

Elected Representatives/Political Parties and
Minority Ethnic Communities in
Northern Ireland

Aidan McGarry
Paul Hainsworth
Chris Gilligan

Community Relations Council



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	2
Abbreviations	3
Executive Summary	4
1. Introduction: Context and Content	5
2. Contact and Interaction	10
3. Issues and Concerns	14
4. Parties: Organisation and Practice	24
Conclusion	33
Appendices	35
Bibliography	41

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The authors are solely responsible for the content and research presented in this report.

Aidan McGarry, Paul Hainsworth and Chris Gilligan
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ABBREVIATIONS

BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
ALL	Alliance Party
Animate	Action Now to Integrate Minority Access To Equality
CWA	Chinese Welfare Association
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
GP	Green Party
EU	European Union
INCORE	International Conflict Research
MCRC	Multi-Cultural Resource Centre
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
NCCRI	National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism
NI	Northern Ireland
NICEM	Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities
NILT	Northern Ireland Life and Times
OFMDFM	Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
PUP	Progressive Unionist Party
RES	Racial Equality Strategy
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party
SEEDS	Solidarity Equality Education Diversity Support
SF	Sinn Féin
STEP	South Tyrone Empowerment Programme
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of the project is to examine the attitudes of elected representatives and political parties in Northern Ireland towards minority ethnic communities. It also explores the extent and nature of political parties' and elected representatives' engagement with minority ethnic communities. The research began on March 1st 2007 and ended on June 30th 2008.

Northern Ireland is becoming a more diverse society in the twenty first century. In this respect, minority ethnic communities have made, and will continue to make, a valuable contribution to the richness and diversity of society. However, these communities have also faced problems such as racism, of a direct or institutional nature, and *de facto* exclusion from political and other spheres in Northern Ireland. In many ways, Northern Ireland politics is at a new crossroads of opportunities as regards intercultural and community relations. One aim of the project is to examine perceptions within the main political parties and assess how elected representatives and parties have engaged with and mainstreamed minority ethnic interests in their manifestos, structures and practices.

The project utilises a rigorous methodological approach in order to ascertain to what extent elected representatives/political parties are engaged with individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds, and their concerns, in Northern Ireland. We triangulated our research by using three different sources of information which provide indicators of this engagement. Firstly, we conducted a review of the political party election manifestos from 1994-2007 (Democratic Unionist Party (DUP); Sinn Féin (SF); Ulster Unionist Party (UUP); Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP); the Alliance Party (ALL); and the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP)). Secondly, in September/October 2007, a questionnaire was sent out to 643 elected representatives (all Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and local councillors in Northern Ireland), and 201 completed questionnaires were returned. This gave a response rate of 32%, which is very respectable for a postal survey. The questionnaire attracted a good response from all the political parties and thus reflects Nationalist, Unionist, and other perspectives, as well as different geographic localities. Thirdly, the project included semi-structured interviews with 46 individuals (28 elected representatives and 18 minority ethnic community representatives and/or advocates) conducted between October 2007 and April 2008. Finally, several events were organised as part of the project in order to gain feedback. A seminar was held in February 2008 at the Magee campus of the University of Ulster in collaboration with INCORE's 'Diversity in Action' project which brought together elected representatives and minority ethnic community representatives and advocates. The initial research findings were also presented in December 2007 and March 2008 in Enniskillen and Newry respectively to local councillors who provided constructive critical engagement and insights. In addition, a workshop at the 'Racism: Moving Beyond Denial' conference, which was organised by Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council in April 2008, provided an opportunity for further constructive debate and valuable input.

The results of the research were presented to elected representatives and minority ethnic community representatives and advocates at a conference on May 7th 2008 which was held at the Belfast campus of the University of Ulster. The event brought together relevant stakeholders, under Chatham House rules, to discuss the key issues which the research addressed. An interim report was produced and sent to all local councillors and MLAs in March 2008, as well as to minority ethnic community representatives and advocates. The interim report served as the springboard for discussions at the conference. The Research Associate for this project, Dr. Aidan McGarry, presented the findings of the completed research to the approximately 35 invited participants who attended. Anna Lo (MLA) from the Alliance Party then responded to the research findings. A panel discussion involving political party representatives followed. Each of the main political parties in Northern Ireland was represented as follows: Robin Newton (DUP); Jennifer McCann (SF); Richard Watson (UUP); Dolores Kelly (SDLP); and Ian Parsley (ALL). Finally, there was a panel discussion led by representatives from minority ethnic communities: Eva Grosman (Polish community); Eileen Chan-Hu (Chinese community); and Derek Hanway (Traveller community). Conference participants acknowledged the findings of the research and provided useful feedback which has been incorporated into this final report.

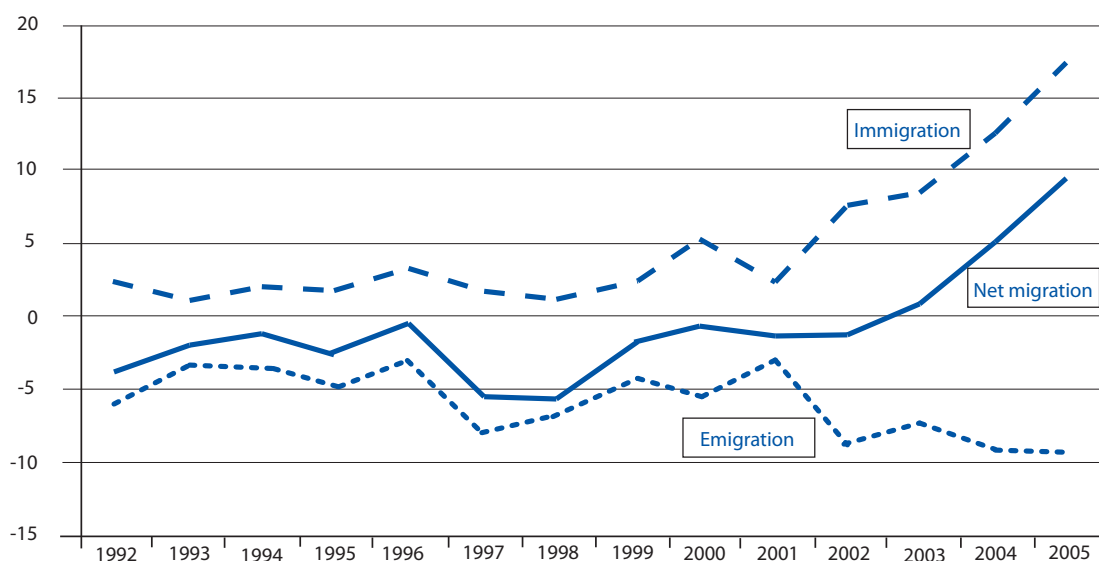
1. INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT AND CONTENT

Since the commencement of the peace process in the 1990s space has opened up in Northern Ireland for society to recognise, examine and explore 'other' questions, that - due to the all-encompassing nature of the 'Troubles' - have not received much attention in the past. Opportunities have become available to focus on issues of societal importance that hitherto have been ignored, sidelined or even denied. The concerns of minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland constitute one of the issues that have taken on greater prominence since the 1990s. As a result, there has been a lot of material published on racial prejudice and on racist attacks, on policy relevant to minority ethnic communities, and on immigration. Some of this is highlighted briefly below. There has also been some significant policy activity on issues of relevance to minority ethnic communities. To date, however, there has been little research on the political parties in Northern Ireland as they relate to issues relevant to minority ethnic communities. This report is the product of a research project which sought to address some of the gaps in existing knowledge here. In the introduction we outline the context for our research, the topics investigated and the methods that we have employed.

Minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland in context

Northern Ireland is currently home to a variety of minority ethnic communities including longstanding groupings such as the Traveller, Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, Jewish, and Muslim communities. This diversity has been added to by a significant increase in immigration from countries outside of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland (see Graph 1.1). Aspects of this diversity include the increasing numbers of children in Northern Ireland who are born of at least one immigrant parent and the growing presence of migrant workers as a result of globalisation, European Union enlargement to the east and the demands for more labour in the workplace. Immigration from Central and Eastern Europe has increased significantly since eight new states (the A8 countries) acceded to the European Union (EU) in 2004. There is also a growing number of migrants – notably from the Philippines, India and the Ukraine – living and working in Northern Ireland under a range of different kinds of temporary work visas (Bell, Jarman and Lefebvre, 2004).

The relative proximity of the A8 countries, combined with the growing wealth of those countries, has led to suggestions that migration from those countries may be largely temporary unlike the largely permanent migration to Britain and Northern Ireland from Britain's former colonies since the 1950s (IPPR 2008: 5). Due to the fairly rapid growth in immigration since 2001, and the possibly temporary nature of much of that migration, it is difficult to accurately specify or estimate the number of individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds who now reside in Northern Ireland. The 2001 census figure of less than 15,000 is believed to grossly underestimate the actual number of minority ethnic individuals in Northern Ireland. Informed estimates suggest though that between 1-5% of the total population of Northern Ireland has a minority ethnic community background (McElhinney, 2008). Without doubt, Northern Ireland is increasingly becoming a more diverse society in the twenty-first century.



Graph 1.1: International migration to and from Northern Ireland, 1992-2006, 000s
(Source: 1992-2001 Office of National Statistics; 2002-06 NISRA).

During the 'Troubles' there was very little public attention given to minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland. In part, this may have been due to the fact that the political landscape was dominated by the 'National Question' and much of the attention of researchers, academics and policy-makers was focused notably on the 'internal conflict' interpretation which characterised the 'Troubles' as a sectarian ethnic conflict between Catholics/Nationalists and Protestants/Unionists (Gilligan, 2007; McGarry and O'Leary, 1996; Whyte, 1990). During the early 1990s the Committee for the Administration of Justice (CAJ), minority ethnic community organisations, and other bodies and individuals lobbied the British Government to extend the Race Relations Acts to Northern Ireland (CAJ, 1992; CAJ, 1993). Attempts to achieve legislation specifically relevant to minority ethnic communities were not immediately successful, but soon bore fruit. During the emerging peace process the 1997 Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order was passed in Westminster, although it subsequently became subsumed in legislation passed as part of the ratification of the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.

The Agreement has changed dramatically the political landscape in Northern Ireland, paving the way to devolution of government and power sharing between political parties. Moreover, there are a number of public bodies and legislative measures in the Agreement which are relevant to minority ethnic communities. The equality legislation, referred to colloquially as Section 75 legislation, in the Act which ratified the Agreement in Westminster outlaws discrimination on, amongst other things, the basis of a person's race, ethnicity or country of origin. The Agreement established a Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission which oversees all public bodies to ensure that they conform with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), and an Equality Commission set up to monitor the 'statutory obligation to promote equality of opportunity in specified areas' (Agreement, Strand One, §5e). The Agreement also established a devolved Assembly with both executive and legislative powers. The most powerful positions in the Assembly are those of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, and within their Office (OFMDFM) a Race Equality Unit was established. Between 1998 and the period of our research the Assembly was suspended more often than it was running (see Gilligan, 2008b on the Agreement and its institutions). However, throughout suspension, the elected Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) continued to work on their local constituency work whilst, under Westminster guidance, civil servants continued to work on policy. In 2005 the Race Equality Unit produced a Racial Equality Strategy which outlines how Government aims to deal with issues relevant to minority ethnic communities (RES, 2005).

There has also been relevant activity by other public bodies. For instance, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) began to record racist incidents in 1996, and this policy has been continued and refined under its successor, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) (Jarman and Monaghan, 2003). The statutory obligation to promote equality of opportunity has prompted public bodies to introduce structures and procedures which enable them to fulfil this public obligation. A range of public bodies, including the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), Further and Higher Education institutions and Health Service Trusts have begun to monitor their provision as it relates to minority ethnic communities (see e.g.: McGill and Oliver, 2002; NIHE, 2007; Watt and McGaughey, 2006).

Public life in Northern Ireland has also witnessed a significant growth in the number and range of organisations working for or with minority ethnic communities. Longer established organisations, such as the Chinese Welfare Association (CWA), the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM), the Multi-Cultural Resource Centre (MCRC) and the former Belfast Travellers' Education and Development Group (BTEDG) have been joined by a wide range of newer groups, such as the African and Caribbean Association of Foyle (ACAF), the Polish Welfare Association (PWA), An Munia Tober (representing the interests of Irish Travellers) and the Anti-Racist Network (ARN). All of these recent developments have a bearing on the work of elected representatives in Northern Ireland. However, little is known or written about how political parties in Northern Ireland have responded to the presence of minority ethnic communities and to recent migration. It is this gap in our current understanding that we seek to address in the research project.

There is now a significant body of research on issues of particular relevance to minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland (Connolly, 2002; Lentin and McVeigh, 2006a; see also websites of: Animate, OFMDFM and the Institute for Conflict Research). Research has, for example, examined: prejudice against people from minority ethnic backgrounds (Borooah and Mangan, 2007; Connolly and Keenan, 2001; Gilligan and Lloyd, 2006); racist attacks (Jarman, 2003; Jarman & Monaghan, 2003; McVeigh, 2006); the needs of minority ethnic communities (Mann-Kler, 1997; Watt and McGaughey, 2006); migration and migrant workers (Bell *et al*, 2004); the position and concerns of Travellers (McCann *et al*, 1994). Some of this research has involved attitude surveys which have generated publicly available data which allow us to compare the attitudes of elected representatives with those of the general public, and more specifically, of party supporters (see Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) survey 2005; 2006).

The research project: themes and methods

The project sought to ascertain to what extent elected representatives/political parties are engaged with individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds, their concerns and the kinds of issues that cultural diversity presents for society, in Northern Ireland. In particular we sought to:

- Examine the extent and nature of contact that elected representatives have with individuals and groups representing minority ethnic communities
- Ascertain the views of elected representatives on how they view their role in identifying, addressing and representing the concerns and issues of minority ethnic communities
- Examine the views of elected representatives/political parties on a range of different topics relevant to minority ethnic communities, including: the participation of minority ethnic communities in public life; race hate; immigration; and public funding for specific minority ethnic community needs

In order to do this, we gathered data from three different sources to provide indicators of the engagement of elected representatives with minority ethnic communities. Firstly, we conducted a review of the political party election manifestos since 1994. In total, 62 manifestos were analysed from the DUP, SF, UUP, SDLP, ALL, and PUP. The second research component was a questionnaire (or survey) which was sent out to every MLA and local councillor in Northern Ireland (643 in total) and which received a respectable 32% return rate (201 in total). The third component consisted of semi-structured interviews with 28 elected representatives (supplemented with 18 interviews with individuals from the minority ethnic sector). All the interviews were conducted between October 2007 and April 2008.

As regards the first research source, a manifesto is an important, primary document that contains commitments and promises. It gives voice to a party in a concise and targeted manner, and rests on a tacit understanding that the party will endeavour to undertake the promises made in the electoral platform. We examined all the election manifestos which were produced by the five largest political parties and the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) in the period 1994-2007 (see Table 1.1). All manifesto references to minority ethnic communities either directly (by name) or indirectly (by addressing racism, diversity, equality, immigration, etc.) were noted. The input went from virtually zero references in the 1994 election manifestos to a point in 2007 when each party addressed the concerns of minority ethnic communities to some extent, either directly and/or indirectly. Most of the references have been basically positive in nature and the 2007 (most recent) manifestos are broadly accommodating and constructive. Material from this element of the project is provided at different points throughout this report. A more detailed outline of the relevant manifesto inputs is provided in McGarry, Hainsworth and Gilligan (2008).

