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**IMMIGRATION, DIVERSITY AND  
POLITICAL PARTIES: NORTHERN IRELAND  
2004-2014**

**GAVIN HART**

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Huddersfield

September 2017

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## **Abstract**

This thesis considers the impact of immigration on party politics in Northern Ireland between 2004 and 2014. It maps out key areas of consensus and conflict between the major political parties during a period of changing cultural demography. In order to do this, an in-depth, thematic analysis is carried out on party narratives that relate to immigration, cultural accommodation and racism during the period studied. The data is derived from original interviews, contributions to assembly debates and a range of other qualitative sources. The thesis highlights a tendency for issues related to immigration to become 'swords and shields' in the arena of inter-party conflict.

It will be shown that ethnically defined parties utilise immigration in order to bolster long-standing ideological narratives related to historic divisions in the territory. It is argued that this process undermines the possibility for political leadership in offering cultural accommodation for new minorities, and joined-up action in tackling racism. It is suggested that this evidence highlights the need for some degree of explicit political separation between matters that pertain to immigration-generated diversity, and issues related to bi-national accommodation in the territory.

# Abbreviations

- APNI – The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland
- CSI – Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Policy Document
- DUP – Democratic Unionist Party
- NICEM – Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities
- NILT – Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey
- NISRA – Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
- NUM – New Ulster Movement
- OFMDFM – Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
- PSNI – Police Service of Northern Ireland
- SDLP – Social Democratic and Labour Party
- SNRP – Stateless, Nationalist Regionalist Party
- T:BUC – Together: Building a United Community Policy Document
- UUP – Ulster Unionist Party

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# **Chapter One: Introducing the Thesis**

## **1.1 Introduction**

What are the effects of immigration on ideological positioning in an ethnically defined party system? In a setting where cultural difference, ethnic segregation and discrimination define the major political battle grounds, will immigration serve to undermine traditional ideological cleavages that divide the parties? Or, will it become enmeshed within processes of inter-party conflict? These are the central questions that underpin this piece of research. In order to provide answers, the thesis employs a case study that considers inter-party positioning in Northern Ireland during a period of changing migratory patterns between 2004 and 2014. Its principal focus is upon a qualitative study of the language used by political parties in relation to immigration, the accommodation of cultural pluralism, and the narratives on racism/anti-racism that have marked inter-party debate in the territory during this period.

The thesis makes a unique contribution knowledge by detailing the process by which political issues related to immigration generated diversity become absorbed within existing ideological positioning strategies in the context of an ethnically divided party system. It is shown that immigration issues become utilised as swords and shields in the prosecution of inter-party conflict. This is demonstrated through an in-depth qualitative study of inter-party debates in Northern Ireland during a period of increasing immigration. The research highlights the manner in which the parties adopt new issues within their wider ideological positioning strategies. The processes captured by this approach are of particular relevance to academic debate on the politics of immigration in sub-state settings and also for scholars of party politics in Northern Ireland. The thesis builds on the findings of existing scholars such as Gilligan et al. (2011), who have considered the effects of immigration on Northern Irish politics using quantitative research techniques, and Hepburn & Zapata-Barrero (2014) who have studied the dynamics of immigration politics at sub-state level across a range of case studies. This thesis carries out a new case study into the specific situation in Northern Ireland using a novel methodological approach to this area of study. The thesis differs from these existing studies due to the depth of linguistic nuance that it captures and the manner in which it exhibits the competitive

dynamics of immigration politics as they have emerged in this particular sub-state context.

There is a significant pool of literature that considers the effects of immigration upon the ideological positioning of political parties operating within the traditional left/right axis of party competition (Bale, 2003; 2008; Green-Pederson, 2007; Dennison & Goodwin, 2015; Mudde, 2012; Odmalm, 2014). Also, there are small pools of emerging research into the effects of immigration on sub-state, regional party systems, some of which bear the hallmarks of historic ethnic division (Hepburn 2009; 2011, Hepburn and Zapata-Barrero, 2014). Finally, there is a small pool of literature that explicitly focusses upon the political ramifications of increasing diversity in Northern Ireland (McGarry et al. 2008; Gilligan et al. 2011). The thesis adds to this body of research through contributing a richly detailed account of how parties in Northern Ireland have approached a number of key issues associated with immigration and changing cultural demography. We are principally interested in studying the manner in which increasing immigration impacts upon three areas of inter-party debate:

