security.
- Some young people were considered as perpetrators as well as recipients of within-community antisocial behaviour.
- The current views of young people with regard to engagement with police were examined, including attitudes toward policing.
- The current views and levels of interest in paramilitary groups were evaluated.
- The role of the family, peers, and community sector as protective mechanisms for youth in the face of on-going threats was assessed.
- The impact of emotional insecurity in the family and community for young people in relating to risks for both internalizing and externalizing problems was examined.

**Minimizing risk, increasing protection**
- Based on both the qualitative and quantitative data a variety of factors were identified for minimizing risk and increasing protection.

- Family and peers, and heightened emotional security about family, were considered as buffers from risk.
- Community relations, including heightened emotional insecurity about community, were examined as additional buffers from risk.
- Community centers emerged based on the qualitative data as potentially pivotal spaces for protecting young people from risk.

Finally, we close the report with a summary, specific conclusions and a recommendation based on the analyses of the quantitative and qualitative data.

# Introduction

This final report conveys findings of research on the inter-connected causes and dynamics related to youth adjustment from a major longitudinal study of family, community, and individual pathways in interface neighbourhoods in Belfast. Reflecting a neighbourhood focus, the children/youth and parents whose voices inform the findings were drawn from 24 socially deprived neighbourhoods in Belfast. One-on-one surveys with mothers and their adolescent children were conducted in the participants' homes by trained interviewers from an established professional survey company. In addition, the research project conducted a new qualitative study of youth from Belfast, towards further researching causes and dynamics within a 'rights based' children and youth centered approach.

The aim of the research study was to advance understanding of the social needs, mental health and lifetime opportunities for Belfast's youth. These goals were addressed in part by the continuation of a major longitudinal quantitative study including the investigation of how the social ecology of political violence affects the development of children and adolescents in working class Catholic and Protestant areas of Belfast and complemented by the results of a new qualitative study. In contexts of political violence, different forms of community violence may be distinguished (Cairns & Roe, 2003). In this study, intra-community antisocial behaviour are described as non-sectarian, whereas antisocial behaviour linked with ethno-political conflict are described as sectarian antisocial behaviour. This research provided insight into the links between non-sectarian and sectarian community antisocial behaviour, family functioning, and adolescents' adjustment.

Methodologically, this study is unique among studies documenting the context of political violence, for pioneering multiple new assessments of processes related to sectarian and non-sectarian violence. Complementing the strong quantitative legacy of the longitudinal study, the qualitative component of this research further advanced understanding of the social needs, mental health and lifetime opportunities for youth living in interface communities. Moreover, qualitative semi-structured interviews and focus groups with marginalized or 'at risk' youth ensured that the voices of the children and young people whose lives continue to be impacted by the myriad risks they encounter on a daily basis retain a prominent position. This approach provided the ability to triangulate findings alongside an in-depth examination of issues of identity and youth behaviour. The overall project, thus, employed a multidimensional socio-psychological lens to examine individual (e.g., anti-social attitudes and beliefs and psychological conditions), family (e.g., parent–child relations and socioeconomic status), school (e.g., performance), peer (e.g., social ties), cultural and community variables in both public and private spaces.

It is evident that youth risk and protection may be determined by numerous socio-psychological factors, including a combination of individual level status elements, community and family disadvantage, and exposure to crime contexts.

# Study Design and Methods
## Quantitative Survey

Participants in the quantitative survey included families who have participated in an on-going study on the effects of political violence on child development in Northern Ireland with data

collected from 2007 to 2012 (Total N = 999 mother/child dyads). Participants in the last survey (N=590 mother/child dyads; 51% male), were the focus of this report reflecting the continuation of the longitudinal study (2012). In 2006-2007, stratified random sampling was used in recruitment to select families with at least one child in the household between 10 and 17 years of age. This age criteria was used because (a) the official census only tracks the presence of children under 16 in households, (b) by 8 years of age, children were aware of the social distinctions being investigated (Cairns, 1987), and (c) children aged 10 and over were more likely to be participants, or victims, in the Troubles. When households had more than one child, the youngest child between 10-17 years interested in participating was selected.

Both single-parent and two-parent families are included, representing the nature of family dynamics within interface communities, and providing a unique opportunity for research on children's exposure to violence and to examine the moderating role of family structure on relations with children's adjustment. For pragmatic reasons, mothers, rather than fathers, were selected as the parent reporter, as: (a) many families in socially deprived communities in Belfast are led by single mothers; (b) mothers were more likely than fathers to be available for in-home surveys during the day; and (c) including many mothers, and only a small number of fathers as parental reporters, which seemed likely if fathers were allowed as alternative interviewees, could pose significant problems for analysis regarding comparisons among families.

The original study areas were selected to obtain a representative sample of Catholics and Protestants and variation in levels of sectarian violence, while limiting socio-economic differences. Consistent with the segregated nature of life in Belfast (Shirlow & Murtagh, 2006), the majority of study participants lived in wards that were ethnically homogenous (over 90% Catholic or Protestant; Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency (NISRA), 2011). Many study neighbourhoods were interfaced and shared a border with neighbourhoods that were predominantly populated by the 'other' group. We also identified neighbourhoods with variation in both historical and current sectarian violence. Finally, to control for the possible confound of socio-economic status, all study areas were in the upper quartile of socially deprived wards in Belfast.

Within each of these targeted neighbourhoods, between 35 and 40 families were contacted using stratified random sampling and all participation was voluntary. Supplemental families were identified and recruited following the same procedures within the study areas. The study was conducted with approval from the Human Subjects Review Board at the University of Notre Dame, and ethics committee at Queens University, Belfast.

## Qualitative Interviews and Focus Groups
The qualitative study, with planning in Year 1 (2012), and data collected in Year 2 (2013), complements the quantitative research, reflecting a distinct neighbourhood focus. This component of the study was designed to understand the risks that youth themselves identify in their everyday lives, while also shedding light on the diversity of experiences of children and young people. In other words, while general patterns of experiences were found, the data also highlights individual differences in experiences. Within the context of this research, the main concerns were ensuring that methods of data collection were age appropriate (as the sample ranged from eleven to eighteen years) and reflective of ability to participate. Therefore in keeping with a 'rights based' approach which seeks to put children at the forefront of research linked to them (Davey et al, 2009), the design was guided by the following: concern for preparation; piloting; use of language; the environment in which data

collection took place; and the background/life experiences of participants. In particular, the process of data collection was active, participatory and engaging.