	UUP	DUP	SDLP	SF	ALL	PUP
European 1994	X	X	X	X		
Forum 1996	X	X	X	X	X	X
Westminster 1997	X	X	X	X	X	X
Local Government 1997	X	X		X	X	
Assembly 1998	X	X	X	X	X	X
European 1999	X	X	X	X	X	
Westminster 2001	X	X	X	X	X	X
Local Government 2001	X			X	X	
Assembly 2003	X	X	X	X	X	X
European 2004	X	X	X	X		
Westminster 2005	X	X	X	X	X	
Local Government 2005				X		
Assembly 2007	X	X	X	X	X	X

An X denotes that a specific election manifesto was produced (when a local government election coincided with a Westminster election parties sometimes only produced one manifesto)

** The shaded cells denote a manifesto which refers either directly and/or indirectly to minority ethnic communities and their concerns.*

Table 1.1: Political party manifestos in Northern Ireland 1994-2007*

Secondly, a thirty-eight item, closed question, survey was sent to all of the 643 elected representatives in Northern Ireland. The questionnaire addressed key issues which had been identified by the researchers (see Appendix 1). Half of the questions were on the nature of contact that elected representatives have with people from minority ethnic backgrounds. We asked questions about how often elected representatives had contact with minority ethnic persons and communities and where this contact took place. We also asked questions on prejudice against minority ethnic communities, on policy regarding them and a range of questions on the participation of minority ethnic people in public life. We received back 201 completed surveys, which is a response rate of 32% - a respectable enough return for a postal survey. The questionnaire response was broadly representative of gender, age, religion, political status and political affiliation. In devising the survey we tried to ask elected representatives the same questions on minority ethnic communities that were asked of the general public in the 2006 NILT survey. The questions on contact are not directly comparable between the two surveys, but a number of other questions were asked on both surveys. These included multiple questions on prejudice against ethnic minorities and on participation in public life by individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds. The survey also included a question on immigration control from the eight Central and Eastern European countries (A8) which joined the European Union in 2004, and another question on the respondents' knowledge of the culture of minority ethnic communities living in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, the survey of elected representatives asked a closed and an open question on legislation on hate crimes, both of which had been asked in the 2005 NILT survey. The survey data was analysed using SPSS software.

Political Party	Total	%
Alliance Party (ALL)	20	10
Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)	39	19
Green Party (GP)	2	1
Sinn Féin (SF)	45	22
Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)	37	18
Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)	44	22
Independent	12	6
Other	2	1
Total no. of respondents	201	

Table 1.2: Political party response to the survey

We also conducted semi-structured interviews with 28 elected representatives. All interviews were recorded on a dictaphone and transcribed. In order to allow the interviewees to be able to talk freely and confidentially all interviewees were guaranteed that only their party affiliation would be identified in the report and they would thus be able to remain anonymous as individuals. Some interviewees indicated that they were happy to be identified by name but for the sake of consistency and to ensure the anonymity of those who did not want to be personally identified no individual is named in the report.

Political Party	Total
Democratic Unionist Party	5
Sinn Féin	6
Ulster Unionist Party	3
Social Democratic and Labour Party	6
Alliance Party	2
Progressive Unionist Party (PUP)	1
Green Party (GP)	1
Other (Scottish, Welsh, Irish)	4
Total no. of political party interviewees	28
<i>Minority ethnic community representative and advocates</i>	18
Total number of interviews	46

Table 1.3: Interviews conducted for the project

We attempted to ensure that the 28 elected representative interviewees were drawn from all the main political parties in Northern Ireland, to have a mix of local councillors and Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and to include representatives from a number of different geographical locations. The project has its empirical focus in six areas, three east of the Bann (Belfast, Coleraine, and Ballymena) and three West of the Bann (Derry/Londonderry, Dungannon, and Craigavon/Lurgan). The project attempted to interview elected representatives who were knowledgeable about minority ethnic communities and/or who represented constituencies with a minority ethnic community presence. Some of the interview questions were designed to enable the interviewee to elaborate on some of the topics covered in the questionnaire survey. Other questions sought to find out the views of elected representatives on how their own party was attempting to organise in relation to minority ethnic communities, and their perception of how other parties were responding to minority ethnic communities. The interviewer asked the same questions to all of the elected representatives (see Appendix 2) in the same linear format, unless an interviewee answered a question before it was asked. The dates of the interviews are included in parentheses throughout the report, located immediately after the individual interviewee referred to.

In addition to our focus on elected representatives we also interviewed minority ethnic community representatives. These were identified as interviewees according to the community that they claimed to represent, including the Polish, Chinese, Jewish, Indian, Pakistani, Filipino, Muslim, East Timorese, Traveller and Lithuanian communities. Advocates, on the other hand, were identified on account of the work they do with minority ethnic communities, for example, as local council officers and community workers. The interviews with minority ethnic community representatives and advocates asked a different set of questions from those asked of the elected representatives (see Appendix 3). The interviewees were broadly representative of the different geographic locations of the project. This report includes some comments from minority ethnic community representatives and advocates, but this has not been a principal focus of the report.

Each of the three different sources of data has advantages and disadvantages. The election manifestos have the advantage of providing the official party line. In this sense they are the most authoritative source of the views and policies of the *parties*. Manifestos, however, are a limited source in the sense that they are produced with a view to gaining votes rather than to providing researchers with data on questions which they are examining. The survey has the advantage of being composed of a standardised set of closed questions asked to all respondents. This means that we know that the answers provided are responses to the same question. The survey was completed by a third of all elected representatives and in this sense it is the source which is most *representative*. The surveys were completed by individuals, not by parties, so in this sense it provides the views of elected representatives, rather than a party line. (The variation in answers given to the survey indicates that there is an understandable variation in views and perceptions amongst elected representatives *within* each of the parties). The interviews allowed us to probe the answers given more deeply, and allowed the elected representatives to elaborate on their views in a way that was not possible with the other two sources. The interviews also allowed us to ask questions which were not covered in the other sources. In this sense the interviews provide the most *depth* and are the most *extensive*. The same questions were asked of all interviewees, but because an interview necessarily involves some open-ended dialogue the format and responses were not as standardised as with the survey. The interviewees were also not standardised. Some interviewees spoke expansively and others were briefer in their responses. (Sometimes this was due to the constraints of the interviewee's busy schedule).

Our research covered a lot of different topics. This has presented us with some difficulties on how to organise the way that we report the findings. There are two elements which are fit together fairly well as separate chapters. One of these is the findings on contact and interaction between elected representatives and minority ethnic communities, which we present in Chapter Two. The other element is the findings on the ways that the political parties responded – in terms of party organisation, attempts to gain votes from, and act as representatives of, minority ethnic communities – to the contemporary relevance of minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland. We present these findings in Chapter Four. Chapter Three consists of our findings on a mix of different issues, including: attitudes towards immigration controls; views of Travellers; perceptions of racism; views on public funding of community and voluntary groups in the field of minority ethnic community policy. The report summarises the main findings in a conclusion at the end.

The project has generated a lot of primary data. We have not yet had the chance to fully digest this data, though we thought it was important to get some provisional findings into the public domain. The authors hope that this research makes a constructive contribution to the dialogue between elected representatives/political parties and minority ethnic communities. The intention is not to prescribe solutions to existing problems or to propose best practice models, but to focus on pertinent issues and raise some questions which may be worth considering more fully.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have provided some background information on: the demographics of minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland; policy activity relevant to minority ethnic communities, and; a very brief guide to relevant existing research. We have also outlined the three main components of our research project, indicated the range of topics that we covered in our research project and provided a brief outline of the contents of the rest of this report.

2. CONTACT AND INTERACTION

Prior to undertaking our research we had a number of questions regarding contact between elected representatives and minority ethnic communities. We wondered: ‘how often do elected representatives have contact with people from minority ethnic backgrounds?’; ‘are they more likely to have contact with some groups than with others?’; ‘in what settings does this contact take place?’; ‘do some parties have more contact than others?’ The survey has helped us to gain a picture of the extent and location of contact and its variation by party. The interviews with elected representatives provide a more detailed picture of the nature of this contact and of the extent to which particular elected representatives and/or particular parties are making contact with people from minority ethnic backgrounds. The survey data indicates that the extent and venue for contact varies across political parties and elected representatives. The data from the interviews suggests variation across different constituencies too. The questions in the survey sought to examine which minority ethnic communities the elected representatives came into contact with and where this interaction takes places. The response rate of the survey was fairly proportionally representative of the party weightings in the Northern Ireland Assembly. Most of the respondents answered every question in the survey. The poorest response rate was on the questions regarding contact and interaction. We suspect that non-responses to the contact questions are because the survey respondent does not have any contact with the relevant group, but in reporting the data we have not made this assumption.

The percentages presented in the tables in this section do not add up to 100% because they are a proportion of the total responses (201), rather than a proportion of the total number of respondents for that specific question.

The first question in the survey assesses the frequency of contact of elected representatives with people from different minority ethnic communities. It was inquired whether contact was daily, once or twice a week, once or twice a month, very rarely, or never. The findings presented below have collapsed the categories in order to present an overview of the data.

	Daily/once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Very rarely/never
Black (African Caribbean)	4	9	78
Chinese	14	28	52
South Asian (Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi)	7	18	65
Irish Traveller	4	9	79
Filipino	5	15	74
Portuguese	5	7	79
Polish	14	31	50
Central and Eastern European (other)	7	13	70
Other European	6	12	65
Any other background	3	3	50

Table 2.1: Elected representatives’ contact with individuals from various minority ethnic communities, by frequency of contact (%)

The minority ethnic communities with which elected representatives have the most frequent contact are the Chinese and Polish communities (in both cases 14% of our respondents had contact with someone from each of these backgrounds at least once or twice a week). This is not surprising perhaps, as these two communities have sizeable populations and presence in Northern Ireland.

We also asked questions about frequency of contact in a range of different settings. The number of elected representatives who reported having *daily* contact with individuals from minority ethnic communities in any setting was so low that we have combined the data for daily and once or twice a week. The constituency surgery was the setting in which elected representatives were most likely (8%) to report having contact with individuals from a minority ethnic background daily, or once or twice a week. (Five elected representatives (2.5%) reported having daily contact in their constituency surgery). Politicians were much less likely to report having contact daily or once or twice a week at a range of different functions (see Table 2.3).

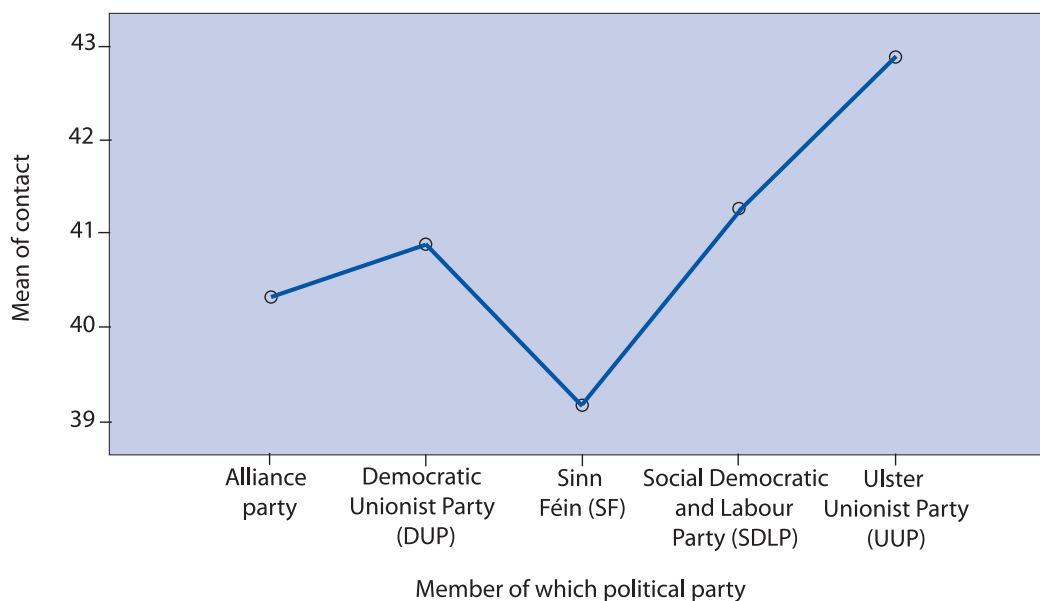
	Daily/once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Very rarely/never
Constituency surgery	8	15	56
Functions or meetings organised by minority ethnic community groups	2	29	56
Functions or meetings organised by public bodies for minority ethnic community groups	2	28	56
Functions or meetings organised by public bodies	3	25	68
Functions or meetings organised by public service providers for minority ethnic community groups	1	21	63
Functions or meetings organised by public service providers	2	20	63
Functions or meetings organised by my political party	2	11	74

Table 2.2: Locations where elected representatives have contact with individuals from minority ethnic communities, by frequency of contact (%)

Almost twice as many elected representatives (15%) reported having contact with individuals from minority ethnic communities in their constituency surgery once or twice a month as reported having contact daily or once or twice a week (8%). So we can say that a few politicians have daily contact with an individual from a minority ethnic community in their constituency surgery, but almost one in four elected representatives (23%) have contact at least once a month. As we do not have data on frequency of contact for the rest of the population we cannot tell if individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds are more, or less, likely than members of the general population to seek out elected representatives in their constituency surgery. When we consider, though, that individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds constitute a small proportion of the population of Northern Ireland (estimates vary between 1% and 5%) it appears that there are appreciable levels of contact in the setting of the constituency surgery.

However, most of the elected representatives (56%) very rarely or never have any contact with people from minority ethnic communities in their constituency surgery. We do not know if this is because there are very few people from minority ethnic backgrounds living in those particular constituencies. Another possibility is that some elected representatives gain a reputation as being particularly helpful and so people from minority ethnic communities attend the surgery of that particular elected representative in that particular constituency. A third possibility is that some political parties are perceived as being more favourably disposed towards minority ethnic communities and so people from minority ethnic backgrounds are more likely to attend surgeries of those political parties.

Elected representatives report having had contact with individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds in a range of other settings. More politicians reported having contact at least once a month in functions or meetings organised by minority ethnic community groups (31%), functions or meetings organised by public bodies specifically for minority ethnic community groups (30%) or at other functions or meetings organised by public bodies (28%), than in their constituency surgery (see Table 2.2). Functions and meetings organised by public service providers, and by public service providers specifically for minority ethnic communities, were settings in which a significant proportion of politicians (22% in each case) had contact with individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds at least once a month. Fewer elected representatives had contact with individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds at least once a month in functions or meetings organised by their own political party (13%). This was also the setting in which elected representatives were most likely to say that they had contact very rarely or never (74%).



Graph 2:1 Political party contact with minority ethnic communities/individuals

When we look at the contact by party we find that some of the five main political parties were more likely than others to have contact with individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds. In order to get a picture of the overall level of contact by party we created a score for each category of contact (5 for never, ranging through to 1 for daily) for each of the minority ethnic communities. We treated non-responses as if the response was a 'never' (scored 5). We then added these together so that each respondent had a score for contact (possible scores ranged from 1 (daily contact) to 5 (never)). We then added together the scores for all respondents from a particular party and divided this by the number of respondents from that party to give us a mean score for contact by party.

The party which had the lowest mean score (the highest level of contact on average) was Sinn Féin and the party which had the highest score (the lowest level of contact on average) was the UUP (see Graph 2.1). The mean scores are fairly close together, which signifies that there is little difference between the parties on the average level of contact between elected representatives and individuals from minority ethnic communities. The mean scores for all parties are towards the high end of the scores, which signifies that on average elected representatives do not have much contact with individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds.

When we look at the figures by minority ethnic community we find a varied picture by party. Elected representatives from Sinn Féin, for example, were on average more likely than any other party to report having contact with an individual from Irish Traveller, Polish or African/Caribbean backgrounds. Elected representatives from the SDLP were on average next most likely to have contact with an individual from an Irish Traveller or Polish background, but it was elected representatives from Alliance who were next most likely to have contact with an individual from an African/Caribbean background. Elected representatives from the DUP (closely followed by Sinn Féin) were, on average, more likely than those from other parties to report having contact with people from a Portuguese background. Elected representatives from Alliance were, on average, more likely than those from other parties to have contact with people from Chinese and Filipino backgrounds.

The survey provided therefore considerable detail on the nature and frequency of contact and interaction between politicians and minority ethnic communities. In one-to-one interviews, interviewees elaborated on the range and nature of interaction. Some elected representatives pointed here to quite frequent and extensive interaction with minority ethnic individuals, whilst others recounted less regular interaction. Unsurprisingly too, interaction takes place in many forms. Some elected politicians stress the point that contact and interaction takes place with *all* individuals or groups via constituency representation and advice channels. As one Sinn Féin MLA (8.2.07) explained: 'You have to make yourself available...you have to make it known... that you have their interests at heart.' Outreach therefore is seen as important for Sinn Féin, which has 'an open door policy to people from different backgrounds'. In this opinion, the onus is on elected representatives to create the conditions whereby minority ethnic communities are more likely to approach politicians. Also, a PUP elected representative (24.1.08) highlighted 'the mostly problem solving' basis of grassroots work: 'It's really what I deal with day by day...It's just the same range of problems.'