- 1) Expansive and restrictive approaches to immigration
- 2) The politics of cultural accommodation
- 3) Responses to racism and anti-racism

These areas of enquiry will combine to provide us with a picture of how immigration has impacted upon processes of inter-party positioning in Northern Ireland during the timeframe of the case study. Through carrying out a qualitative study into the competitive dynamics of inter-party debate in these areas, the thesis will contribute to the emerging pool of research upon immigration into sub-state territories (Hepburn & Zapata-Barrero, 2014; Jeram et al. 2015). Additionally, the study will collate data that is useful to scholars studying party politics in Northern Ireland more generally, as it explores elements of competition beyond those shaped by years of conflict and the consociational system constructed as part of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. The empirical body that has been compiled here provides an important snapshot of debates on diversity and identity as they have emerged during a period of changing cultural demography in the territory.

The overarching argument that arises from this investigative process is that parties operating in an ethnically defined political framework, will utilise immigration issues in order to support established ideological positioning strategies. In this sense, migrants become swords and shields in the prosecution of inter-party conflict. This is highlighted in the thesis through a detailed dissection of ideological positioning in relation to immigration, cultural accommodation and racism between 2004 and 2014. This introductory chapter will proceed by providing a brief outline of the more substantive chapters that comprise the thesis. The first of these chapters reviews a wide body of academic literature including theoretical work on the accommodation of cultural pluralism, controversies related to immigration policies, and texts that consider the positioning processes of political parties.

## **1.2 Thesis Outline**

Chapter two considers a selection of important literature that will serve to underpin the processes of research discussed later in the thesis. It provides a critical overview of key academic controversies in order to highlight the strengths and limitations of the current body of research. By engaging with important aspects of academic discussion on cultural pluralism, immigration and political parties, the chapter will provide a firm conceptual foundation for our enquiry into how such debates have been operationalised in the specific context of Northern Ireland between 2004 and 2014.

This evaluation of literature proceeds in three broad stages. Firstly, the chapter outlines some of the key theories related to the accommodation of cultural pluralism. Assimilation is characterised as an active attempt to forge cultural homogeneity in diverse societies. It will be argued that this approach is flawed due its capacity to justify illiberal measures in the pursuit of societal solidarity (Glazer, 1997; Alba & Nee, 1997). Secondly, the section considers the concept of difference-blind liberalism as a means to accommodate cultural pluralism. It is suggested that whilst the idea of cultural neutrality is normatively appealing, it is impossible to achieve due to the organic forms of racial, ethnic and religious intolerance that so often emerge in response to diversity (Marshall, 1963; Rawls, 1999). Thirdly, the section considers multiculturalism as a means to accommodate cultural pluralism. It will be argued that multiculturalism represents a pragmatic and sensitive approach to the

accommodation of cultural pluralism in diverse societies (Kymlicka, 1995; Parekh, 2006, Modood, 2007). Finally, the section turns to highlight the intricacies of scholarly debate between interculturalist and multiculturalist theorists. It will be suggested that despite elements of disparity between these two schools of thought that they are subtly distinct and somewhat complementary.

With these overarching conceptual approaches to the accommodation of difference discussed, the chapter moves on to consider key areas of academic debate associated with immigration policy. This will be articulated through engagement with expansive and restrictive approaches to immigration policies and the drivers of these conflicting positions. The section suggests that the primary fault-lines of these controversies are based upon the distinction between public opinion and elite policy-making (Freeman, 2002), the economic benefits and risks associated with immigration (Daneygier & Donnelly, 2012), and the potential for migrants to impact negatively upon social solidarity (Miller, 2000; Joppke, 2007). The purpose of this section is to outline the key fault-lines in immigration politics so that we may explore the manifestations of these positions in inter-party debate in Northern Ireland during the period of our case study.