Qualitative research with a small number of children/young people can produce rich and detailed understandings of their lives (Tisdall et al, 2009). The use of qualitative research within the study areas made a useful contribution to the evidence base. This allowed participants to define and explore issues important to them without being constrained by the concepts set out in surveys/questionnaires. The aim of this qualitative research was to explore, describe and interpret the personal and social experiences of the children and young people in this study. While there was always the potential for sensitive issues to emerge in research involving children and young people, this was particularly the case in a society emerging from decades of inter-group conflict (see Davey et al, 2009).

The qualitative research included focus group discussions and one-to-one interviews. The use of focus groups when researching children and young people provides a number of advantages including the use of pre-existing groups (for example youth groups) when seeking to gain access. In addition, young people often prefer to discuss issues in a group setting because they may find it easier to relax in the company of those they know (Davey et al, 2009). All respondents were identified by local community groups. Focus groups were also deemed an important method in that youth participants would also 'have the support of friends who would encourage each other to take part and to discuss issues' (Costley, 2000: pg.166). It has been further suggested that children feel more comfortable when they outnumber the adult researchers (Hill, 2006). While there were a number of advantages it was also important to be aware of the limitations to this technique including group dynamics (gender, religion, age and ability) and a lack of anonymity and privacy when discussing sensitive topics (Davey et al, 2009). Therefore, the focus group research was to be complemented with a one-to-one interview follow up as was the case in the present context.

One aspect of the research was to undertake an examination of sensitive and emotional issues via informal and semi structured interviews that followed the focus groups. The one-to-one setting meant that the researcher focused on the needs of the individual child and was attentive to cues suggesting a desire to end the interview or any other discomfort (Tisdall et al., 2009). In order to test the appropriateness of the questions being asked, two pilot focus groups were undertaken in the preliminary stages of the work.


## Analytical Considerations

Nearly two decades have passed since the signing of the Belfast Agreement (1998) that restored devolved power to Northern Ireland and commitments to promote mutual respect and parity of esteem. The decline in conflict related violence that succeeded the Agreement has been vital in developing the opportunity for political normalization but it is evident that certain sectarian tensions remain. Violence and anti-social behaviour surrounding the Flag Protest, on-going dissident violence and tensions over parading have remained as enduring problems. In some neighbourhoods, youth anti-social behaviour and intra-community turmoil have remained problematic. The reproduction of social exclusion, growth in drug use, youth suicide, access to secure employment, the break down in community and family loyalty and other social shifts combined with on-going conflict-related violence, contributed to what were identified as risk factors. Understanding risk is important so as to shift from normative analysis, which simply describes violence and anti-social behaviour without exploring its reproduction and impact upon lifestyle, life choices and life outcomes.

Life for young people growing up alongside Belfast's interfaces is (compared to less segregated places), related to living in areas of high social exclusion associated with religious segregation, embedded poverty, low educational qualifications, morbidity, exposure to policing, the influence of paramilitaries and potentiallyy higher incidences of drug, alcohol, and substance abuse. Youth are also more likely to be living in places that endured the highest levels of conflict-related violence and within which the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder are more commonplace (Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006). Further marginalization comes from 'deviance' casting through which youth living in highly segregated communities are 'deemed' to be 'posing a risk' or as being irresponsible 'risk takers'. For the purposes of this report, risk assumes a double meaning, namely; children or young people who are 'at risk', and children or young people who 'pose a risk'.

The purpose of this study is to advance knowledge of the effects of interface context on child development, and also how this context of conflict, tension and segregation is related to opportunity gaps, and gaps in lifetime opportunities, for youth in these areas.

# Experiences of Risk for Children and Youth

External perspectives generally viewed growing up on an interface as strongly correlated with images of violent inter-community conflict. This represented only one of myriad risks that young people must attempt to navigate in their move towards adulthood. Reflecting the heterogeneity of childhood transition from youthful dependence to adult autonomy, the manner in which risk and danger is impactful varies significantly. The following section explored the type of risks that youth participants identified as challenges they face in their everyday lives during both the qualitative focus groups and in one-to-one interview. In an effort to strengthen the findings overall and reflecting on the mixed methods approach adopted, convergent validity was demonstrated with relevant quantitative data as applicable.

Backett-Milburn and Harden (2004: pg. 430) have suggested that, 'issues of children's personal safety and the risks and dangers they face in the course of their daily lives have become key social and parental concerns in the UK at the turn of the 21st century.' Mitchell et al., (2001: pg. 217) further argue that, 'within sociological discourses, concepts of "risk" and "identity" are much discussed and debated, particularly in relation to young people as they move from childhood towards adulthood and adult status.' Growing up involves a transition period, a moving from adolescent dependency to adult independence, or as Kelly (2000: pg. 468) would suggest, '…youth is principally about becoming: becoming an adult, becoming a citizen, becoming independent, becoming autonomous, becoming mature, becoming responsible.'

During this period of growth and development, young people were faced with challenges and myriad choices. With the rise in individualization within society, a consequence of living in a post-modern era, has generated greater life opportunities (Giddens, 1991) with the associated proliferation of high risk ventures and hazardous choices which young people must either engage in or attempt to negotiate. In an increasingly modernized world, one fraught with uncertainty, it is argued that the choices open to young people have more potential to be risky as Furlong and Cartmel (1997: pg. 7) elaborate; 'in the modern world young people face new risks and opportunities, the traditional links between the family, school and work seem to have weakened as young people embark on journeys into adulthood which involve a wide variety of routes, many of which appear to have uncertain outcomes.'

The types of risk facing young people in interface areas included alcohol and drug use, mental health problems, aggression, conduct problems including antisocial behaviour and problems with authority figures. These factors were in turn related to the erosion of the traditional family unit and problems in the school setting. Following the presentation of these data, the following sections explored related themes for young people living in interface social spaces, followed by an in-depth examination of feelings of security and safety in the community. The thematic results section concluded the identification of protective factors in the family and community which helped to counteract the negative impact of the aforementioned risk factors.