Many of the interviewees spoke of mutually positive interaction between elected politicians and minority ethnic communities at various events – such as festivals, meetings, cultural activities, and conferences. For example, one UUP MLA (1.2.08) spoke of organising a meeting with nurses in a local hospital in order ‘to reassure them that they were doing a valuable job and that they were appreciated for what they were doing’ (see also McElhinney, 2008). Again a DUP MLA (25.1.08) related that contact with minority ethnic individuals was ‘quite sporadic, perhaps three cases a week and then nothing for three or four weeks...It’s frequent enough but it’s not a daily occurrence’. Several interviewees highlighted an OFMDFM reception for minority ethnic communities as an event of note. The reception took place at Stormont at the time devolved government was restored to Northern Ireland in May 2007. According to one minority ethnic community advocate (12.10.07), the event could possibly have been construed as ‘tokenistic’ by invitees. However, argued this interviewee, ‘it really did matter’ to people from minority ethnic communities: ‘It genuinely did encourage them to think that the government had actually taken notice of them and that then redoubles their efforts to actually get their voices across to government – and that’s important.’ In the view of one representative for the Indian community (12.2.08), the event ‘was very, very useful’, whilst a Pakistani representative (13.2.08) commented: ‘That was a very good step...a positive step. I was really pleased and surprised.’ In contrast, a representative for the Jewish community (23.1.08) thought that the event was too stage managed and needed greater Traveller representation.

In the view of some minority ethnic community representatives and advocates, contact and interaction definitely increased at election time – though, of course, this observation would apply to a range of other groups at election time in Northern Ireland and beyond. Politicians and minority ethnic representatives spoke of contact via door-to-door election canvassing. In reference to the 2007 Northern Ireland Assembly election, moreover, one advocate for the Chinese community (28.11.07) spoke of more one-off photographs with party candidates, more politicians/candidates turning up at Chinese celebratory events and some phone calls asking for advice on what might be appropriate to put into election manifestos – ‘we hadn’t had that in previous years’. In interviews with minority ethnic community representatives and advocates interviewees expressed a view that parties (and in some cases particular individuals were singled out for particular mention) were doing some good work and making important contributions to race relations and anti-racism. Many interviewees, however, also emphasised that ‘more could be done’. (A sentiment, as we shall see in Chapter 4, that was also expressed by many elected representatives in the survey).

Conclusion

Contact between elected representatives and people from minority ethnic backgrounds varied in a number of different regards. In terms of *setting*, the survey found that daily or weekly contact was most likely to be in constituency surgeries, and almost one in four elected representatives reported contact in constituency surgeries at least once a month. In the interviews a number of elected representatives talked about a range of ways in which they helped people from minority ethnic backgrounds via their constituency work. Representatives and advocates from minority ethnic communities singled out particular individuals for special acknowledgement for work they did on behalf of minority ethnic communities. Meetings and functions organised by or for minority ethnic communities were the settings in which the highest proportion of elected representatives (about one in three) had contact with people from these backgrounds. Meetings organised by the parties themselves was the setting where contact was least likely to be reported. In terms of *frequency* of contact elected representatives from Sinn Féin were more likely, on average, to have contact with people from minority ethnic backgrounds. Frequency of contact, however, did not vary much by party. There was much more variation within parties (a significant number from all parties had no contact) than between parties. In terms of *communities*, elected representatives were more likely to have contact with some communities than others. This is to be expected given the different sizes of the different communities. Some parties were also more likely than others to have contact with particular communities. Sinn Féin, Alliance and the DUP reported most contact with particular communities. Representatives and advocates from minority ethnic communities reported that contact was more intense at election time.

3. CONCERNS AND ISSUES

The focus of the research project is upon elected representatives and political parties and their relationship to ethnic minority communities and their concerns. In this chapter, we endeavour to ascertain the views of elected representatives and political parties on a range of different issues and topics relevant to minority ethnic communities, including perception of minority ethnic concerns, migration, racist attacks, hate crime, and funding. Again, the chapter draws upon the three components of the research – interviews, manifestos and the survey. The chapter begins by assessing some of the interview data before focusing on election manifestos, with the emphasis upon what elected representatives and political parties perceive to be the concerns of minority ethnic communities.

Perception of the main concerns of minority ethnic communities

In the interviews we asked the elected representatives what they thought were the main concerns and issues of minority ethnic communities. According to one PUP elected representative (24.1.08): 'I'm not so sure that minority ethnic groups have particular needs that are any different from, say, a white, working-class Protestant group. I think they suffer levels of degradation and prejudice and ill-health, and struggle with the inequalities of the education system.' Thus, 'mostly it's to do with housing and employment' – but the interviewee added further specific problems (immigration, asylum and racist attacks) to this broad list. Several other elected representatives also alight on housing as a key concern, notably for migrant workers. For instance, a UUP MLA (1.2.08) says that he was 'appalled' at housing and living conditions, notably 'bed hopping as a result of shift working and rotational bed sharing'. A Sinn Féin councillor (3.12.07) too identified housing and accommodation as a crucial issue: 'I'd say the biggest issue facing [migrant workers] at the minute is the availability of affordable housing.' Other big issues here were seen to be: registering with a doctor; exploitation in employment; and regulation of recruitment agencies and contractors. Similarly, a DUP MLA (24.1.08) saw the main problem as getting migrant workers 'settled' and, in this respect, the provision of local welcome packs from the council was deemed to be helpful. A DUP local councillor expressed concern about employers exploiting migrant workers (21.1.08). Racist attacks also featured prominently in elected representatives' perception of the main issues and concerns of minority ethnic communities. For instance, a Sinn Féin local councillor (1.2.08) spoke of a Loyalist arson attack on a migrant workers' residence. Again, a Green Party politician (3.12.07) saw intimidation and verbal abuse as problems, as evidenced in Chinese restaurants and against Filipino nurses in hospitals.

As regards election manifestos, the compilation and dissemination of these documents has provided political parties with opportunities to express and record their support for policies and people. The material included and the language employed by political parties in election manifestos exhibits their perception of and position on the concerns and issues of minority ethnic communities. In its election manifestos the DUP has limited references to the specific concerns of minority ethnic communities but it does refer to racism more generally. This suggests that, according to the DUP, racism is the main concern of minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland. The DUP's 2001 election manifesto was effectively the first in which the party expressed support for policies relating to minority ethnic communities. Herein the DUP cites discrimination as a concern: 'we believe in real and meaningful equality for women and ethnic minorities. We hold that this principle should be built into mainstream government priorities and not relegated to token programmes or projects. In this way the problem of discrimination can be effectively and resolutely tackled' (DUP, 2001: 8). As highlighted elsewhere (McGarry et al., 2008), recent DUP manifestos have set out the party's support for tougher sentencing for hate crimes and a zero tolerance approach to racism (DUP 2007: 58). The party's 2005 manifesto too flagged up the important role that politicians ought to play in these matters (DUP, 2005). In the 2005 manifesto, the party positively evaluates the longstanding and contemporary contribution of immigrants to Northern Ireland's economy and society (DUP, 2005: 2).

The 1997 UUP general election manifesto maintains the importance of a 'genuinely plural, liberal democratic state capable of accommodating social, cultural and religious diversity' and refers to minority rights (UUP, 1997a: 1-2). When addressing fair employment, the UUP stakes its commitment to equality of opportunity 'irrespective of race, gender or creed' (UUP, 1997a: 2). In 1998, the UUP reiterates the fair employment principles highlighted in the party's 1997 manifesto: 'in trying to achieve fairness and equality, it is essential that the highest value is placed on equality of opportunity irrespective of race, gender, creed or disability' (UUP, 1998: 6). Furthermore, an Ulster Unionist Charter is included at the end of the 2003 manifesto which stipulates that 'Ulster Unionists will work for the social and economic betterment of all our citizens regardless of class, gender, colour, race, nationality or religion' (UUP, 2003: 10). In 2003, the UUP manifesto commitment supports 'a multicultural, multi-ethnic society in which everyone plays a part' (UUP 2003: 9). Again, in the party's 2007 manifesto, the UUP supports 'A Shared Community', in 'a culturally diverse Northern Ireland in which the rights of all are secured' (UUP, 2007: 27). Significantly, the manifesto was condensed and translated into seven languages on the party's website.

The Progressive Unionist Party's election manifestos express 'respect for diversity' (PUP, 1996; 1997; 1998). The party called for all individuals to be treated equally, regardless of race and other attributes (PUP 1997: 1). The PUP's 1998 manifesto set out the party's determination to see a health service free to all peoples regardless of class, colour or creed (PUP, 1998: 4). Subsequently, the party's 2003 Assembly election manifesto called for 'the development of pro-active initiatives that lead to

more representative participation of women and ethnic minorities in public and private institutions' (PUP, 2003: 4). The same aspiration features in the party's 2007 Assembly manifesto.

The Alliance Party – in its 1997 general election manifesto – welcomed the introduction of Race Relations legislation and looked to equality of opportunity regardless of 'religion, political belief, gender, race, disability and age' (Alliance 1997a: 15-16). The party's 1997 local government election manifesto also looked to elected district councillors 'to work hard to ensure that no discrimination of any kind', including race, takes place. Subsequent Alliance Party manifestos reiterated these themes in the context of equality, anti-discrimination and cultural diversity. In order to build a united community, Alliance pledges to 'ensure that the interests and needs of persons belonging to ethnic minorities are included in the broader framework of community relations' (Alliance, 2003: 8). At the same time, Alliance outlines its commitment to establishing an integration policy for asylum seekers in Northern Ireland, thus abolishing the practice of placing such persons in detention (Alliance, 2003: 14). On cultural matters, Alliance supports the appreciation and promotion of Cantonese, Irish and Ulster-Scots. Moreover, 'Alliance recognises the linguistic diversity within our community, and believes all ethnic minority languages practiced in Northern Ireland deserve as much protection as indigenous languages' (Alliance, 2003: 24). The party's 2003 Assembly election manifesto also pledges to 'ensure that the interests and needs of persons belonging to ethnic minorities are included in the broader framework of community relations'. The 2007 Assembly manifesto calls for full implementation of the Racial Equality Strategy and expressed support for the rights and integration of migrant workers.

For Sinn Féin the equality agenda has very much characterised its political discourse. In the 2001 election manifesto the party specifically and explicitly bringing race into the equality agenda, calls for 'the promotion of equality of opportunity between persons of different religious beliefs, political opinions, racial groups, ages, marital status and sexual orientation' (SF, 2001b: 16-17). Also, it advocates an amnesty for asylum seekers who arrived in Ireland before January 2001. Additionally, it demands an end to the voucher system for asylum seekers as well as an end to the detention of asylum seekers. Asylum seekers are not the only minority which is cited here. Legislation is called for to transfer powers of responsibility for Traveller accommodation from district councils to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive without further delay (SF, 2001b: 17). In 2003 Sinn Féin calls for legislation and adequate funding to ensure the implementation of PSI (Promoting Social Inclusion) as well as increased powers for the Equality Commission to legally challenge discrimination. At the same time, the party's election manifesto expresses support for the Traveller community and condemns recent abuse of the Muslim community in Northern Ireland (SF, 2003: 73, 90). The party supports 'healthcare training for Traveller women to work within their communities' (SF, 2003: 72). Sinn Féin's 2005 local government manifesto, extending the party's concern to represent Traveller and other minority communities, calls specifically for the following: 'the speedy implementation of the recommendations of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Travellers; a Good Practice Guide to be developed and implemented for all Traveller service providers, including local councils; Local Councils to fund initiatives to encourage participation from ethnic minorities in the political process and there should be council representation on ethnic community support groups' (SF, 2005b: 9). It contends that 'too many councils are still ignoring their responsibilities to citizens from ethnic minority backgrounds and failing to properly address issues such as intimidation, discrimination in employment, education and inadequate health provisions' (SF, 2005b: 31). The party claimed though that Belfast, Lurgan and Omagh Councils 'have led the way in reaching out to and working with members of minority ethnic communities on a range of issues' (SF, 2005b: 31). In the most recent election manifesto the party promises to work to 'respect, protect and promote the rights of Travellers to adequate and appropriate housing and ensure genuine engagement and consultation on a basis of equality between the Housing Executive, local authorities, Travellers and the settled community' (SF, 2007: 34).

The SDLP too approaches minority ethnic communities via the language of equality. The party's 1997 election manifesto proclaims that 'we believe the ethnic minorities in our society are entitled to protection from discrimination and measures to guarantee equality of opportunity in terms of jobs, accommodation, education and health care in line with international obligations' (SDLP 1997: 14). The SDLP welcomes the long overdue Race Relations legislation and 'the fact that it specifically protects Travellers; we believe that nomadic lifestyle is a fundamental freedom to be vigorously defended' (SDLP, 1997: 14). Additionally, it calls for the 'provision of adequate resources to meet the needs of minority ethnic communities, particularly in the fields of health, education and social services' (SDLP, 1997: 14). Moreover, the party wants to see an ethnic question included in the census in order to enable an accurate assessment of the needs of minority ethnic communities. In subsequent manifestos, the SDLP includes further words of support for minority ethnic communities, notably calling for access to political structures regardless of gender, disability, religion and ethnic background (SDLP 1999: 7). The party's 2001 manifesto recorded that the party's initiative had resulted in a Senior Civil Service review of under-representation of minority ethnic groups and other groupings (SDLP 2001: 5). The SDLP advocates funding 'to support ethnic minority voluntary groups' as well as 'for pilot traveller accommodation' (SDLP, 2001: 13). Besides supporting Travellers, the SDLP calls for 'fair treatment of asylum seekers' (SDLP, 2001: 18). Later, the party attacks the unfair treatment of asylum seekers, appealing for 'an end to the use of prison accommodation for those awaiting hearing' (SDLP, 2003: 33). The 2005 and 2007 manifestos supported the provision of training for party members to counter racism and other forms of intolerance, whilst calling also for better educational provision for ethnic minority school children and pre-school care for Traveller children (SDLP 2005; 2007). The next section looks further at Traveller matters.

Views and Comments Regarding Travellers

Two questions were asked in the survey specifically on the Traveller community. Firstly, the survey asked elected representatives whether they agreed that the culture of Irish Travellers is increasingly respected (see Table 3.1).

Political Party	The culture of Irish Travellers is increasingly respected in Northern Ireland					Total
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Alliance Party	0	1	6	11	2	20
DUP	0	4	15	12	8	39
Green Party	0	0	0	1	1	2
SF	1	5	10	19	10	45
SDLP	0	5	8	17	7	37
UUP	0	8	11	15	8	42
Independent	1	4	2	3	2	12
Other	0	0	1	0	1	2
Total no. of respondents	2	27	53	78	39	199

Table 3.1: Level of agreement that the culture of Irish Travellers is increasingly respected in Northern Ireland

From the five possible responses, the most favoured choice (for 39% of respondents) was that respondents from all political parties disagree with the view that the culture of Irish Travellers is increasingly respected in Northern Ireland. Only 15% of the respondents strongly agree or agree that the culture of Irish Travellers is increasingly respected in Northern Ireland. As regards the DUP, the most favoured option was that 39% of party respondents neither agree nor disagree that the culture of Irish Travellers is increasingly respected in Northern Ireland. For Sinn Féin, the most favoured option was that 42% respondents disagree that the culture of Irish Travellers is increasingly respected in Northern Ireland, and the comparable figures for the UUP and SDLP were 36% and 46% of respondents respectively. The majority of Alliance respondents disagrees that the culture of Irish Travellers is increasingly respected in Northern Ireland (55% of the Alliance respondents).

The second question relating to the Traveller community asked participants if they agreed that local councils should ensure Irish Travellers have access to accommodation provisions. The results have been split by political party and are shown in Table 3.2.

Political Party	Local councils should ensure that Irish Travellers should have access to accommodation provisions					Total
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Alliance Party	1	11	3	3	1	19
DUP	1	9	15	9	4	38
Green Party	0	1	1	0	0	2
SF	22	17	2	3	0	44
SDLP	6	21	5	4	0	36
UUP	2	10	13	11	6	42
Independent	1	3	1	4	3	12
Other	0	0	0	1	1	2
Total no. of respondents	33	72	40	35	15	195

Table 3.2: Level of agreement that local councils should ensure Irish Travellers have access to accommodation provisions

Again, five possible responses were available. The most favoured option of all political parties was that 37% of respondents agree that local councils should ensure Irish Travellers have access to accommodation provisions. For the DUP, the most favoured option was that 40% of party respondents neither agrees nor disagrees that local councils should ensure Irish Travellers have access to accommodation provisions. The comparable figure for the UUP here is 31%. Half of Sinn Féin respondents strongly agree that local councils should ensure Irish Travellers have access to accommodation provisions (50% of the SF respondents). The majority of SDLP respondents agree that local councils should ensure that Irish Travellers have access to accommodation provisions (58% of the SDLP respondents). The majority of Alliance respondents also agree with this viewpoint (58% of the Alliance respondents).

Migration

In 2005 and 2006 the Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) survey asked a range of questions on the topic of migration and migrant workers (including questions on attitudes towards government policy on immigration, and on the perceptions of the contribution that migrant workers make to Northern Irish society). Because we wanted to ensure a respectable completion rate for questionnaires sent out to elected representatives, we asked only one question on the issue of migration – i.e. attitudes towards the UK government's decision not to place restrictions on immigration from the eight Central and Eastern European countries (A8) which joined the EU in May 2004. Some of the other issues relevant to immigration, (such as those regarding refugees and asylum-seekers, and the contribution which migrant workers make to Northern Irish society), have been raised by political parties in their election manifestos and/or were raised by elected representatives in the interviews which they gave for this project.

When we compared responses to the question on the UK government's decision not to place restrictions on immigration from the A8 countries, we found that elected representatives were more likely than the general public who completed the 2006 NILT survey (33% compared to 26%) to agree with the government's decision. When the responses are broken down by political party we find that elected representatives from all of the political parties are more liberal than their party supporters on the question of immigration restrictions. In the case of the UUP and DUP, however, there is very little divergence between the views of elected representatives and those of their party supporters. The two Nationalist parties – Sinn Féin and the SDLP – are the parties for which the views of elected representatives and their party supporters diverge most. The more liberal attitude towards immigration on the part of elected representatives may be because they are judging the overall benefits of this migration to Northern Irish society, while members of the general public are considering the issue from the point of view of the impact it has had on them personally in one particular aspect of their lives. Negative media (tabloid newspaper) representations of outsiders may well have played a part here too. Another possibility is that the response from the general public reflects more scepticism towards government handling of policy issues, while the elected representatives' responses reflect their views on the specific issue of migration from Central and Eastern Europe. This possibility is suggested by the ambivalence of the responses to the questions on immigration and migrant workers in the 2006 NILT survey. A significant majority (73%) in the NILT survey thought that the UK government should have placed restrictions on immigration from the A8 countries. However, at the same time, a majority also thought that migrant workers are good for the Northern Irish economy (54%) (Gilligan, 2008a). A third possibility is that the divergence in opinion is due to the time lag between the two surveys. It is possible that by 2007 it was clearer that immigration from the A8 countries has been largely beneficial to Northern Irish society, and that elected representatives were particularly of this view.

	Elected Representatives, %	NILT 2006, %	'Divergence'
Sinn Féin	63	30	+33
SDLP	63	26	+37
Alliance	55	31	+24
UUP	18	14	+4
DUP	11	9	+2

Table 3.3: Elected representatives and party supporters who agree with the UK Government's decision not to place restrictions on immigration from A8 countries in 2004

In addition to the divergence between elected representatives and their supporters there is also the issue of divergence of opinion between the parties. On the question of restrictions on immigration from the new EU countries, we find a significant difference between the opinion of elected representatives from Sinn Féin, the SDLP and Alliance on the one hand and the two

main Unionist parties on the other. Looked at from this perspective, elected representatives from Sinn Féin, the SDLP and Alliance, and their party supporters, are more likely than elected representatives and party supporters of the two main Unionist parties to agree with the UK government's decision (see Table 3.3). This difference between the two main Unionist parties and the other parties was also evident in the party manifestos and in the interviews with elected representatives.

As regards the manifestos, the DUP's 1994 European election manifesto refers to Article 8A of the Maastricht Treaty, which relates to the freedom of movement of persons throughout the European Union (EU). The manifesto warns that 'the United Kingdom could be forced to take in people whom it does not want' (DUP, 1994: 5). Immigration is presented, in this instance, as a burden on the state that the UK cannot resist due to the erosion of sovereignty at the EU level. Ten years later the 2004 European election manifesto contains a section entitled 'Facing Enlargement', which notes that the new entrants to the EU are mainly Eastern European countries, many of which are 'economically impoverished' (DUP, 2004: 22). This section suggests that 'in consequence of the free movement of labour afforded to Member States it is likely that there will be an increase in economic migrants moving across Europe from East to West in search of higher paid jobs and benefits'. The DUP's Euro-candidate, Jim Allister, supports effective measures 'to ensure that we do not suffer the effects of "benefits tourists" who would seek to abuse the social security and healthcare systems on offer in Northern Ireland' (DUP, 2004: 22). The DUP's stance on 'benefits tourists' would appear therefore to reassure voters with fears about migration. However, it is noteworthy that, an appreciable change in language can be detected in the party's 2005 election manifesto. The latter document is more positive-sounding about the contribution of migrants: 'as a Province we have benefited in many ways from other cultures and traditions. Whether it is people who have come to Northern Ireland recently, or have been here for many years, our economy and society have benefited from their presence' (DUP, 2005: 24).

Sinn Féin has articulated pro-immigrant views in election manifestos. Also the party advocates an amnesty for all those asylum seekers who arrived in Ireland before January 2001 (SF, 2001b: 17). Additionally, it demands an end to the voucher system for asylum seekers as well as an end to the detention of asylum seekers (SF, 2001b: 17). The 2004 European election manifesto promises that Sinn Féin will work for 'an immediate right to employment for all EU workers in any member state' (SF, 2004: 9) and maintains that they have an equal right to social protection (SF, 2004: 15). Moreover, it points out that 'EU transnational companies must respect and promote the dignity and human rights of their workforces wherever they are' (SF, 2004: 28), and that 'the EU must ensure non-discriminatory work practices' (SF, 2004: 35). The 2007 Assembly election manifesto confirms SF's commitment to workers' rights including the launch of a 'multilingual public education campaign on workers' rights and employers' responsibilities and actively encourage[s] trade union recognition, membership and representation' (SF, 2007: 8). Finally, under a section addressing 'Equality for the New Communities', the manifesto highlights the new cultural diversification 'which has huge potential to change our national dynamic for the better' (SF, 2007: 46).

The UUP's 2004 European Election manifesto includes a section entitled 'Governed according to our laws and customs' Firstly, the section focuses upon international terrorism and international crime as important concerns. Secondly, the section turns to issues of racism, asylum seeking and the movement of people. The section continues by stating that: 'The UUP is a signatory to the European Charter against racism, cherishes diversity and supports a humane asylum policy in Northern Ireland (UUP, 2004: 1)'. There is no specific condemnation included here of the practice of imprisoning asylum seekers in detention centres and prisons. The section asserts that the 'free movement of peoples across borders is a reality with which we must come to terms', and concludes that (in bold print) 'Controlled immigration can be beneficial but abuse of the asylum laws cannot be tolerated (UUP 2004: 1)'. The party's 2005 manifesto returns to the theme of immigration under a section entitled 'The people for law and order'. Here the UUP demonstrates its commitment to protect 'you and your family from crime', and supports a UK-wide ID card scheme to protect society – against criminal activity, terrorism and fraud – and also to 'help prevent illegal immigration'. Thus, the UUP sees potential threat in the processes of asylum seeking and migration. However, in a section focused on 'The people for rights and tolerance', the party expresses pride in the United Kingdom's multicultural heritage. The emphasis here is on equal citizenship in the United Kingdom for people in Northern Ireland, 'irrespective of class, gender, colour or race'. The manifesto concludes that 'Ulster Unionists support a Northern Ireland anti-racism strategy to promote the British values of tolerance and inclusion' – values seen to be threatened by racism and bigotry (UUP, 2005: 10).

The SDLP refers to the rights of migrants more than other parties do so in their manifestos. The SDLP's 1998 election manifesto concludes with the warning that the new Europe 'must be able to deal with the ethnic tensions which might arise as a consequence of labour mobility' (SDLP, 1998: 11). This warning was in the context of an outlook which is broadly sympathetic towards immigrants. Two years later the SDLP called for 'fair treatment of asylum seekers' (SDLP, 2001: 18). The pro-migrant stance of the party was spelled out further in the 2003 manifesto which committed the SDLP to developing 'a rights awareness programme for migrant workers' (SDLP, 2003: 11). The manifesto also included a call for the UK to sign up to the UN Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and promises that the SDLP will promote trade union membership for all migrant workers (SDLP, 2003: 33). It also opposed the unfair treatment of asylum seekers, calling for 'an end to the use of prison accommodation for those awaiting hearing' (SDLP, 2003: 33). The SDLP's 2004 European election manifesto addresses the latest round of EU enlargement - we have a 'practical and moral interest in supporting our new fellow citizens today' (SDLP, 2004: 4). Whilst acknowledging the practical challenge to society, it cautions against 'community tensions arising in areas attracting migrant workers' (SDLP, 2004: 4). Furthermore, the party attempted to challenge some of the negative stereotypes

against immigrants, maintaining that 'evidence shows that migrant workers make a net contribution to the economy as we see clearly in our health service. While others may fan the flames of racism, the SDLP will stand firm for equality and diversity' (SDLP, 2004: 4). On issues relating to migrant workers, the 2005 election manifesto states its intention to 'deliver an integrated cross-departmental strategy to review and address the range of needs of migrant workers and their families, raising awareness of their entitlements, and helping them to access social welfare, education, health and other services. We will also campaign for the UK government to sign the UN Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers' (SDLP, 2005: 14-15). In order to protect migrant workers' rights, it promotes 'union membership for all migrant workers' (SDLP, 2005: 39). On staffing in the NHS, it warns that the 'short term solution of overseas recruitment is inadequate, uneconomical and unfair to developing countries trying to build up their own services' (SDLP, 2005: 26). Part of the SDLP's goals is to protect workers and in this respect it calls for a 'cross departmental strategy to augment protection and awareness of the rights of Migrant Workers, as outlined by the Human Rights Commission in the recent 'Migrant Workers Advice Guide' (SDLP, 2007: 21).

The Alliance Party's election manifestos also strike a positive note when discussing the issue of immigration. The party's 1999 election manifesto welcomes the EU's commitment to develop a 'common immigration policy, without which the freedom of movement of people within the Union will remain a pipe-dream' (Alliance, 1999: 7). In 2003 Alliance outlined its commitment to establishing an integration policy for asylum seekers in Northern Ireland, thus abolishing the practice of detaining asylum-seekers in Maghaberry Prison or the Crumlin Road Jail (Alliance, 2003: 14). The party's 2007 Assembly election manifesto notes that a growing number of new immigrants are coming to Northern Ireland to work, a development which it maintains is an encouraging sign of a globalising economy (Alliance, 2007: 7). This manifesto also contains a commitment to 'seek to ensure that all migrant workers and immigrants have full access to public services, and employment rights' (Alliance, 2007: 10). Alliance supports the full implementation of the Racial Equality Strategy and the integration of immigrants into Northern Ireland society (Alliance, 2007: 10).

The difference between political parties towards immigration, as shown in the survey and the election manifestos, was also evident in the interviews with elected representatives. Virtually all of the elected representatives from the DUP and UUP who were interviewed were in favour of restrictions on the numbers of immigrants allowed into Northern Ireland. Opinions varied on how urgently restrictions were required and how strongly the interviewee felt about the issue. The most typical comment was that present levels were tolerable, but that they should be carefully monitored. As one UUP MLA (23.1.08) put it: 'I would not wish it to get to such levels that difficulties could arise because of local people feeling that others have taken their jobs.' Others, however, thought that there were already too many immigrants in Northern Ireland. As one DUP local councillor (4.2.08) contended: 'I think we need to be looking at restrictions now. I hope that doesn't sound [like] a racist comment, but I think we have to be looking at restrictions.' Such comments co-existed though with a generally positive overall assessment of migrant workers. Thus according to the same individual, 'the basic perception is that these people are good workers, have done a good job'. A PUP elected representative, (24.1.08) however, did not view the issue in quite the same way, saying that: 'I don't think I'd be in favour of a cap because I think we need to look at the global economy... We've an influx of migrant workers now and they're contributing to our society, to our economy. They're paying taxes and national insurance. They're maybe staying for a couple of years or maybe putting down long term roots. That's fine. But a lot of the countries they are coming from realise what they've lost'. Furthermore, in an even more positive vein the representative said that the growth in immigration 'enriches our lives, educates us. It also challenges us to see that there are other, different views out there'.

By and large, representatives from the two largest Nationalist parties were not in favour of restrictions on the number of immigrants coming to Northern Ireland. Albeit one SDLP MLA (18.1.08) said that there should be restrictions on numbers but 'not in a narrow way'. Another SDLP MLA (15.2.08) talked about a need to monitor immigration, but this was deemed to be necessary in order to ensure that adequate services were provided for immigrants: 'Restrictions? No. Measurement? Yes. Measurement would enable us to have a better idea of what services are needed.' Members of Sinn Féin were also opposed to restrictions. Moreover, most of them made some reference to the Irish people's experience of migration, a reference which was not prominent in the discourse of SDLP party representatives. One Sinn Féin local councillor (3.12.08) said that there is 'a shared concept of migration' between contemporary Irish Nationalists and migrants. This 'collective understanding and a collective consciousness' were developed by Irish people through their family experience of emigration: 'There are very few families in any area of Ireland that don't have someone in America, somebody in Australia, England or whatever'. An Alliance MLA (24.1.08) urged 'a more constructive relationship' around the issue of migration: 'It's a big upheaval. People don't do that lightly. It's brave and it shows they want to work hard and contribute something.' Another Alliance MLA (13.2.08) argued that the presence of a significant number of migrant workers with young children had helped some schools threatened with closure to remain open.

Despite the different attitudes towards migration, however, elected representatives from all of the parties said that they had worked in some way to help their constituents with problems pertaining to their immigration status. One DUP MLA (24.1.08) for example, said of some of his newer constituents that 'they have been very much part of the community here... I have done everything in my power to keep them and get them to remain in the United Kingdom'. A number of representatives from the DUP also complained about how some unscrupulous employers exploited migrant workers. According to one DUP MLA (24.1.08): 'Polish and Lithuanians have suffered a number of problems of exploitation... It's certainly something my party's

opposed to and wants to do something about.’ The same elected representative also criticised landlords who placed large numbers of migrant workers in substandard accommodation and charged them exorbitant rent: ‘It needs to stop and we need to deal with it and effectively be seen to deal with it as an Assembly’. A number of representatives from Sinn Féin, the SDLP and Alliance complained about misconceptions that migrant workers take jobs away from Northern Irish people. One Sinn Féin local councillor (3.12.07), for example, criticised elected politicians ‘who have little contact with migrant workers’ but who ‘help perpetuate “they’re taking our jobs” kinds of arguments’.

Representatives from minority ethnic community organisations had mixed feelings about what political parties are doing for migrants. On the one hand, one African community representative (11.10.07) notes that ‘most of the political parties are trying to adopt some kind of inclusive principles on how to represent migrants. But having said that I think there are some political parties that represent migrant issues better than others’. On the other hand, a Polish community representative (21.11.07) maintains that, with regards to political parties, ‘there are no specific agendas that are actually going to target migrant workers’. One minority ethnic community advocate (9.10.07) points out that migrants are under-represented by political parties: ‘very few have migrant members. Certainly no-one is being put forward as a candidate’.

On a range of different indicators – survey, manifestos, interviews – elected representatives from the UUP and DUP are much more likely than elected representatives from the other main parties to express concerns about the numbers of immigrants and to suggest the need for a cap on numbers, at least at some point in the future, if not now. However, harbouring these attitudes on immigration does not preclude conducting local constituency work to assist migrant workers with visas, campaigning against unscrupulous employers or troubleshooting problems with landlords.