## Alcohol and Drug Use

The qualitative data presented below suggests high levels of alcohol and substance abuse across all age groups. Alcohol abuse was particularly pronounced among female participants in the younger age group (11-14 years). A review of the quantitative survey data for the entire sample parallels the voices of the youth participants, with a large percentage (over 40%) of youth reporting consumption of 3 or more alcoholic beverages on a day when they are drinking (Table 1). That is, 244 out of 590 youth participants when they drank, reported drinking between 3 to 10 or more drinks on a typical day.

| Table 1 | | |
|---|---|---|
| How many drinks (units) containing alcohol do you drink on a typical day when you are drinking? | Number of participants | % of participants |
| 1 or 2 | 41 | 6.9 |
| 3 or 4 | 66 | 11.2 |
| 5 or 6 | 113 | 19.2 |
| 10 or more | 65 | 11.0 |
| Don't know | 176 | 29.8 |
| Refuse | 129 | 21.9 |
| Total | 590 | 100.00 |

| Table 2 | | |
|---|---|---|
| How often would you drink 6 or more drinks on one occasion? | Number of participants | % of participants |
| Never | 359 | 60.8 |
| Less than monthly | 54 | 9.2 |
| Monthly or less | 50 | 8.5 |
| Monthly | 28 | 4.7 |
| 2-4 times a month | 37 | 6.3 |
| Weekly | 10 | 1.7 |
| 2-3 times a week | 33 | 5.6 |
| Don't know | 19 | 3.2 |

Moreover, as noted in table 2, results from the quantitative survey further indicated that a large percentage of participants (36%) also reported binge drinking (drinking 6 or more

drinks on one occasion), ranging from less than monthly (9%) to 2-3 times per week (5.6%). One hundred and fifty-eight of the 590 participants reported drinking at least monthly (Table 2).

At the same time, youth did not present through their own interpretation that their drinking was problematic. In the qualitative data there was limited appreciation of the long-term impact and effect of regular binge drinking. It is worth noting that such activity was not viewed as risk taking by those involved. In this sense, there was a lack of awareness of the health and social risks that regular binge drinking can have on one's overall well-being. This lack of awareness about the long-term effects of binge drinking was supported by the quantitative survey which notes that, while youth were engaging in binge drinking, 80% of youth reported that they never had feelings of guilt or remorse about their drinking.

Youth involvement and exposure to heavy and persistent drug use was a major theme to emerge from the qualitative interviews, with the most prominent exposure to drug and substance abuse noted among older youth participants (15-18 years) in study area B (both Protestant and Catholic) and in study area A (15-18 years - only Protestant). The type of drug taken ranged from class B marijuana (for some this amounted to daily usage), to heavier class A drugs (including cocaine, magic, ecstasy). A number of youth participants referenced taking prescription medication (diazepam, tramazepam, tramadol, or 'blues', 'yellows', 'whites') as a means of counteracting the effect of taking other 'harder' drugs. Finally, when discussing the reasons for their heavy drug use, some youth suggested that it was a coping mechanism reflective of a sense of poor self-worth or feeling disconnected from the community. Importantly, there existed limited appreciation of the associated risk that heavy and persistent drug use can have in terms of heightening a feeling of isolation and dislocation from the community environment. Although it was acknowledged that heavy and persistent drug taking was an issue in terms of anti-social behaviour and harshly dealt within the community, the risk of engaging in such behaviour was not considered to be a deterrent.

There was little evidence to suggest that those engaged in regular drug taking viewed their activity as 'risky' or as potentially having a negative impact on their overall well-being, despite sharing stories of being caught in highly risky or dangerous situations while being under the influence of non-prescribed drugs.

## Mental Health and Well-being
The qualitative data suggested that mental health problems remained a risk to the overall well-being of participants and was related to problems such as low self-esteem, anxiety, depressive feelings, and low mood. This was particularly problematic amongst the lower age group (11-14 years) and amongst female participants. In the quantitative data, these patterns were investigated with regard to overall feelings of mental distress, assessed by the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ). The age-related findings were consistent with the qualitative findings in that the younger age group reported significantly more problems with mental distress (Figure 1). However, although the mean differences between male and female adolescents are not substantively different (Figure 2), boys report significantly *more* problems with mental distress compared to girls. This is consistent with research suggesting suicide rates are higher for males than for females in the older age group.
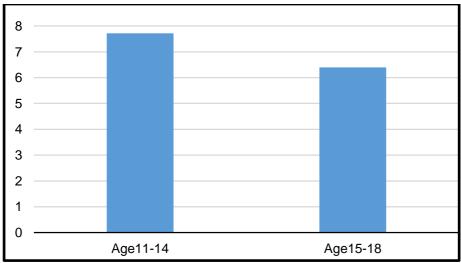
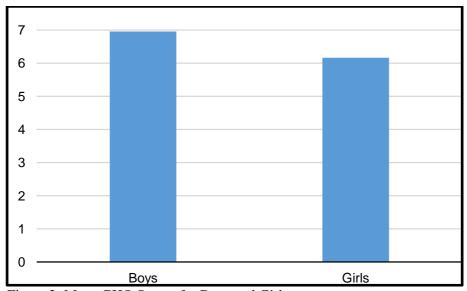Figure 1: Mean GHQ scores for younger (11-14) and older (15-18) youth


Figure 2: Mean GHQ Scores for Boys and Girls

The reported mental distress was significantly related to more pronounced mental health problems across a range of assessments, including emotion problems ($r = .34$, $p < .001$), somatization ($r = .43$, $p < .001$), depression ($r = .58$, $p < .001$), and anxiety ($r = .55$, $p < .001$). These statistical correlations mean that youth who reported more problems with mental distress also reported higher levels of symptoms across a range of mental health questionnaires. These quantitative findings were consistent with the qualitative reports in which youth expressed an in-depth appreciation and knowledge of having experience with or knowing about self-harm and/or suicide. Children and young people growing up in the participating interface areas were aware of and perhaps were more vulnerable to severe mental health issues. This in turn may be related to the risk for self-harm, such as self-mutilation, cutting, burning or purging. Thus, an increasing risk that youth must attempt to deal with is risk for higher levels of self-harm and/or suicide than may be the case in other types of neighbourhoods.