Racist Attacks

When asked whether they thought that racism was a problem in Northern Irish society most of the interviewees for this project referred to racist attacks on, and harassment of, minority ethnic people and migrant workers. References to practices of institutional racism, by way of contrast, were less frequent. For instance, an SDLP MLA (19.12.07) responded: ‘Yes, [it’s] a substantial problem...significant attacks, violent attacks, verbal abuse and so on.’ A UUP MLA (19.2.08) perceived racism to be a growing problem: ‘Yes, I think it’s an issue that increasingly we have to come to terms with or indeed confront.’ Education was seen as important here ‘to ensure that certainly young people understand the importance of treating people fairly, equally and correctly’. One SDLP local councillor (10.1.08) thought that racism was more likely to emanate from Unionists: ‘I’ve found that the majority of racist incidents and attacks on members of ethnic minorities would seem to emanate from Unionist, Loyalist areas, rather than from Nationalist areas.’ The individual was not sure why this was so and added that, ‘I’m not saying that there isn’t a problem with racism within the Nationalist community.’ A Sinn Féin local councillor (3.12.07) thought that the different minority ethnic communities in his locality had been better received in Republican areas than they had in Loyalist areas. A Green Party politician (3.12.07) thought that racism in Northern Ireland is a problem and that there was a paramilitary aspect to it. A senior PUP spokesperson notes elsewhere that: ‘Racists have nothing whatever to offer the Protestant community’ (The Other View, 2003: 7). An interesting perspective was provided by a PUP elected representative (24.1.08), who suggested that Northern Ireland is going through a period ‘of massive change in a short space of time and people react to that...Racism in working-class areas is really a community responding to change’. Part of the problem was seen to be the lack of preparation for increased inward migration, which had not been ‘managed’ well. As a consequence, ‘the most vicious reaction to that change is racial hatred’.

Whilst racism is recognised as a reality – and notably racist attacks, several interviewees rejected the argument that the problem in Northern Ireland was worse than elsewhere. For example, according to the above-mentioned PUP elected representative (24.1.08), ‘Yes, there are racists. There’s absolutely no question about that.’ But Northern Ireland was not ‘the racist capital of Europe’. A DUP MLA (25.1.08) too tended to play down the prevalence of racism in Northern Ireland: ‘I think it’s a mixed bag. I think there’s an underlying racism...amongst a small number of people and that does get highlighted in the press when it happens. But for the most part, I think [that for] the vast majority of the ethnic minority communities who come here, their experience is quite good. For a small minority, it’s not.’ Pursuing this minority/majority theme, the interviewee sees ‘a small minority in our own settled community’ as unhappy with the presence of minority ethnic communities, whereas ‘the vast majority’ is not. One DUP local councillor (21.1.08) took a similar view that ‘on the whole I would say that Northern Ireland society is not racist’. A UUP MLA (1.2.08) did not think that racism is a particular problem in Northern Ireland, except in certain localities ‘where people don’t understand or take time for’ minority ethnic people. Moreover, adds this interviewee: ‘They wouldn’t be coming over here if they felt they were getting a raw deal or that people were hostile to them. That’s not the case.’ At the project conference held in May 2008 one MLA pointed out that racism is more prevalent in inner-city areas because ‘poverty and exclusion could lead to a tinderbox’ whereby the blame for deprivation is focused on minority ethnic communities.

A Chinese community representative (26.11.07) suggested that Northern Ireland was still playing catch-up as regards race relations and anti-racism. A representative for the Polish community (26.10.07) explained that anti-racism unites broadly to some extent. Again, a minority ethnic community advocate (22.11.07) concurred: 'I think it's a common cause. They would all agree with it.' However, 'how much effort they might put into it might be a different matter. It's easy to speak up when there has been a [racist] attack. Everyone can easily condemn things. But the preventive work is what's needed.' According to a representative for the Lithuanian community (1.2.08), whilst parties are against racism, the test is how they deal with it: 'They can all say nice speeches about racism and then that's where it is left...racism is being left on a nice sheet of paper.' Also, a representative for the Traveller community (15.11.07) wanted politicians to be more visible in their support and their condemnation of institutional racism – rather than contenting themselves with basic statements like 'racism is bad'. This sentiment was echoed by a minority ethnic community advocate, who welcomed the party political consensus on condemning racist attacks (9.10.07), but looked to more comprehensive treatment of institutional racism and Traveller issues.

Sectarianism and Racism

Unsurprisingly, comparisons and links have been made between sectarianism and racism. For various interviewees, racism and sectarianism were seen as two sides of the same coin. According to a UUP MLA (19.2.08), 'they both have the same horrible outlets'. A Sinn Féin MLA (8.2.08) pointed to a scenario of 'bigotry, intolerance, based on race, creed or colour and sometimes based on ignorance or misinformation'. Again, an SDLP MLA (18.1.08) equated sectarianism and racism with fear of 'the other': 'Some people have difficulty dealing with difference and are inclined to see somebody who is different in any way as a threat.' Another Sinn Féin MLA (22.1.08) also put racism and sectarianism on the same attitudinal wavelength – 'it is bias based on ignorance, based on lack of contact, based on segregation, based on fear'. At the same time, the view was taken here that there is something *new* about racism in Northern Ireland and that the experience of dealing with sectarianism could inform the struggle against racism 'at an early stage': 'I think we're a very political society, we're more capable of dealing with the attitudinal issues which give rise to racism.' However, like various other interviewees, this Sinn Féin MLA did not see Northern Ireland as any more racist than other societies. A DUP local councillor (21.1.08) also viewed racism as 'a form of sectarianism', suggesting that 'because of our sectarian conflict over the past years, it hasn't raised its head...But, as a whole, I would say that Northern Ireland society isn't racist'. At the project conference held in May 2008, one MLA pointed out that addressing racism was important but was concerned that it had become 'the soft option' compared with dealing with sectarianism. The suggestion here was that, in Northern Ireland, it is more straightforward to address racism than it is to tackle sectarianism.

Race Hate Crime and Punishment

The survey results find that Unionist parties and their supporters are the least likely to support more severe punishment for crimes motivated by hate (see Table 3.4). This might be because they are more likely to think that all similar crimes should be treated similarly, irrespective of the target. The 2004 House of Commons Select Committee on Northern Ireland's Ninth Report 'Hate Crime- an increasing trend?' notes that 'housing policy appears to have an impact on hate crime. The prevalence of race hate crime in loyalist areas was highlighted. Because of housing shortages within nationalist or republican areas, ethnic minorities tend to be housed in loyalist areas' (Select Committee, 2004). Despite this, it would be misleading to assume that racist attacks do not occur in Nationalist areas because such instances do occur.

	NILT 2006, %	Elected Representatives, %	'Divergence'
Alliance	48	90	+42
Sinn Féin	42	84	+42
SDLP	41	68	+27
UUP	34	43	+9
DUP	31	46	+15

Table 3.4: Elected representatives and party supporters who say that those who commit a 'race hate' crime 'probably should' or 'definitely should' be more severely punished

	Definitely should	Probably should	Probably should not	Definitely should not	Don't know
Elected representatives	40	23	19	14	4

Table 3.5: Do you think that someone who commits a racist assault should be more severely punished than someone who commits an ordinary assault?

Table 3.5 shows that on the issue of hate crimes we find that elected representatives believe that someone who commits a racist assault 'definitely' or 'probably' *should* be more severely punished than someone who commits an ordinary assault' (63%) compared to those who believe that they 'probably' or 'definitely *should not*' (33%).

Funding and Policy

Elected representatives were asked about the level of public funding that they would support for the work of community and voluntary groups in the field of minority ethnic communities policy in Northern Ireland. Again, the survey results have been split by political party and are shown in Table 3.6. They indicate to what extent parties are willing to dedicate resources to address the concerns of minority ethnic communities.

Political Party	In terms of public funding of work of community and voluntary groups, in the field of minority ethnic communities policy in N.I would you support					Total
	More funding	Continuation of current levels	Decrease in funding	Other	Can't choose	
Alliance Party	15	2	0	0	2	19
DUP	11	21	1	0	6	39
Green Party	1	1	0	0	0	2
SF	34	10	0	1	0	45
SDLP	24	14	0	0	0	38
UUP	10	28	2	2	1	43
Independent	3	6	1	0	2	12
Other	1	1	0	0	0	2
Total no. of respondents	99	83	4	3	11	200

Table 3.6: Attitudes towards levels of public funding support for the work of community and voluntary groups, in the field of minority ethnic communities' policy in Northern Ireland

Half of the respondents from all political parties support an increase in funding (50% of respondents). The majority of DUP respondents support a continuation of the current levels of funding (54% of the DUP respondents). The majority of Sinn Féin respondents support an increase in funding (76% of the SF respondents). The majority of UUP respondents support a continuation of the current levels of funding (65% of the UUP respondents). The majority of SDLP respondents support an increase in funding (63% of the SDLP respondents). The majority of Alliance respondents also support an increase in funding (79% of Alliance respondents). In short, SF, SDLP, and Alliance tend to support an increase in funding whereas the DUP and the UUP support a continuation in current levels of funding.

In the project interviews too, several political representatives expressed personal views on funding. A UUP MLA (19.2.08) thought that funding needed 'a strategic approach'. It was not a question of 'throwing money' at problems. Rather it was best to develop and cost plans or agreed themes, and 'if extra funding is necessary then we can make that available'. Another UUP MLA (1.2.08) suggested that 'an increase in funding would be good all round' i.e. for a range of policy areas. An SDLP MLA (19.12.07) and a SDLP local councillor (10.1.08) both suggested that more money should be available to encourage

participation and integration and for language classes – but it would all need to be weighed up against other societal needs. Similarly, a Green politician (3.12.07) said that: ‘We should do what we can to identify the needs of ethnic minorities and where possible facilitate them.’ Interpreting services were identified as being particularly needed. But again, the wider local community should not feel that it is being discriminated against, notably over housing needs.

Various interviewees thought, therefore, that political parties and elected representatives ‘could do more’ and this applied to the government also. According to one UUP MLA (19.2.08), to some extent the government was ‘paying lip service’ to the issues: ‘I think it’s doing what it can...but it *could* do more.’ In the view of a DUP MLA (24.1.08), government ‘are doing some things, but they’re probably not doing enough’. Again, an SDLP local councillor (10.1.08) made a similar assessment: ‘I think it’s doing a lot, [but] there’s always room for improvement’, such as ‘providing more information about rights and services and the like’. An Alliance MLA (13.2.08) was somewhat more critical of the role of government, taking it to task for not doing enough, especially on the Racial Equality Strategy. The latter, notably its first action plan, was deemed to be lacking in urgency, vision and imagination: ‘It was just a list of their current work, what they have been doing.’ This type of criticism was also brought by Alliance to the floor of the Northern Ireland Assembly, when the (ineffective) implementation of the Racial Equality Strategy was debated (3.7.07). Again, for a representative for the Jewish community (23.1.08), the Racial Equality Strategy had taken too long to construct, had vacuous language and was lacking in outcomes.

As regards official policy on minority ethnic communities, elected representatives were asked to rank the policies which they viewed as the most important to their political party. Each response item was ranked using a scale: 1 - Most important objective of policy; 2 - Important objective of policy (2nd); 3 - Slightly important objective of policy (3rd); 4 - Slightly less important objective of policy (4th); and 5 - Less important objective of policy (5th). As a result, 39% of respondents from all political parties believed that assisting the integration of people from minority ethnic backgrounds into Northern Ireland is a slightly important objective. Again, 34% of respondents from all parties believed that promoting respect for cultural diversity and recognition for particular ethnic identities is an important objective. Furthermore, 42% of respondents from all parties believed that promoting equality of opportunity and preventing discrimination is the most important objective. The majority of respondents from all parties believed that reversing disadvantage through positive discrimination is a slightly less important objective (68% of respondents). The majority of respondents from all parties report that they believe that ensuring there should not be a minority ethnic communities’ policy is a less important/ least important objective (67% of respondents).

Conclusion

The chapter focused on elected representatives and political parties’ perceptions of minority ethnic community concerns and issues. The interviews with elected representatives indicated their perception of and sympathy with some of the key concerns of minority ethnic communities such as accommodation and housing, inequality, racist attacks and employment matters. The election manifestos addressed both here and elsewhere throughout the report suggest that political parties are paying increasing attention to a range of relevant issues and concerns. One such issue is migration, which is covered in a sub-section above. The evidence shows some commonalities but also some differences between parties on the issue of immigration, as well as some differences between elected representatives and party supporters. Another key issue is racism, or more specifically here racist attacks and hate crime, which some elected representatives focus on much more so than on other aspects such as institutional racism. Also, the survey responses indicate that, whilst no party would want to reduce public funding for the work of community and voluntary groups in the field of minority ethnic community policy, again there were some differences between the different parties /elected representatives on this issue.

4. PARTIES: ORGANISATION AND PRACTICE

In this chapter, aspects of party organisation and practice are examined in relation to minority ethnic issues and concerns. Firstly, the survey asks elected representatives about their attitudes towards their political party's policy and practice relating to ethnic minorities. Secondly, racism is discussed in the context of how interviewees perceive their own party (and other parties). Thirdly, by way of exploring good practice and organisation, several topics are addressed, again drawing upon the interviews. Lastly, matters relating to voting, representation and participation are discussed, with a view to ascertaining to some extent how elected representatives perceive their role and their political party's role in an increasingly diverse society. The focus of the chapter is upon how parties and elected representatives respond to this latter phenomenon.

More or less party input?

In the survey elected representatives were asked whether they would like to see 'greater, less or the same input' as regards party policy and practice relating to minority ethnic communities. Again, the results have been split by political party and are shown in Table 4.1. They indicate to what extent parties are in favour of dedicating resources to address the concerns of minority ethnic communities.

Political Party	Regarding your party's policy and practice relating to minority ethnic communities, would you like to see greater, less or the same input					Total
	More input	Less input	About the same	Don't know	Other	
Alliance Party	10	0	10	0	0	20
DUP	11	0	24	4	0	39
Green Party	1	1	0	0	0	2
SF	35	0	9	1	0	45
SDLP	20	0	17	1	0	38
UUP	17	1	21	3	1	43
Independent	2	2	4	1	2	11
Other	0	0	2	0	0	2
Total no. of respondents	96	4	87	10	3	200

Table 4.1: Level of input regarding party policy and practice relating to minority ethnic communities

As regards policy and practice relating to minority ethnic communities, 48 % of respondents from across all the political parties would like to see greater input from their own party. The majority of DUP respondents would like to see the same level of input (62% of the DUP respondents). The majority of Sinn Féin respondents would like to see greater input (78% of the SF respondents). Almost half of UUP respondents would like to see the same level of input (49% of the UUP respondents). A majority of SDLP respondents would like to see greater input (53% of the SDLP respondents). Respondents from the Alliance Party were split equally between those who would like to see greater input (50%) and those who would like to see about the same level of input (50%). To sum up, respondents from SF and SDLP would like to see greater input whilst respondents from the DUP and UUP would like to see a continuation of the current level of input.

Parties and racism re-visited

In the previous chapter we looked at racist attacks and race hate. Here we look more specifically at how some elected representatives view their own and other political parties. The general impression from the interviews is that political parties do not see themselves or other parties as institutionally racist, even if it is accepted that some individuals within the party might have made some statements of a racist nature from time to time. One DUP MLA (24.1.08), disavowing racism, pointed out how the party worked with minority ethnic communities in Belfast, Dungannon and Portadown: 'We as a party work with the people who want to come in. We will deal with them. We are a party of service to the community.' This representative function is explored further below. Another DUP MLA (25.1.08) also maintained that political parties in Northern Ireland were not racist:

'I actually think that now there is more awareness in parties of under-represented groups.' A similar point was made by an SDLP local councillor (10.1.08): 'The majority of political parties here I think would be anti-racist and pro-diversity.' Again, a Sinn Féin MLA (8.2.08) claimed that political parties are more sensitive these days on the issue of racism and more progressive individuals were in evidence in all of the parties. The same individual explained that the All-Party Assembly Group on Ethnic Minority Communities was set up at the Northern Ireland Assembly, with the Secretariat provided by NICEM, in part 'to make sure the parties were doing what they needed to do to exorcise racism if that existed'. Another Sinn Féin MLA (22.1.08) simply ruled out racism as an option for a Sinn Féin member. Interestingly, one of the above-mentioned DUP MLAs (25.1.08) thought that it would be constructive for parties to try to recruit 'a member of the ethnic minority communities as a public representative, to try to combat any residual racism that there might be'. In this way, argued the DUP MLA, the party would be seen to be comfortable with and party supporters would be seen to vote for the candidate. A clear intention here would be to send out the right signals.