## Aggression and Conduct Problems
Mental health problems of low self-esteem, anxiety, depressive feelings and low mood did not represent the only problem related to the well-being of the youth taking part in the study.

Evidence uncovered suggested that young people were attempting to cope with anger management, an issue that affected the lives of some of the children and young people in the study. A number of research participants were engaged in counselling to cope with emotive issues. The qualitative data pointed to problem behaviours such as hostility, anger, aggression and conduct problems, as also being problems for the mental health and well-being of young people.

Reflecting a pattern of age differences with behaviour problems observed in other contexts, the younger cohort of adolescents, reported more aggression compared to the older cohort (Figure 3). At the same time, consistent with expectations based on research in other settings, males also reported more aggression compared to females (Figure 4). In turn, self-reported youth aggression, such as hitting, kicking, etc., was significantly related to conduct problems ($r = .16$, $p < .001$) and hyperactivity ($r = .16$, $p < .001$). These correlations suggest that youth exhibiting behaviour problems such as aggression and hyperactivity, were more likely to have problems interacting with friends and family members, creating additional risk for unhealthy social development.
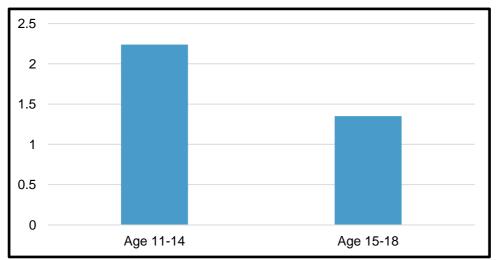


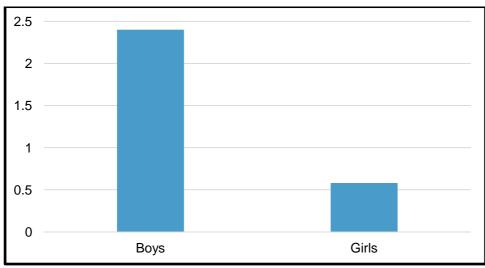Figure 3: Mean Aggression Scores for Younger and Older Youth



Figure 4: Mean Aggression Scores for Boys and Girls

## Erosion of the 'Traditional' Family Unit

There was evidence to suggest changes in the 'traditional' family unit with the majority of children and young people participating in the study growing up in a single parent home (Figure 5), and with few male role models. Figure 5 shows the number of youth in the sample growing up in a variety of family structures. Mothers report 30% were married, 5% were living as married, 10% were separated, 4% were widowed, 11% were divorced, and 41% were never married.
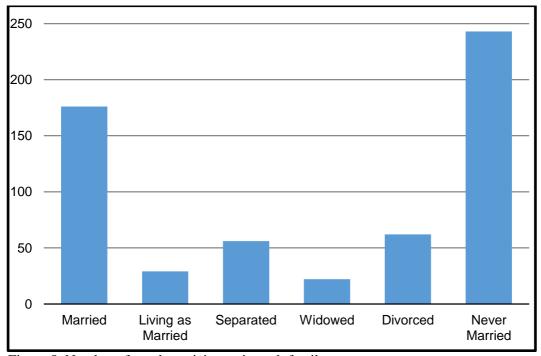


Figure 5: Number of youth participants in each family structure

When exploring family dynamics within both single- and two-parent family units, some of the quantitative data suggest compounding risks. For example, using mother reports, two-parent households were both *higher* in family cohesion (e.g., backing each other up, group spirit, supporting one another, or feeling of togetherness, and *lower* in family conflict (e.g., fighting a lot, becoming openly angry, throwing things or losing tempers), compared to single-parent homes (Figure 6). These differences between single-parent and two-parent homes were statistically significant.

Unsurprising given the lack of positive male role models in the lives of many of the young people engaged in the research, young people spoke fondly of their relationship with their mothers/grandmothers, with many referencing their mother as someone who they could 'tell anything to', or as being 'someone who will always look after me.' Reflecting the importance of youths' relationships with their mothers the data show that youth disclosure to mothers and families was related to lower exposure to negative events in the community and lower participation in antisocial behaviours (Figure 7). Mean levels of exposure to SAB and NAB, participation in SAB and direct experience with the police or paramilitaries are depicted in Figure 7. Disclosure to parents was measured with items tapping the degree to which youth choose to share things (e.g., with whom they are spending their time, how they feel about things) with their mothers. Although overall levels of experience with the police or paramilitaries were low (25% of boys, 3% of girls), positive communication between adolescents and their parents, was related to less frequent interactions with these groups.
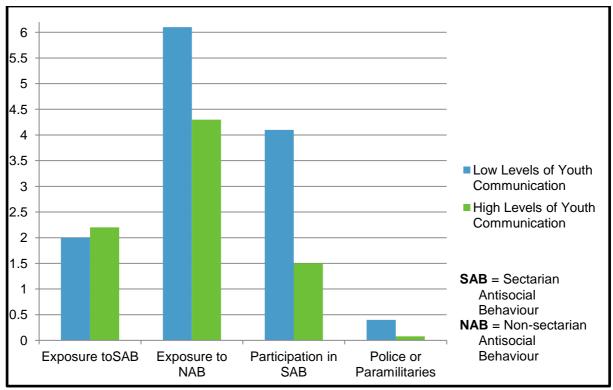
Figure 7: Adolescent Disclosure Relationship to Lower Risk Exposure

## Risk Factors beyond the Family Unit

The qualitative data explored problems outside of the family unit, those experiences that have the potential to negatively impact the wellbeing of youth living on or alongside an interface in the study areas. For some, school was an environment that was laden with difficulty. The risk of failing to achieve academic success in school was a concern that was openly discussed thus highlighting that risk beyond the family unit is particularly impactful. Youth reported on a number of challenges in the educational setting ranging from high levels of truancy, problems with authority figures inside the school environment, low educational attainment, and limited knowledge on further education as a viable option. Specific education-related outcomes were not asked at this wave of quantitative data collection. However, work based on prior data collection from the longitudinal study showed that roughly 20% of youth reported having been in trouble in the last year in school. Moreover, living in areas considered to be high risk lowered long-term education achievement and aspiration (Goeke-Morey et al., 2013). That is, our previous research and the qualitative findings from this project suggested that young people who did not have lifetime aspirations, were more focused upon gaining basic, entry-level employment rather than developing a professional career.

The qualitative findings with regard to interactions with organizations that could help children/youth deal better with the risks associated with living in their area were mixed. For example, the majority of children and young people involved in the study suggested they would speak with the community youth workers about aspects of their personal lives, their family lives and other issues should they arise. For a number of those involved in the project, community youth workers were important role models. At the same time, engagement with other support services designed to protect and assist children/youth at risk was limited, if at

all present. The qualitative data revealed there was limited evidence to suggest that children and young people engaged in formalized, structured support services should they be struggling to cope. Some children and young people suggested they were aware of support services available to them, (i.e. Lifeline, Childline, Samaritans) but they were not appreciative, knowledgeable or in contact with such organizations. In fact, only one young person indicated they would feel comfortable contacting these agencies in the first instance should they be experiencing risk and vulnerability.

Overall, this section on the experiences of risk for youth growing up in interface areas suggests that there are numerous factors which impact upon the lives of youth making the transition towards adulthood. Factors such as alcohol and drug mis-use, mental health problems, aggression and conduct problems remain particularly impactful, but are risks that are experienced differently in terms of age and gender. These types of individual risk are related to family and community dynamics, in both positive and negative ways. The potential for these outside influences to act as helpful processes for youth was further explored below as was the reality of living in segregated spaces and how other intergroup dynamics were influenced.

## Interfaces and Shared Spaces: Intragroup and Intergroup Relations

The young people involved in the study reported on a range of factors associated with living along an interface, as well as the intergroup dynamics that develop in both segregated and shared spaces. First, young people provided strong evidence of loyalty and community attachment in the qualitative data. This experience of close-knit communities, along with in-group cohesion, support, and strength of identity, was related both to the geographic composition (e.g., enclaved area) as well as other risk factors and negative outcomes. At the same time, youth were also open about the challenges and risks associated with growing up in the areas under investigation. These factors in turn, shaped intergroup relations in both negative, such as engaging in sectarian antisocial behaviours, and positive, such as inter-community contact schemes, ways.

## Close-knit Communities and Strong In-group Identities

Youth perceptions of neighbourhood centered on the immediate vicinity in which the children and young people grew up, with the areas in the study readily referred to in positive terms, as 'friendly', or as a 'place where everyone gets on.' Only later in the focus groups did contrary views suggests areas that were more negatively affected by higher levels of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Feelings of strong intra-community relations were more pronounced among young people living in enclaved areas where the minority population is less than half the size of the adjacent majority population. From the survey data, youth in the enclave neighbourhoods reported higher strength of in-group identity. That is, a sense of personal ethnic identity as Catholic or Protestant, compared to those in the bordering majority communities (t (85) = 2.18, p < .05). Strength of identity with the in-group is reflected in youth reporting that their Catholic or Protestant group is important to them and they consider themselves to be a part of the community. Figure 8 shows means, that is, average scores, for the minority/enclave and majority/surrounding groups of different areas. The higher means for individuals in the minority/enclave neighbourhoods further supports the notion that being part of a minority group, relatively geographically isolated from those of similar backgrounds, and surrounded by a majority, increases a sense of intra-community bonding and strength of in-group identity.
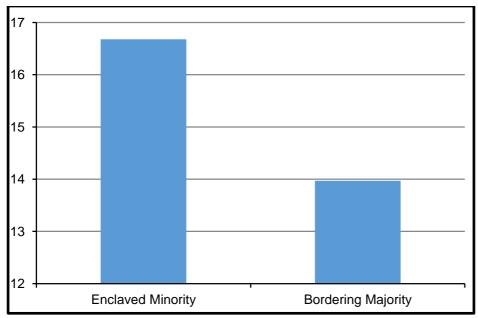
Figure 8: Mean Level of Strength of In-Group Identity by Enclaved Area

Moreover, having a strong sense of identity is associated with positive benefits in terms of mental health. Youth who report stronger connection with their in-groups were less affected by the sectarian antisocial behaviour and crime in their neighbourhoods. Figure 9 depicts how for youth with higher strength of in-group identity, that is, personal ethnic identity as Catholic or Protestant, have no association between exposure to sectarian antisocial behaviour, that is, experiencing sectarian antisocial behaviour, and anxiety. In other words, for youth with a high sense of identity with their in-group, witnessing or hearing about sectarian antisocial behaviour did not increase their anxiety. However, for those with lower levels of in-group identity, exposure to sectarian antisocial behaviour did increase their anxiety. These findings extend on the myriad of risk factors, such as compromised mental health, examining relations with community risk and feelings of in-group attachment. Consistent with the findings from the longitudinal study, these set of results suggests that strength of in-group identity may be a helping factor for youth. Identity helped to protect young people from greater mental health problems in the face of intergroup conflict.
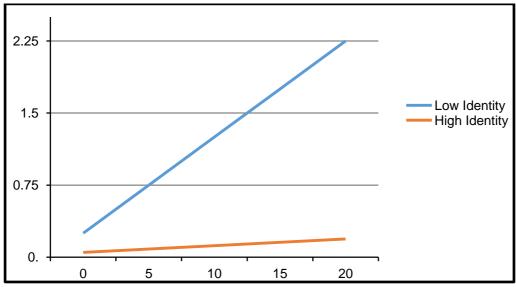


Figure 9: Relationship between High Identity and Experience of SAB on Anxiety.

## Challenges Living in Interface Areas

Despite evidence gathered revealing positive attitudes toward community, place, and in-group identity, youth revealed more negative aspects associated with growing up on/alongside an interface in Belfast. Primarily around resource allocation between Catholics and Protestants, and feelings of safety and security, these factors were also related to risky behaviours, such as dangerous, threatening or problem behaviours, among the youth participants.