One SDLP MLA (18.1.08) suggested that racism can be a problem within parties at an *individual* level: 'I've heard racist attitudes expressed [within political parties] in the same way I've heard homophobic attitudes.' A Sinn Féin local councillor (3.12.07) argued that: 'I think it's the job of elected representatives and community leaders to try to ensure that ... prejudices don't affect decision-making and that we recognise the prejudices we have.' Various representatives are not happy to see evidence of individual racism within their political party. As one Sinn Féin MLA (22.1.08) states: 'I certainly, speaking as a Sinn Féin representative, would abhor anybody in Sinn Féin who would show racist tendencies.' In the same context, an SDLP MLA (18.1.08) claims that: 'I would be a bit shocked, and certainly at least disappointed, if I heard anybody from my party saying anything very negative.' An SDLP local councillor (10.1.08) thought it was important that a political party 'identifies and takes steps to address' members given to racism. One minority ethnic community advocate (20.10.07) saw this type of approach as good practice since it sent out 'a loud message' that racism was not acceptable. To some extent, interviewees saw some racist remarks as a product of genuine ignorance and the need here was for appropriate training and education to take place. Arguably in this context, a UUP MLA (19.2.08) - when asked about racism and political parties - replied: 'I wouldn't say racism, but I think perhaps some political parties are further ahead than others and I think perhaps there are political parties struggling to come to terms with the situation.'

Training

Coming 'to terms with the situation' invokes the practice of training or education. Politicians, minority ethnic representatives and advocates agree that training is a useful and important practice. Various interviewees pointed to the range of training, education and information taking place already in Northern Ireland via minority ethnic community organisations, local council provision, social networks, trade unions and other bodies, such as the Equality Commission. In this respect, local councillors and MLAs praised the educational and anti-racist work of organisations such as NICEM, SEEDS (in Derry/Londonderry), Animate and STEP (both in Dungannon).

In the project interviews, one SDLP MLA (19.12.07) welcomes training provided by local councils, but would like to see it as a mandatory part of induction for elected representatives. It is seen as 'helpful' in the sense of 'showing where the lines are drawn' (e.g. what to say and what not to say). Another SDLP MLA (18.1.08) also sees training as 'a good idea' - but 'it's very hard to force people to do it'. However, Belfast City Council is praised for making strides in recent years 'in equality and awareness of race issues', through its Good Relations Unit. A DUP MLA (25.1.08) explained that some training had taken place but more would be 'useful and helpful'. A Sinn Féin local councillor (3.12.07) also pointed to in-house training and supported provision of training for all party members. Indeed, scope for going further was flagged up in the form of 'a terminology protocol developed on sectarian, racial issues, anything like that there - where all the parties make the commitment that their spokespeople will stay away from certain words, certain phrases' and are made aware of best practice. The role of local councils is important and some of them, such as Dungannon's, provide training opportunities on anti-racism, and were praised by interviewees for their work in this respect.

A representative for the Jewish community (23.1.08) also supported mandatory training, with specific praise for the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism's (NCCRI) intercultural training programme: 'I think training should be obligatory for every party that there is. I'm absolutely rigid about that...appropriate and half decent training...not daft tick-box training or two hours of gibberish.' A minority ethnic community advocate (22.11.08) agreed with the thrust of this approach: 'I'd have it mandatory. Something they have to do...Politicians aren't getting that training.' As a result, sometimes language used by politicians is 'inappropriate' and 'out-of-date' - 'It's not done on purpose; it's done from ignorance.'

Politicians were expected then to set a good example on training or at least follow that of the statutory agencies in this respect. Another minority ethnic community advocate (12.10.07) thought that training 'could be very good for (local) councillors on the ground... People are a bit uncomfortable with what terms to use.' A similar point was made by a representative of the Polish community (26.1.07) who suggested that 'when comments are made, quite often it's just, you know, lack of

training or information', whilst a Lithuanian representative (1.2.08) thought that training helps to promote cultural awareness and understanding. The latter individual took the view that the political parties were not racist but 'they may not know how to express [things] in a professional way'. A representative of the Muslim community maintained that educational courses provided opportunities to break down stereotypes and understand the concerns and composition of the Muslim communities in Northern Ireland. Finally here, a minority ethnic advocate (5.11.07) thought that training was important to help elected representatives understand why migrant workers are in Northern Ireland and why they are not 'taking our jobs'.

Racial Equality Officer/Anti-Racist Officer

Interviewees were asked whether they would favour the appointment of a designated Racial Equality Officer or an Anti-Racist Officer to serve as a valuable resource within political parties. One UUP MLA (19.2.08) said: 'It probably would be valuable. There's no question it would certainly have value.' The interviewee wondered though whether it would be 'practical in the current climate'. In contrast a DUP MLA (25.1.08) thought that the climate was right: 'I'm not so sure that it would have been a good idea say two or three years ago, but I think that now and over the next two or three years, yes it would be.' A second DUP MLA (1.2.08) suggests that 'it would be something worth looking at' – adding that perhaps it could be someone not from Northern Ireland with whom minority ethnic communities would identify. A Sinn Féin MLA (22.10.8) thought that 'it's worth thinking about', but wondered whether it might not be best to have equality officers covering the whole range of equality matters. A second Sinn Féin MLA (8.2.08) added that equality work was central to the party and some elected representatives had been very active on the anti-racist front. But the interviewee would not 'rule out' such an appointment. According to a Sinn Féin local councillor (3.12.07), the main thing is that the party 'is very progressive on the issue of racial equality', and 'totally committed' to equality across the board. SDLP interviewees had different views about the appointment of a Racial Equality Officer. One SDLP MLA (11.1.08) saw equality as an OFMDFM responsibility, whereas another (19.12.07) thought that 'it would be valuable for us to have one' i.e. a Racial Equality Officer. An SDLP local councillor (10.1.08) felt the party was moving in that latter direction: 'I think it would be useful to have a pin-point person within the party' – and not just a tokenistic appointment. Finally, an Alliance Party MLA (13.2.08) supported the concept of a Racial Equality Officer to work on 'understanding the issues' and 'to improve the communication with ethnic minorities' – and also because racial equality is 'low down on the agenda' in political parties. However, at the same time it was recognised that local councils had appointed anti-racist and community/good relations officers to fulfil an anti-racist and equality role.

Several minority ethnic representatives and advocates addressed the issue too and were largely supportive of a Racial Equality Officer. For instance, a Timorese representative (7.2.08) thought that migrants and minority ethnic communities 'should know where to go and have someone responsible to deal with'. Also, a Jewish representative (23.1.08) saw it as good practice insisting that it was 'absolutely essential' for all the political parties to have specialists on minority ethnic issues, just as they have spokespersons on housing, education, youth, etc. Political parties were seen as signatories for anti-racism in their manifestos, but 'until they nominate a champion within their own organisations, they're not going to be proactive about these things'. Finally here, a minority ethnic community advocate (22.11.08) supported the idea 'to have somebody specific, who'd be trained up on the whole thing', rather than having a single equality officer who would be 'subsumed into everything else'.

Good Practice

One obvious sign of good practice in recent years has been the publishing of election literature in other languages. Due to limitations of resources (identified, in interviews with some elected representatives, as a factor), political parties do not tend to publish the complete manifesto in other languages but have condensed manifestos into one page summaries and placed these on the party website. One example here is the UUP which published a potted online version of the 2007 election manifesto in seven languages (Polish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Hindi, Portuguese, Lithuanian, and Arabic). As interviewees pointed out, other political parties (including SF, SDLP, and Alliance) have published their election literature in other languages including Cantonese, Polish, Portuguese, and Urdu. A PUP elected representative (24.1.08) recognised the importance of such a practice but conceded that due to limited resources it was not possible for the party. Interviews with minority ethnic representatives and advocates revealed that they very much welcomed the practice of political parties providing translations and they wanted more of them. One minority ethnic community advocate (9.10.07) notes: 'We've seen it happening to an extent that there's been translation of election material... so in that sense there has been some outreach going on.' Again, a representative for the Lithuanian community (1.2.08) notes: 'when election time comes there is some information coming through the door, such as leaflets, just basically advertising to vote for one or another party'. An East Timorese representative (7.2.08) wanted to see more of such material in different languages: 'You need to tell me what you are doing, so I can vote for you.'

Another obvious sign of political parties' commitment to pluralism and inclusiveness is the placing of candidates from minority ethnic communities on the party lists in elections. This has been done by the Green Party and the Alliance Party in the most

recent past and sends a clear signal to both minority ethnic communities as well as to the wider society that minority ethnic communities are a constituent part of public life in Northern Ireland. Elsewhere in this report the impact of Anna Lo's election to the Assembly for the Alliance Party has been noted. Interviewees were seen to be impressed by this development and largely supportive of the good practice of minority ethnic presence at Stormont. One DUP MLA (25.1.08) hoped that his party would field a minority ethnic community candidate in the future. The same DUP MLA also explained that the party had invited a prominent minority ethnic community representative to speak at their party conference in 2007. According to this interviewee, there was not a specific motion or debate on anti-racism, but: 'We wanted to ensure that visually those who would support us would see that... he was comfortable being in our company and likewise us with him.' In similar vein the SDLP Youth conference in 2007 focused on civil rights and invited a speaker from the Polish community. Additionally, the most recent SDLP conference established an outreach worker to reach out to voters (including minority ethnic communities). This reflected practice across the border as, according to a minority ethnic advocate in Dublin (4.4.08), one of the main political parties' equality officers was appointed to advise the party on 'how to reach out best, how to promote the party, how to make links, how to be relevant to immigrant communities' (4.4.08).

Some of the political parties allude to good practice in their election manifestos. For instance, the SDLP, maintaining that equality and human rights are not just political slogans, points to 'training for party representatives against all forms of intolerance, including racism and homophobia' (SDLP, 2005: 30). Also, Sinn Féin listed its input in 2003: 'brought forward major initiatives to tackle sectarianism and racism; launched an anti-racist charter and are seeking to have it introduced in councils across the country. Demanded and promoted equality for all cultural traditions' (SF, 2003: 9). Sinn Féin also reiterated a call for 'all political parties to sign an anti-racist pledge' (SF, 2003: 14). Political parties in Northern Ireland have signed the European Anti-Racism Protocol committing them not to use racist rhetoric in election campaigns. As discussed above, interviewees claim that parties are uncomfortable with and embarrassed by racist-sounding comments from individuals in their rank and file. Again, Sinn Féin's 2007 Assembly election manifesto confirms the party's commitment to workers' rights including the launch of a 'multilingual public education campaign on workers' rights and employers' responsibilities', including trade union recognition, membership and representation (SF, 2007: 8). The Polish community magazine in Northern Ireland (*Link Polska* formerly *Głosik*) approached political parties in 2006 for a summary of each political party's agenda in terms of leadership and policies. According to a Polish representative (26.10.07), some parties responded immediately with the requested information but some not at all.

However, as indicated above, political party representatives/interviewees have outreached to minority ethnic communities by attending events, cultural activities and receptions organised by minority ethnic communities. Community forums bring together minority ethnic community representatives and advocates to address issues affecting minority ethnic communities in certain geographical areas. For example, the Foyle Multi-Cultural Forum in Derry/Londonderry is a platform for minority ethnic communities and other agencies such as the PSNI to come together to discuss issues. Also, the South Belfast Roundtable on Racism is composed of minority ethnic community representatives and advocates and includes political party representation on the Executive Committee. Again, some interviewees referred to the All-Party Assembly Group on Ethnic Minority Communities which brings together elected representatives from political parties (DUP, SF, UUP, SDLP, Alliance and the PUP) as well as minority ethnic community representatives and advocates to address concerns. Project interviews with individuals from minority ethnic community representatives and political parties in Scotland (8.4.08) indicated that they were in the process of adopting best practice and establishing their own similar All-Party Group

Instances of good practice by political parties in Northern Ireland can certainly be identified then – and the project has done this, as have many other sources. The list of examples here is by no means exhaustive. At the same time, as the survey evidence indicates, elected representatives acknowledge that political parties could be more proactive in outreach and establishing policies and initiatives at a political party level. Recalling the survey data above, respondents from all political parties would like to see greater input from their respective political party (48% of respondents). This stance is corroborated in the interviews which suggest that, on reflection, various elected representatives feel they could do more to reach out to minority ethnic communities.

Voting

Due to constraints of focus, time and space, the project survey did not incorporate a question on voting behaviour or potential. However, the interviews did cover the ground to some extent and it will be instructive to present the findings below. Elsewhere, useful research has been done on minority ethnic voting in Northern Ireland (Cox, 2004; Electoral Commission, 2005) and also in the Republic of Ireland (Fanning *et al*, 2003; Fanning *et al* 2007). Here is not the place to examine these (or other) reports in any detail, except to note that all of them point to comparatively low levels of registration and voting by minority ethnic individuals entitled to vote. Alleged reasons for this, of relevance to Northern Ireland, include: individuals not knowing how to register; not wanting to take sides; lack of knowledge about the parties; a feeling that parties do not represent minority ethnic communities; parties not focusing on 'real issues'; language barriers; parties needing to condemn racism more and to pay more attention to diversity issues; and a sense of minority ethnic exclusion from mainstream politics and an alienation from

tribal politics. Significantly, the Electoral Commission (2005) found that people from minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland believed that political parties were generally not interested in their vote. Interestingly, in our project, whereas some political party interviewees did not want to pressurise minority ethnic individuals unduly to join the party, several minority ethnic individuals and advocates (when interviewed) thought that parties might be somewhat more inviting as regards encouraging party support and affiliation.

At the project conference one MLA estimated that, at present, there are approximately 60,000-70,000 individuals from minority ethnic communities living in Northern Ireland. Other voices put the figure at somewhat less. Drawing from various web-sites, for instance, McElhinney (2008) points to unofficial estimates of 45,000. According to recent research (Jarman, 2006) over 30,000 people from 120 countries came to Northern Ireland to live and work between April 2003 and June 2005. Organisations such as the Multi-Cultural Resource Centre have not published up-to-date figures on individuals in Northern Ireland with a minority ethnic background. Without doubt, though, the figure is considerably higher than the official census figures from 2001. In recent years, Northern Ireland has witnessed a significant demographic change due to inward migration, particularly from the Central and Eastern European (A8) states which joined the EU in 2004 (Animate, 2006; Bell *et al.*, 2004; Jarman, 2006; Jarman and Byrne, 2007). It is in the interests of political parties to appeal to these potential new voters, whose voting weight possibly could have an impact in areas with delicately balanced voting blocks. After all, political parties are in the business of attaining the highest number of votes possible.

Most interviewees in the project took the view that there was not necessarily a minority ethnic community vote or a migrant worker vote that was particularly substantial overall. But nonetheless it was thought that there was potential for change here as Northern Ireland becomes a more diverse, multicultural society and if inward migration continues and newer migrant communities, notably from the Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs), become more settled, integrated and registered as voters. Various interviewees thought that individuals from the more longstanding communities were more likely to register and vote, than were newcomers who might well be transient. Interestingly here, one Sinn Féin local councillor (3.12.07.) thought that the East Timorese were more likely to stay in Northern Ireland than were Polish and Lithuanian migrant workers, some of who were beginning to return home to their native countries in the throes of economic growth. At the same time, it was recognised by various interviewees that any talk of a 'bloc vote' was somewhat narrowly focused, in that individuals voted for different parties, rather than simply with one voice. Moreover, political parties would have to engage more with minority ethnic communities and migrant workers if they are to benefit from the support of 'new' electors

The prospect of a more substantial minority ethnic community vote was appreciated by various interviewees, as was the challenge. One Sinn Féin MLA (10.12.07) explained that 'we hope to take account of the great potential in future elections'. Similarly a DUP MLA spoke of the potential influence of minority ethnic voters and migrant workers, and even suggested that they might have an impact in a small number of constituencies at present, e.g. in Mid Ulster. A second DUP MLA (24.1.08) also envisaged change here with the passage of time. In the meantime, the individual was confident that their personal constituency work and links had resulted in votes won from the Indian and Chinese communities. An Alliance MLA (13.2.08) took the view that as more 'bread and butter' issues took centre stage, migrants would vote on these issues and for who could put forward the best policies, rather than on tribal political lines. The interviewee suggested that with some 50,000 migrants, there is 'virgin ground to win', but 'there is a lot for parties to do to go out and woo these new voters' and encourage them to participate in local politics. A spokesperson for the Green Party (3.12.07) adopted a similar line of reasoning, arguing that there were possibilities of winning migrant worker support for the Greens, since 'the old Northern Ireland politics means nothing to them, and they probably don't want to take sides'. A DUP local councillor (21.1.08) followed the same track of reasoning, suggesting that voting in the future would be more on issues and less on tribal lines: 'There are issues out there. These people are going to be voters... It's important that parties get their act together and try to reach out.' The challenge for political parties (and others) therefore was to make the most of and *for* a more diverse electorate in the years to come. In this context, an SDLP MLA (3.12.07) contended that 'the ball is very much in our court', the job of politicians is to help people register as voters and encourage them to use the vote and become part of the democratic process. Another SDLP MLA (19.12.07), in discussing potential minority ethnic support, combined the democratic enhancement argument with the logic of electoral and party politics: 'They do have that power ... That is the message we want to get to them. (Also) there is a vote out there to be got and that's what we are about as well.'