In the focus group discussions, negative perceptions on one's own community frequently centered upon lack of resources available, lack of opportunities, and/or a lack of recreational space. Most participants, particularly those in the older age group, (15-18 years), cited 'boredom,' 'lack of opportunity,' or 'nothing to do in their area,' as the main downside of living on or alongside an interface. There also appeared to be a gendered nature to the data whereby those most vocal in their disdain tended to be male, many of whom felt they would leave their areas eventually should they have the financial capability to do so. For others taking part in the research, there was an appreciation that their area was a challenging place to grow up, but that feelings of attachment to the community would make any future decision to leave and live somewhere else difficult. Despite the challenges, the benefits from living in a closely-knit neighbourhood factored into their decisions to stay.

These contradictory feelings of wanting to remain a part of the community while also seeking to move away, were also portrayed in the quantitative findings. In the survey, young people were asked about the degree to which they had positive feelings about their communities, such as feeling safe, whether there are more good things than bad things about living there, and that if needed, people in the community would defend them.

## Engaging in Sectarian Behaviour

The challenges associated with living in interface areas extend beyond boredom and within-group antisocial behaviour. Those young people who stated that they have engaged in, or were engaging in sectarian antisocial behaviour, stated that this predictably took the form of rioting with the 'other' community across all study areas. In the qualitative data, youth participants' rationale for engagement in such activity ranged significantly; however, those growing up in enclave communities were more likely to cite 'defence of the area' as their reason for becoming involved in riotous behaviour. In this sense, there was a heightened awareness amongst youth living in an enclave about the perceived risk to their overall well-being in terms of negative inter-community engagement.

Around these behaviours, the quantitative data support the findings reflected in the qualitative data that older youth were more likely to participate in sectarianism compared to the younger cohort (Figure 10). For the quantitative survey, the youth responded how often, if at all, they had partaken in various acts for the purpose of 'getting at the other community'. Youth responded using a 4 point scale ranging from 0 (*rarely*) to 3 (*very often*). Examples of engagement in inter-community youth violence included: *throwing stones or other objects over walls; threatening, shouting at, or calling someone from the other community names; beating up (hit, punch, or kick) someone from the other community.* For this survey, items were intentionally included to capture the range of behaviours (from non-violent to violent) youth engage in to provoke members of the other community. Higher scores indicate more participation in sectarian antisocial behaviour. Mean, that is, average, scores for the 11-14 year-old and the 15-18 year-old groups were presented below. Means between the two groups were significantly different ($t(438) = 2.21$, $p < .05$).
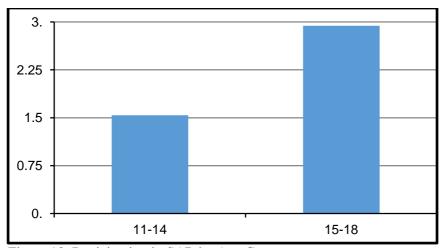
Figure 10: Participation in SAB by Age Group

Moreover, building on the findings about the strength of in-group identity, the quantitative data suggested that youth who felt more attached to their ethno-political groups were more likely to commit sectarian antisocial acts (Figure 11).
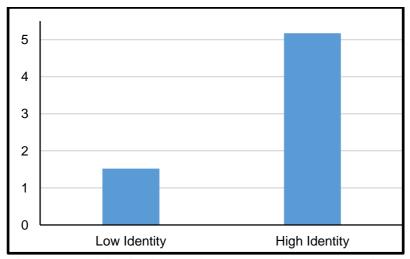

Figure 11: Participating in SAB by Strength of In-group Identity

## Intergroup Relations and Inter-community Contact

Although living in interface areas and having strong in-group identification were related with committing sectarian acts against the 'other' community, there were examples of improved inter-community relations as a result of contact schemes. Inter-community activities that had been engaged with were generally viewed as positive by participants with an acceptance that better inter-community relationships were desirable and necessary. However, inter-community activities were viewed in consumerist terms, for example, as opportunities to engage in high adrenaline sports, rather than their ability to better inter-community relationships. It is also important to recognize the limited nature of the majority of inter-community activities; not only in terms of the level and amount of contact with the 'other' community, but also the lasting impact of such schemes upon inter-community relationships. Moreover in the quantitative survey, participants revealed that outside of school related events, 65% have never participated in an inter-community project (see Figure 12). Eleven percent reported participating once and 21% reported participating more than once.
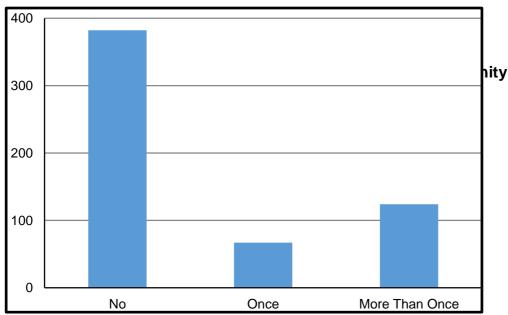
Figure 12: Number of Participants in Cross-Community Projects Outside of School

Compared to those who did not participate, those who participated in these programmes providing evidence suggesting that inter-community projects and programmes do sustain inter-group relationships. For example, Figure 13 compares the frequency and quality (i.e. contact is friendly and cooperative) contact along with intergroup trust, such as feelings of trust about the other group. Each of these aspects of intergroup relations was higher among those youth who participated in inter-community projects outside of school than those who have not.
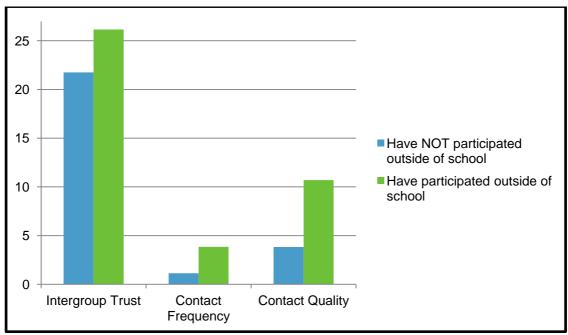


Figure 13: Mean Levels of Trust, Frequency and Quality of Intergroup Contact for Youth who Have and Have Not Participated in Cross-Community Projects Outside of School

Moreover, in the qualitative data there was evidence that some inter-community relationships endured in spite of the interface with Belfast city center, particularly seen as a 'neutral' and safe meeting space. Moreover, a number of children and young people keep in regular

contact across the community divide through use of social media outlets, including Whatsapp, Snapchat and Facebook. Yet, other participants noted that their contact with inter-community peers through social media was often negative or hostile. Thus, these mixed method findings suggested deeply complex intergroup relations among youth in interface areas and reflected the heterogeneity of childhood experience in terms of their ability to successfully navigate potentially risky outcomes. Future research was needed to better understand the pattern of associations within inter-community projects, particularly outside of the school system.

## Security and Safety within the Community

Complementing the focus on negative interactions between the two communities, the current findings suggest that the risk associated with being involved in intracommunity conflict, such as being assaulted or abused from members within one's own community, were readily reported in the qualitative data with greater frequency of negative stories of engagement with the perceived hostile out-group. The prevalence of non-sectarian, or within community threat, was also noted in the quantitative survey. Overall, youth reported greater average levels of observing or experiencing, that is, greater mean levels of exposure, to non-sectarian forms of antisocial behaviour and older youth (15-18 years old) reported greater exposure compared to younger youth (11-14 years old) (Figure 14).
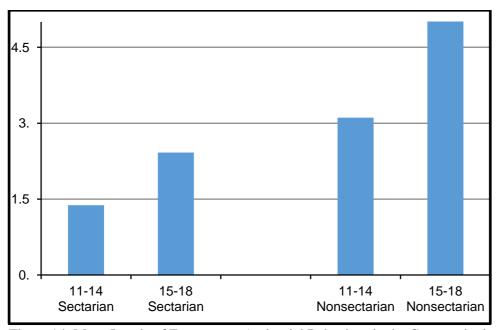


Figure 14: Mean Levels of Exposure to Antisocial Behaviour in the Community by Age Group

For example, in the qualitative data, most respondents who were victims of physical, verbal, or emotional abuse stated that this emanated from within their communities and was committed by people known to them and of the same community background. Thus, youth perception of risk from within was more pronounced than the perceived risk from without.

Yet, young people are not only at risk as recipients of such within-community antisocial behaviour but they are also considered to be posing a risk as perpetrators. For example, children and young people from across all variables (ethnicity/gender/age/location) referenced taking part in activities readily identifiable as 'high risk', including criminal damage, breaking into derelict property, fire lighting in public spaces, spray-painting/graffiti of public/private property, breaking windows, entering derelict property. As noted in the first

section, these forms of antisocial behaviour were often related to recreational and hard drug use in public. More serious instances of burglary, physical assault, drug-dealing and joyriding were noted among some older participants in the study (15-18 years). At times there existed confusion over what amounted to activity that would be considered anti-social in nature. The majority of youth engaging in such activities did not consider their behaviour to be offensive nor did they accept that their behaviour was necessarily posing a 'risk' to themselves or others.

Moreover, there was little evidence to suggest that children and young people taking part in the research viewed engagement with the police as being potentially risky, or as having any long-term consequence, despite the fact that many had been arrested or cautioned by the police. Some youth interviewed were/had been involved and charged in more serious criminal activity including burglary, possession of stolen goods, and drug dealing. In this setting, the young people expressed that they felt the police treated the 'other' community more favourably than their own. Some respondents stated that they had been unfairly targeted by police and by the community safety wardens who viewed their presence on the streets as intimidating and unwelcoming. However, there were multiple views about policing, with some participants welcoming the safety aspect that a police presence could bring.

The qualitative data from the youth participating suggested that knowledge of paramilitary organizations and experience of paramilitary activity was most pronounced in Loyalist/Unionist areas. However, to these adolescents, paramilitarism was viewed predominantly by youth as 'outdated, 'unnecessary,' and 'a scourge on their areas.' Despite some pronounced examples of paramilitary style attacks on older male participants, the risk associated with living alongside or in close proximity to paramilitary groups, was not considered particularly acute in the focus group discussions and interviews.

Finally, some children and young people, particularly those in the younger age-bracket (11-14 years old) were vocal in their criticism of those who engaged in antisocial behaviour, viewing them as reckless risk takers and perpetrators of unnecessary harm to their own community. Incidents of criminal damage discussed included destroying a local park, theft, and drug dealing in the areas. In addition to the lack of recreational opportunities noted by the older cohort, the younger participants included antisocial behaviour as one the challenges undermining their feelings of security and safety.

Despite the lower levels of exposure to sectarian antisocial behaviour, youth still reported insecurity in their communities. Youth reported on their perceptions of safety and security in their communities in terms of intergroup relations. Youth were asked questions such as how often they worry that bad things will happen in their communities and if they are scared when people from the other community walk toward them. Fifty-one percent of the youth participants reported that they felt at least some insecurity about their community. The findings from the longitudinal data indicated that youth's emotional insecurity about sectarian antisocial behaviour in the community was associated longitudinally with both youth's internalizing (e.g., anxiety, depression) and externalizing (e.g., conduct problems, aggression) problems (Cummings et al., 2011). Figure 15 shows the mean or average levels of mental distress (see measure shown in Appendix G) for youth who reported no insecurity and those who reported at least some insecurity.
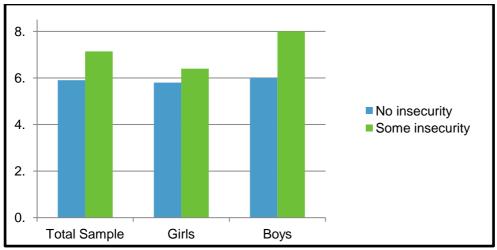
Figure 15: Youths Show Levels of Insecurity

Moreover, youth's perceptions of sectarian antisocial behaviour in the community were also linked with greater family conflict, youth's emotional insecurity about the family, and the development of both internalizing and externalizing problems among youth (Cummings et al., 2012).

# Minimizing Risk, Increasing Protection

Given the dynamics of risk identified above, there are a number of findings that are relevant to minimizing the negative impact of such experiences and protecting youth from harmful outcomes. This section identifies possible forms of support for young people, within their families and through community workers.