In the opinion of a UUP MLA (19.2.08), the focus should not be upon approaching minority ethnic individuals as voters. Rather, 'it is better to have a more open approach and a more honest approach of assistance and help'. If that leads to increased support for the party, then it would be 'a bonus, but it shouldn't be the *raison d'être* for establishing a link'. An alternative and radical scenario was put forward by a PUP elected representative (24.1.08), who spoke about minority ethnic communities and migrant workers as a potential voting bloc: 'But they need to organise politically. If they find that there isn't a political party in Northern Ireland that represents their political point of view, or doesn't offer policies they can buy into, they can start their own.' Of course, it remains to be seen whether such a direction is taken by minority ethnic communities and migrant workers, and whether it is considered by them to be viable and appropriate.

In conclusion here, it may be somewhat premature to talk of an 'ethnic minority vote' and/or 'migrant worker vote' of great weight numerically. There is no guarantee that members of these broad communities will vote along the same lines, even if they do register for voting. Again, there is no certainty that registration will culminate in actual voting. Anecdotal evidence has suggested that acquisition of a voter identification card can be useful for significant other purposes (besides voting) such as opening a bank account. Nevertheless, Northern Ireland is becoming home to a more diverse population and the potential for change is being recognised increasingly. As some interviewees suggest, the possibility of minority ethnic people and migrant workers making an impact in certain circumstances, in certain constituencies, is at least open to discussion. This is especially the case after Anna Lo's election in South Belfast in 2007. In the future, much will depend on how much individuals and communities feel that they are stakeholders in the society and polity in which they reside. Whilst not exhaustive, other key factors here are the capacity and willingness of political parties to engage with minority ethnic communities and concerns, the way that political debate and priorities evolve in a post-conflict situation, and the nature of migratory flows.

Representation

This section examines how politicians take on board and aspire to represent minority ethnic issues and causes. Members of minority ethnic communities are constituents; therefore, they require representation just like other constituents do. Effective representation for minorities means ensuring that their voices are heard. It follows that politicians must be responsive to the needs and interests of minority ethnic communities. As organisations seeking elected office, in effect the parties have aspired - over the past decade or so - to serve as *de facto* representatives or advocates of minority ethnic concerns and issues.

Of course, representation can take place in different forms on different levels. Notably, it is the role of dedicated community, support and advocacy organisations such as the Chinese Welfare Association, the Polish Welfare Association, the Indian Community Centre and An Munia Tober (a support organisation for the Traveller community based in Belfast), where specific organisations have been set up to represent specific communities. As one interviewee (7.2.08) explained, 'Timorese people best represent Timorese interests'. Similarly, a representative for the Muslim community (15.11.07) explained that Islamic institutions best represent the Islamic population in Northern Ireland. More broadly focused organisations, such as the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM), Multi-Cultural Resource Centre (MCRC) and Solidarity Equality Education Diversity Support (SEEDS) in Derry/Londonderry perform similar advocacy and representative roles. Again, bodies based in Dungannon, notably the South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP) and Action Now to Integrate Minority Access To Equality (Animate), were identified by various interviewees as important organisations that made an invaluable contribution to anti-racism, capacity building and migrant worker advocacy. Other advocates such as the Equality Commission, the trades unions, the voluntary sector and the churches were cited by interviewees as key organisations representing or advocating on behalf of minority ethnic communities and migrant workers. Clearly, the list of organisations is by no means exhaustive here.

At the same time, and in the context of this project, it can be asked to what extent members of political parties in Northern Ireland see themselves as being able to represent diverse groupings of constituents and to support causes and issues on their behalf. A Timorese representative (7.2.08) considered elected politicians to be important 'because of their position in the media, as well as in the community'. Interview responses indicated that elected politicians saw themselves and their parties as able to fulfil a certain representative or advocacy role here. The role accrued to elected politicians as part of their representative function. Constituency work involves providing service, advice, information and support to constituents. In the words of a Sinn Féin local councillor (3.12.07): 'I do believe we make a difference to their [i.e. minority ethnic people] lives. We do our best to help people along the way.' Several elected political representatives made the point that it was a question of treating people equally and fairly here, of treating one constituent like the next one.

According to one DUP MLA (24.1.08), 'We're a party of service to the community. It doesn't matter who comes through this door...They're all treated in the exact same way...they are dealt with professionally in the best possible way that we can deal with them. And, if we can get results for them, we get results for them.' In similar vein, a Sinn Féin councillor (3.12.07) adopts the same sort of approach: '[We provide] exactly the same type of service which we would provide to the indigenous population. [It's] just an extension of that. It's the same services that we provide for local people. We do not discriminate on who comes through the door, you know.' A Sinn Féin MLA (24.12.07), whilst admitting to Sinn Féin having no party monopoly on advice giving, claimed that 'what we do well is advice'. Again, a UUP MLA (1.2.2008) reiterates the constituency representative line: 'Well, I'm an Ulster Unionist. I represent everyone who comes through my door. I don't ask what religion they are.' To underline the point about offering a good service, the UUP MLA referred to other constituency and party advice offices in the neighbourhood: 'People who I thought would have been one of their supporters come past all those other offices to come to me in the Ulster Unionist office for help and assistance.' None of these constituents ask to join the party or are pressurised to do so, but nonetheless the MLA promised 'to go the extra mile for them whatever'. So, clearly here, elected representatives play a constituency role as regards resident members of minority ethnic communities.

A PUP elected representative (24.1.08) contended that *any* political party could represent minority ethnic communities – ‘and in a way I do, because when someone from a minority ethnic background comes to me for help, I’m representing their views to the Housing Executive, to their private landlord, to the Home Office. [Also] we lobbied and fought for race relations legislation in Northern Ireland, along with a multitude of other organisations, including NICEM and the Multi-Cultural Resource Centre.’ In somewhat contrasting mode to the above cases, an SDLP MLA (22.1.08) plays down the specifically representative function, yet still claims to perform a certain support role for minority ethnic communities: ‘I’m not sure we would claim to represent them. I think we would work hard for them and do what we can to assist. I don’t think any party can claim “we are the voice of the ethnic minority”, because the ethnic minorities don’t speak with one voice.’ In another frank and forthright response, a UUP MLA (19.2.08) felt that the party could not claim to represent minority ethnic communities: ‘I truthfully could say that I don’t think we could and I think that we are a little bit behind in terms of attitude and approach and engagement with ethnic minorities. I think it is something we are working on and attempting to address.’

However, some elected politicians do make the claim that *their* party is better placed or equipped to perform this particular representative role than are other parties. For instance, another SDLP MLA (11.1.08) sees the party as well situated here because of its ‘international perspective’. Also, a Sinn Féin MLA (22.1.08) suggested that party policies, practices and experience were important factors here: ‘We have policies and at ground level we are, I hope, as helpful as we can be, and we take up issues. We understand discrimination, we understand inequality and we don’t like it when we see it. So we try to do something about it.’ The interviewee was able here to give appropriate examples of individuals helped by the party to deal with specific problems. From a different perspective, an Alliance MLA (24.1.08) maintained that the party’s neutral and anti-tribal character would appeal to voters outside of the mainstream two traditions paradigm. In contrast, a DUP local councillor (8.1.08) suggests that some minority ethnic communities and migrant workers will identify with the party’s political perspective: ‘They’ve chosen the United Kingdom as their base here and set up business or work or whatever to earn a living, and obviously their main desire will be that Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom.’

According to one minority ethnic community advocate (9.10.07), primarily it is the community associations such as the CWA and NICEM that are seen to best represent minority ethnic communities. However, in recent years, political parties are seen as more conspicuous and active on this front (9.10.07): ‘within the last couple of years there has been more endeavour in political parties to be seen to represent more than their traditional communities’. The same interviewee considered that this may be a response to the growing number of migrant workers in Northern Ireland since the European Union enlargement of 2004. According to another minority ethnic community advocate (22.11.08), ‘you would see more people on the ground from these parties turn up at various things, they’re more visible’, with for instance some good political campaigning for individuals in difficulty, such as asylum seekers. A theme that comes through some of the interviews is that Northern Ireland is changing and political parties too are changing to some extent. More and more parties are seen to be making greater efforts here, whether it is on the ground, online, by telephone or via election manifestos, statements and activities. Political parties are seen by several interviewees to be more active, helpful and supportive – even if there is still some way to go here. As one advocate (12.10.07) suggested, ‘We’re still at the start of an education process here ... We’ve had ten years of it, five years of it. Let’s say five.’ Similarly, another advocate (9.10.07) said that ‘it’s been a long process since we started dealing with racial equality issues three or four years ago’. But now, observed the same interviewee, there is more engagement from political parties.

Anna Lo’s election to the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2007 is seen by interviewees – and by people in the wider community – as an important signal and symbol of change. Lo was born in Hong Kong and came to live in Northern Ireland in 1974. Since then she has made a big contribution to minority ethnic causes, not least as the Chief Executive of the Chinese Welfare Association. In campaigning for the Assembly, she wanted to give a voice to the Chinese community, but interpreted her role more widely too as a voice against ‘tribal politics’. Several representatives from different minority ethnic communities welcome the new Alliance Party MLA for South Belfast as a good role model. In this context, it is instructive to note the various reactions to this development, as voiced in the interviews for the project. For example, a Filipino representative (28.3.08) viewed Lo as a *de facto* voice for all minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland, and looked forward to the day when more such candidates, including from the Filipino community, might be elected locally. Likewise, a representative for the Lithuanian community (1.2.08) took the same view, seeing the elections of both Lo and Rotimi Adebare (the Nigerian-born Mayor of Portlaoise) as positive developments, and looked to the day when Lithuanians might also be elected ‘in a council office or even a parliament’. Again, as a representative of the Pakistani community (13.2.08) contended, ‘the door is slightly open now’ with Lo’s election and more minority ethnic candidates might well follow. Also, a representative for the Indian community (12.2.08) hoped that more such candidates would emerge as ‘real politics’ developed in Northern Ireland. An African representative (11.10.07) expressed the view that minority ethnic candidates ‘should stand for posts...they offer a better chance for their community...you have your own representative who understands your issues better’. However, the rider to this assertion was that one should be able to vote for the candidates too in *all* elections, not just in local and European ones.

A representative for the Traveller community (15.11.07) equated the significance of Lo’s election with that of Travellers in the Republic of Ireland and a minority ethnic community advocate (12.10.07) thought that the election of black and minority ethnic

candidates would help to make political parties more representative. Finally here, a representative for the Muslim community (15.11.07) hoped that Muslims too would be asked to get more involved in local politics and policy, in order to promote understanding and integration. In this context, the same individual was critical of political opposition to the establishment of mosques where there was demand and need. All in all then, there was much approval for Lo’s election and considerable interest in the issues behind it. However, support for the candidacy was not universal. For instance, one Sinn Féin MLA thought that Lo might have done better – numerically and otherwise - to stand as an independent candidate and wondered whether the minority ethnic cause or the Chinese community might possibly become too identified with one particular political party. Several representatives and advocates for minority ethnic communities and migrant workers also expressed the view that it was not easy for many ethnic minority people or migrant workers to get involved in politics. A Chinese representative (26.11.07), for example, pointed to the long hours that many Chinese people worked in the catering industry. Also, a Timorese representative (7.2.07) saw the immediate and overriding preoccupation of migrant workers as having to ‘solve their basic needs’.

Many questionnaire respondents and interviewees thought that political parties could be more proactive on behalf of the concerns of minority ethnic communities. Nevertheless, various interviewees had good things to say about relations with political parties across the board, suggesting that political party initiatives and input were appreciated. According to a Timorese representative (7.2.08), for example, ‘Some of our people have been supported by the DUP, others by Sinn Féin. It’s not a question of religion. We Timorese are very mature. We don’t say if you’re a Catholic you vote for a Catholic, if you’re Protestant you vote for a Protestant...We chose a Muslim to be our first prime minister...We vote for those who can help us or provide support for us...[that’s] a lesson Northern Ireland might learn from East Timor.’ Similar sentiments were expressed by a Pakistani representative (13.2.08), who explained that: ‘We don’t take sides...we support whatever good they do for ethnic minorities.’ The same individual confessed to not having complaints against the political parties. Again, a representative for the Polish community (26.10.07) had good things to say about several political parties. For instance, the Alliance Party was praised for providing regular press releases, building contacts with Polish political parties back in Poland and selecting Anna Lo as a candidate. Again, the UUP was complemented for having material in Polish on its party website – ‘it’s a nice gesture’. Also, the DUP was seen to have some good one-to-one relationships locally, whilst the SDLP too was seen to ‘have been coming forward’, and Sinn Féin ‘helps as well’. A representative for the Indian community (12.2.08) took the view that political parties particularly represented their own communities, but ‘whenever we need them, there will be parties there to help us and support us’.

In conclusion here, political parties represent. In this context, elected politicians do see themselves as fulfilling a representative role on behalf of constituents, including minority ethnic communities. Indeed, representatives from and advocates of the latter communities pointed to certain individuals within political parties who had made significant contributions in this respect. As several advocates pointed out, these individuals ‘can make the difference’. At the same time, the view was expressed by various minority ethnic community representatives that political parties could be more genuinely representative if individuals from those communities were elected to office.

Participation

One of the priorities of the Racial Equality Strategy (RES), drawn up by the direct rule government for 2005-10, was ‘to increase participation and a sense of “belonging” of people from minority ethnic backgrounds in public, political, economic, social and cultural life’ (OFMDFM, 2005a: 33). The document pointed to the lack of minority ethnic voices in the civil service, public appointments and other places. In order to promote a ‘shared future’, political parties too were urged to ‘encourage the participation of minority ethnic people at all levels within the political process’ (OFMDFM 2005a: 45). In the survey elected representatives were asked about the participation of minority elected communities in public life and were given a range of options to choose from (see Table 4.2). A total of 33% of elected representatives suggested that the best way for members of minority ethnic communities to participate in public life is through existing institutions such as political parties, community groups and religious organisations. However, elected representatives particularly favour participation through both existing institutions and minority ethnic communities’ own organisations (60%).

	Existing institutions	Own Organisations	Both existing and own	MECs should not be involved in public life	Can’t choose
Elected representatives	33	3	60	1	1

Table 4.2: Which is the best way for members of minority ethnic communities (MECs) to participate in public life?

The survey also provided detail on the respective opinions of political parties towards participation of minority ethnic communities in public life (Table 4.3).

Political Party	The best way for members of minority ethnic communities to participate in public life						Total
	Through existing institutions	Through their own organisations	Through both existing and own organisations	Members shouldn't be involved in public life	Other	Don't know	
Alliance Party	11	0	9	0	0	0	20
DUP	9	1	27	1	0	1	39
Green Party	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
SF	11	1	31	0	1	0	44
SDLP	16	2	19	0	0	0	37
UUP	14	1	27	0	0	1	43
Independent	3	2	6	1	0	0	12
Other	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Total no. of respondents	66	7	121	2	1	2	199

Table 4.3: Responses showing the best way for members of minority ethnic communities to participate in public life

The majority of respondents from all political parties believe that the best way for members of minority ethnic communities to participate in public life is through both existing and their own organisations (60% of respondents). In each of the four main political parties, moreover, the respondents indicated that the best way for members of minority ethnic communities to participate in public life is through both existing and their own organisations: 69% of the DUP respondents; 71% of the SF respondents; 62% of the UUP respondents; and 51% of the SDLP respondents took this position. The majority of Alliance Party respondents maintain that the best way for minority ethnic communities to participate in public life is through existing institutions (55% of Alliance respondents). Of the five largest political parties only one respondent, indicated that minority ethnic communities should not be involved in public life.

Conclusion

In this chapter, again there was survey evidence of some differences between political parties/elected representatives on the question of party input into policy and practice relating to minority ethnic communities. Interviews focused on the issue of racism in relation to political parties. Unsurprisingly, all of the main political parties formally rejected racism and opposition was voiced to manifestations of it within parties. At the same time there were varying degrees of support for good practice within parties in the form of such mechanisms as training, appointing dedicated party officers, translating literature into different languages and other measures. These measures can be seen as party political adjustment to an increasingly diverse society. In this respect, the latter phenomenon has implications for voting matters, representation and participation and these very broad issues were discussed in the context of parties/elected representatives' attitudes and how they see their role in this society.

CONCLUSION

The project seeks to ascertain to what extent elected representatives/political parties in Northern Ireland are engaged with minority ethnic communities and individuals. In particular, the project aims to examine the extent and nature of contact that elected representatives have with individuals from and groups representing minority ethnic communities. At the same time the research seeks to explore the views of elected representatives on how they view their role in identifying and addressing the concerns and issues of minority ethnic communities. In this context the views of elected representatives/ political parties are examined on a range of different topics and concerns of relevance to minority ethnic communities.

There are three main research components in the project. First, an analysis was completed of every election manifesto from the DUP, SF, UUP, SDLP, Alliance, and the PUP from 1994-2007. The manifesto analysis focused on how political parties address the concerns and issues of minority ethnic communities either directly (by naming minority ethnic communities) or indirectly (by addressing issues such as employment rights or racism). Second, a survey was sent out to all MLAs and local councillors asking questions relating to contact with and attitudes towards minority ethnic communities. Third, a total of 46 semi-structured interviews with elected representatives (28) and minority ethnic community representatives and advocates (18) were conducted, which explored the relationship between elected representatives/political parties and minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland. An interim report was published and disseminated in March 2008 which formed the basis of the discussions at the project's conference held in May 2008. This final report is largely descriptive and still constitutes work in progress more so than a completely finished product.

Political parties in Northern Ireland have been broadly supportive of minority ethnic communities and willing to engage with them. The survey responses indicate that not inconsiderable contact and interaction takes place between elected representatives and the minority ethnic sector. However, political parties readily acknowledge that more work could be done here in terms of interaction, contact and outreach. Interaction is crucial in order to understand the concerns and issues of minority ethnic communities. Outreach by elected representatives sends a clear message to minority ethnic communities that they are a constituent part of society and that political parties are willing to address their concerns and issues in public life. Moreover, it is the responsibility of elected representatives to create the conditions in which minority ethnic communities feel welcome in constituency surgeries and beyond. The survey asked questions about the frequency of contact in a range of different settings. The responses indicated that the constituency surgery was the setting in which elected representatives (almost one in four) were most likely to report having contact with individuals from a minority ethnic background on a regular basis (i.e. at least once a month). Typically such contact and interaction involves signposting and advice giving on accessing public services, employment matters and accommodation concerns. However, whilst the constituency surgery is the site of an appreciable level of contact here, most of the elected representatives surveyed (56%) admitted to very little or no contact in this setting. Meetings and functions organised by or for minority ethnic communities were the settings in which the highest proportion of elected representatives (roughly one in three) had contact. Overall, frequency of contact did not vary all that much from party to party, though there was much greater variation within parties. Interviewees from minority ethnic communities were able to cite examples of good work done locally by elected representatives from all political parties.

The project focuses also on elected representatives'/political parties' perceptions of minority ethnic concerns and issues. Interviews with elected representatives illustrate their perception of and sympathy with some of the key concerns of minority ethnic communities such as racism, inequality and housing/accommodation matters. The manifesto analysis demonstrates that over the past decade political parties have been focusing increasingly on the concerns and issues of minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland. One such issue is migration. The recent inward migration from Central and Eastern European (A8) countries since 2004 has galvanised political parties/elected representatives to address the concerns of migrant communities in manifestos and activities - particularly as these relate to employment rights, housing and racist attacks. The research evidence here shows some commonalities but also some differences among the political parties on the topic of immigration, as well as some differences between elected representatives and party supporters. In this respect, on a range of different indicators – survey, manifesto and interviews – elected representatives from the UUP and DUP are much more likely than elected representatives from other parties to express concerns about the number of immigrants coming into Northern Ireland. Consequently these parties are much more likely to support a cap on numbers. However, harbouring these attitudes on immigration does not preclude individuals from conducting local constituency work to assist migrant workers with visas, campaigning against unscrupulous employers or troubleshooting problems with landlords. Interestingly, data from the project survey and the Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) survey also suggest that the more liberal attitudes of elected representatives towards migrant workers are somewhat out-of-step with the attitudes of their party supporters.

Another key issue of concern, of course, is racism. Elected representatives recognise that the phenomenon exists in Northern Ireland and, to some extent there is a common anti-racist sentiment in evidence across the party spectrum. When asked whether they thought that racism was a problem in Northern Ireland though many of the elected representative interviewees for the project referred particularly to racist attacks on minority ethnic people and migrant workers. References to practices of

institutional racism were less frequent. Arguably, this situation reflects media coverage of racism in Northern Ireland, though this is not a particular topic that the research project has been able to or scheduled to focus upon. Elected representatives (63% overall) tend to support tougher sentencing for crimes motivated by hate, and again there are significant differences between the parties on this issue. Notably, Unionist parties and their supporters are less inclined to support more severe punishments for crimes motivated by hate. Nationalist parties' and, more so, the Alliance Party's representatives are much more inclined to think the opposite. Also, one of the survey questions asked about funding support for the work of community and voluntary groups in the field of minority ethnic communities' policy in Northern Ireland. Again there are some differences between the parties. The survey responses indicate that, whilst no party would want to *reduce* public expenditure here, Sinn Féin, the SDLP and the Alliance Party tend to favour *increases* in funding.

In terms of party organisation and practice to address the concerns and issues of minority ethnic communities, the survey indicates that 48% of elected representatives would like to see greater input from their respective political parties. The message which comes through from the research was that political parties/elected representatives could be more proactive on issues affecting minority ethnic communities. There are instances of good practice such as the translation of election material into other languages and outreach work. Interviewees with elected representatives and with representatives and advocates for minority ethnic communities highlighted the importance of training for elected representatives. Moreover, it was argued that this training should be on-going and should focus on appropriate language and anti-racism. The creation of the position of Racial Equality Officer was acknowledged by various political parties and minority ethnic community representatives and advocates alike as a valuable resource, potentially enabling political parties to respond to the concerns and issues of these communities. Finally here, the creation of the All-Party Assembly Group on Ethnic Minority Communities is welcomed as a positive development – one of several forums or initiatives - which merits cross-party support.

In conclusion, the report has focussed upon providing a largely descriptive and non-exhaustive account of the findings, drawing primarily upon the survey, the interviews and the manifesto search. The intention is not to prescribe solutions to existing problems or to propose models, but to focus on pertinent issues which are worthy of being addressed more fully. The authors hope that this overall research and report make a constructive contribution to the dialogue between elected representatives/political parties and minority ethnic communities. The aspiration also is to meet a gap in the research and literature on elected representatives/political parties and minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland. In this respect there is more work to be done on the topic. Recommendations for future research would include for example: greater comparative research, notably a detailed comparative focus on the topic in the context of devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; a systematic analysis of political party newsletters, district council minutes, party conference resolutions, parliamentary assembly and committee debates and other primary sources in order to ascertain how embedded policy and practice is within political parties as regards minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland; and, an in-depth analysis of the strategies, tactics and layered approaches within political parties in Northern Ireland as regards minority ethnic matters.

APPENDIX 1

ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES AND MINORITY ETHNIC COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

SURVEY

Please read each question and follow the instructions given (in italics). Thank you.

- 1. In your official capacity as an elected representative how often do you have any contact with people from any of the backgrounds listed in the table below? (*please circle options for each group*)**

Black (African, Caribbean)	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Very rarely	Never
Chinese	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Very rarely	Never
South Asian (Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi)	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Very rarely	Never
Irish Traveller	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Very rarely	Never
Filipino	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Very rarely	Never
Portuguese	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Very rarely	Never
Polish	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Very rarely	Never
Other Eastern and Central European (<i>please specify</i>)	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Very rarely	Never
Other European (<i>please specify</i>)	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Very rarely	Never
Other (<i>please specify</i>)	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Very rarely	Never
I do not have any contact with any people from any of the backgrounds listed above (please skip Question 2 and go directly to Question 3)					

- 2 Regarding your contact with people from the backgrounds listed in Q1, how often do you come into contact with people from these backgrounds in the following settings? (*please circle ALL options that apply*)**

In my constituency surgery	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Very rarely	Never
At functions or meetings organised by minority ethnic community groups	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Very rarely	Never
At functions or meetings organised by public bodies for minority ethnic community groups	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Very rarely	Never
At other functions or meetings organised by public bodies	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Very rarely	Never
At functions or meetings organised by public service providers for minority ethnic community groups	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Very rarely	Never
At other functions or meetings organised by public service providers	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Very rarely	Never
At functions or meetings organised by my political party	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Very rarely	Never
As a member of my political party	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Very rarely	Never
At other functions or settings (<i>please specify</i>)	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Very rarely	Never

3 Thinking of people from minority ethnic communities, how much prejudice do you think there is against them in Northern Ireland nowadays? (please circle only ONE option)

A lot	A little	Hardly any
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4 Do you think there is generally **more** prejudice against people from minority ethnic backgrounds in Northern Ireland now than there was 5 years ago, **less**, or about the **same** amount? (please only circle ONE option)

More now	Less now	About the same	Don't know	Other (please specify)
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5 How would you describe yourself: as **very prejudiced** against people from minority ethnic communities, **a little prejudiced**, or **not prejudiced** at all? (please only circle ONE option)

Very prejudiced	A little prejudiced	Not at all prejudiced	Don't know	Other (please specify)
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6 How much do you agree or disagree with each of these statements about minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland? (please circle ONE option for each statement)

Organisations and leaders in public life, such as politicians, community groups and churches, should encourage members of minority ethnic communities to participate in public life.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I personally know quite a bit about the culture of some minority ethnic communities living in Northern Ireland.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The culture and concerns of Irish Travellers are increasingly respected in Northern Ireland.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

7 Which of these statements comes closest to your own view? The best way for members of minority ethnic communities to participate in public life is: (please tick only ONE option)

Through existing institutions such as political parties, community groups and religious organisations	
Through their own organisations	
Through both existing institutions and their own organisations	
Members of minority ethnic communities should not be involved in public life	
Other (please specify)	
(Don't know)	

8 Please read these statements, regarding the overall objective of official policy towards minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland, and rank them according to what you believe are the **most important** objectives of policy towards minority ethnic communities: (please mark as many options as apply in order of preference i.e. 1 for most important, then 2, 3, 4...)

To assist the integration of people from minority ethnic backgrounds into Northern Irish society	
To promote respect for cultural diversity and recognition for particular ethnic identities	
To promote equality of opportunity and prevent discrimination	
To reverse disadvantage through positive discrimination	
Other (please specify)	
There should not be a minority ethnic communities policy	
Can't choose	

- 9 In relation to public funding of the work of community and voluntary groups in the field of minority ethnic communities policy in Northern Ireland would you support: *(please circle one number only)*

A rise in funding	
A continuation of current levels of funding	
A decrease in funding	
Other <i>(please specify)</i>	
Can't choose	

- 10 Regarding your **party's policy and practice** relating to minority ethnic communities and their concerns would you like to see greater input (of staffing, resources, activities, policy-making etc...), less or about the same? *(please circle one number only)*

More input	Less input	About the same	Don't know	Other <i>(please specify)</i>
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- 11 In Northern Ireland there is now a law against racist violence so that anyone who commits an assault like this can get a more severe sentence because of the racial element. Do you think that someone who commits a racist assault **should** be more severely punished than someone who commits an ordinary assault? *(please circle one number only)*

Definitely should	1
Probably should	2
Probably should not	3
Definitely should not	4
(Don't know)	8

- 12 Why do you think they should/shouldn't be punished more severely?

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- 13 In May 2004 eight countries from Eastern Europe joined the European Union. Most of the existing EU member states put restrictions on immigration from these eight countries. However the UK government did not. Do you agree with the UK government's decision or do you think they should have also placed restrictions on immigration from these countries? *(please circle one number only)*

Agree with the UK's decision	1
Disagree - they should have placed restrictions on immigration	2
Neither	3
(Don't know)	8

- 14 Finally, some general questions on your background. Are you: *(Please circle one number only)*

A member of the Northern Ireland Assembly (MLA)	1
A member of a District Council	2
Both an MLA and a member of a District Council	3

15 Which party are you a member of? (please circle one number only)

Alliance Party	1
Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)	2
Green Party	3
Progressive Unionist Party (PUP)	4
Sinn Féin (SF)	5
Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)	6
UK Unionist Party (UKUP)	7
Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)	8
Independent	9
Other party (please specify)	10

16 Are you male or female? (please circle one number only)

Male	1
Female	2

17 Which age group are you in? (please circle one number only)

Under 25	1
26-35	2
36-45	3
46-55	4
56-65	5
Over 65	6

18 Can you record your religion, if any? (please circle one number only)

Protestant	1
Roman Catholic	2
Other (please specify)	3
No religion	4

19 Do you represent one of the following areas: Belfast BT1-17; Dungannon: BT70-71; Ballymena: BT42-44; Bangor: BT19-20; Omagh: BT78-79; Newtownards: BT22-23; Newtownabbey: BT36-37; Craigavon: BT62-67; Derry/Londonderry: BT47-48 (please circle ONE option only)

Yes	No
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APPENDIX 2

Politician Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself and tell me which political party you represent.
2. In your work, which minority ethnic communities do you meet?
3. What is the nature of this interaction? Where?
4. How often do you meet with members of minority ethnic communities?
5. What do you see as the main interests/concerns of minority ethnic communities?
6. Do you think that racism is a problem in Northern Ireland society?
7. Do you think that racism is a problem amongst political parties?
8. Did your political party publish election manifestos in other languages?
9. Does your political party represent minority ethnic communities?
10. Do you think minority ethnic communities represent a substantial voting block?
11. Do you think that immigration should be capped? More restrictions?
12. In what way does your party reach out to minority ethnic communities?
13. Can you give any example of specific (political party) policies or initiatives which target minority ethnic communities?
14. Do you think your personal views and attitudes on minority ethnic communities are the same as your political party's?
15. Are you aware of instances of best practice from other political parties on minority ethnic communities which your political party could learn from?
16. How could your political party improve its representation of minority ethnic communities? More proactive?
17. Do you think your party should appoint a Racial Equality Officer?
18. Do you think all elected representatives should receive training on multiculturalism?
19. Is government doing enough to integrate minority ethnic communities?
20. Should the minority ethnic community sector receive more public funding?

APPENDIX 3

Interview Questions for Minority Ethnic Community Representatives and Advocates

1. Please introduce yourself, and tell me a little bit about your organisation.
2. What do you see as the main problems or concerns of the community in Northern Ireland?
3. Who do you think best represents minority ethnic communities (specific community) in Northern Ireland?
4. What type of interaction do you have with political parties?
5. How often do you meet with elected representatives/political parties?
6. Do political parties in NI only represent the interests of either Protestant/Unionists or Catholic/Nationalist?
7. Which political parties in NI best represent the interests of minority ethnic communities?
8. Do you think political parties are sufficiently engaged with minority ethnic communities?
9. Which political parties have been proactive on issues facing minority ethnic communities?
10. Are you aware of any initiatives/policies by political parties relating to anti-racism?
11. In your view, is there any sign/evidence of racism from political parties/elected representatives in Northern Ireland?
12. Should individuals from minority ethnic communities stand on the party lists of mainstream political parties?
13. Do political parties do enough to recruit members from minority ethnic communities?
14. How could elected representatives/political parties engage more with minority ethnic communities?
15. Do you see any signs of best practice which political parties could learn from one another?
16. Do you think that 'anti-racism' has become a common cause which unites Unionist and Nationalist parties?
17. Do you think that elected representatives should receive training on issues surrounding interculturalism, diversity, and anti-racism?

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