## Family and Peers as a Buffer from Risk

Among young people facing increased risk as a result of their environmental circumstance and their proximity to an interface, family and peer support networks were cited as important across all variables. With regard to the family, the data from the quantitative study supported that youth's greater emotional security in the family reduces the likelihood of their development of adjustment problems in the context of sectarian community violence (Cummings et al., 2014). Also, as shown in the graph below (Figure 16), youth with better attachment to the mother were buffered from the negative impact of exposure to Sectarian Antisocial Behaviour (SASB) on their own perpetuation of Sectarian Antisocial Behaviour (PSAB). In other words, for youth with strong attachments to their mothers, being exposed to sectarian antisocial behaviour did not increase their likelihood of committing sectarian acts. However, for youth with low parental attachment to their mothers, exposure to sectarian antisocial behaviour did, in fact, increase their likelihood of participating in sectarian acts.
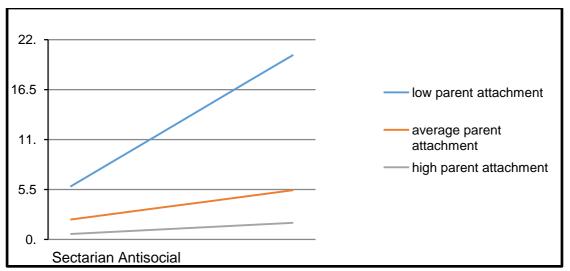
Figure 16: Relationship Between Exposure to Sectarian Antisocial Behaviour and Youth Committing Sectarian Acts at Difference Levels of Parental Attachment

With regard to other sources of support, children and young people were more likely to discuss problems or the challenges of growing up in their area with someone they know and were close to rather than with a counsellor. Most young people suggested they would turn to their close friends for support should they be experiencing difficulty in their lives.  In addition to exploring the role of family cohesion and youth disclosure above, the quantitative data suggested these factors have implications for peer relations as well. Youth who reported closer ties and more support from their peers also lived in homes in which mothers reported higher levels of family cohesion or support (see measure described in Appendix S) ($r(574) = .27$, $p < .001$)., and lower levels of family conflict ($r(584) = -.13$, $p < .01$). Combined, these data support the findings of the qualitative research that indicate that there was a constellation of risks and these factors increase the likelihood of negative outcomes, concentrated in certain domains of life for particular youth. This set of findings highlighted the need to attend to informal means of support. If youth were turning more toward someone they know, such as friends or family, then there was a critical need to find ways to reach those adolescents who had weak or insufficient peer and family networks for emotional support.

Moreover, among the broad-range of risk of survey respondents ($N = 585$), peer relations were warm.  Adolescents (average age 16.8 years old, standard deviation 2 years) reported that they mildly to strongly agree that their friends 'really try to help them,' that they can 'count on friends when things go wrong,' they have 'friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows,' and they can 'talk about problems' with their friends. On average, peer support around difficult subjects or topics was high, but not at the absolute top of the possible scale in the quantitative sample.

In addition, further research on peer relations is warranted because of the low level of correlation.  However, preliminary data suggested that closer peer relations may be related to fewer depressive symptoms ($r(585) = -.09$, $p < .05$). In other words, having peer relations provided support involving sorrows or problems and appeared to be related to fewer experiences of feeling no interest in things, feeling blue, worthless or hopeless about the future. Although the quantitative survey did not have specific questions about whether or not youth speak with counsellors about their problems, this data does suggest that informal support through peer networks is accessed by young people in Belfast. Many youth sought peer support and the rate of seeking such support was relatively frequent.

## Community Centers as Pivotal Spaces

With regard to the community, the data from the quantitative study supported that youth's greater emotional security in the family reduces the likelihood of their development of adjustment problems in the context of sectarian community violence (Cummings et al., 2014). One of the major findings to emerge from the qualitative research concerns the pivotal role played by community youth workers as an important point of contact when children and young people are feeling low or in need of advice. Across the four qualitative study areas, the role which youth workers play in the everyday lives of those children and young people engaging in the study was highlighted. Community workers are embedded in the everyday lives of children and young people participating in the study and are a useful source of support for those youth struggling to navigate the multitude of risks they continue to experience. Yet due to a lack of funding and resources available, some community youth workers felt that statutory agencies were 'out of touch' with the reality of the lived experiences of children and young people in the communities. It was suggested that the allocation of funding and resources was disproportionate with too great an emphasis placed on 'crisis payments' made to groups working solely on the interface. Rather than providing funds and resources at times when inter-community tensions are high, greater emphasis should be placed upon creating a better lived environment for children and young people within their own communities.

To further support community youth workers, and the role they play to help protect young people from the risk they are exposed to in interface areas, there was a call for greater long-term funding of youth based education and training initiatives. The goal of this sustained financial support would be to create an environment in which young people, many of whom have left formalized and structured mainstream education with no qualifications, can develop practical skills and training that will create the opportunity for future employability. Furthermore, community safety initiatives should be expanded as a means of minimizing the risk associated with growing up on or alongside an interface. With regard to the community, the data from the quantitative study supported that youth's greater emotional security in the community reduces the likelihood of their development of adjustment problems (Cummings et al., 2014).

# Recommendation

Evidence gathered and presented above underscores the importance of youth emotional security about the family and community in youths' well-being and adjustment. Relatedly, matters associated with youths' in-group identity factored significantly, and in relatively complex ways, with youth outcomes. Accordingly, the importance of policies and practices with the potential to increase youths' emotional security about intra- and inter-community relations and the stability, security and well-being of family relationships, were underscored by these results. Psychoeducational approaches and programs to improve family and community communication and safety are among the possible directions towards improving child, family and community well-being in interface communities. Undoubtedly understanding multiple risks highlighted means that we do not simply measure violence and sectarian attitudes but instead understand more about how family structures and experiences of risk are linked to the strength of identity and also the structure of family and other support. Ultimately it shows that issues that are deemed as educational or policing matters are in fact related to multiple causes and modes of reproduction. It is through understanding multiple

factors that shape young lives that policy developments can be developed. In that vein, programs that are jointly developed and endorsed by professionals across domains that affect youth (mental health, policing, education) would be ideal, keeping in mind the initial base of support for most youth starts in the home. Strengthening communication and support mechanisms within the family system and between the family system and available support mechanisms at the community level are also suggested areas of intervention that will serve youth developing in economically deprived communities.

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