The final part of the literature review begins by considering existing research into the effects of immigration on political parties. Most of this literature focusses upon state-wide party systems that are principally defined by a left/right axis of party competition. It will be shown that there is a reasonable body of literature that considers such cases; though it tends to be dominated by investigations into the effects of radical-right-wing parties (Bale, 2003; Green-Pedersen, 2007; Van Spange 2010; Mudde, 2012). With this established, the chapter considers the small number of texts that explicitly engage with the effects of immigration in sub-state party systems marked by strong ethnic cleavages (Hepburn & Zapata-Barrero, 2014; Adam & Deschouwer, 2015; Jeram et al., 2016). It is illustrated here that there is a small body of research emerging that considers how immigration affects politics in such settings through examining some of the more relevant case studies in these areas. It will be argued that further work is required in delving into the competitive dynamics of party politics on diversity and immigration, in ethnically divided societies, if we are

to proceed to a point where it is possible to extract generalisable theories in these areas. With this established, three central questions are posed that relate specifically to the case study used in this thesis:

- What can Northern Ireland tell us about the manner in which immigration debates impact on ideological positioning in an ethnically defined party system?
- What impact has immigration had upon cultural politics in the ethnically defined party system in Northern Ireland?
- Has immigration-generated diversity had a significant impact on inter-party debates related to racism and sectarianism in Northern Ireland?

Chapter three outlines some of the methodological choices employed in order to find answers to these questions. The chapter begins by outlining the motivations behind selecting Northern Ireland between 2004 and 2014 as a case study in order to consider the relationship between ethnically defined political parties and issues related to immigration. It will be shown that Northern Ireland represents an example of an ethnically defined, sub-state party system and that during the period of our study, immigration was leading to distinctive changes in the cultural demography of the territory (Gilligan et al., 2011). Furthermore, justification is provided for adopting a qualitative approach in order to establish the dynamics of inter-party positioning on these issues. It will be argued that due to the key role played by language in demarcating the ideological positioning between political parties it is necessary to use a detailed study of the discursive trends that emerge in the narratives of party representatives (Downs, 1957; Petrocik, 1996; Finlayson, 2012).

The particular merits and the potential drawbacks of carrying out a thematic analysis will be discussed in this section in order to offer clarification of why certain methodological choices were made to proceed with this investigation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Finally, there is a review of some of the primary challenges that arose during

the research process and the actions that were taken in order to overcome them. This includes sections on elite interviewing and an overview of the coding and thematising procedures that provide the key findings in the latter part of the thesis (McEvoy, 2006; Kin, 2011).

Chapter four outlines in a more detailed fashion the particularities of the Northern Irish case study. This begins by considering some of the key sources of division in Northern Irish society. These include: conflicting claims to national self-determination; the role of religion in demarcating the primary communities; and the manner in which cultural issues have become central fault-lines in the communal division (McGarry & O'Leary, 1995, Coakley, 2007, McGlynn et al 2014). The thesis recognises that through focussing upon these particular societal fissures it falls into the trap of discussing Northern Irish society using a binary discursive framework in places (Rolston, 1998; Little, 2003; Finlayson, 2007). It is understood that this does not capture the true width of complexities that mark diversity in Northern Irish society. However, it is necessary in this instance to utilise the 'two traditions' paradigm in order to highlight the salience of communal division in underpinning party politics in the territory.

With some of the key dimensions of societal segregation established, greater detail is provided upon the form and content of inter-party positioning in the devolved party system. This outlines the presence of a dual party system and the existence of a non-aligned, cross-communal party (Tilley et al. 2008). The chapter also considers the importance of the consociational institutional structure within which party competition takes place. This serves to illustrate theoretical debates upon the efficacy of consociationalism for managing ethnic tensions, and also, to highlight recent trends in the party politics of Northern Ireland (McGarry and O'Leary 2006a; 2006b; Wilford, 2009). The final section discusses the impact immigration has had upon cultural diversity in the province during the period of our case study. This provides an audit of the extent of immigration into Northern Ireland and then considers three key pools of existing research related to these developments. This includes work on attitudes towards immigration (Gilligan et al. 2011), changes in linguistic diversity (McMonagle, 2009), and racism/sectarianism in the territory (Geoghegan, 2010;



McVeigh, 2014; Gilligan, 2017). With these areas covered, the foundation is laid for our in-depth study of party positioning in relation to these three key areas.

Chapters five, six and seven highlight the detailed findings that have emerged from our qualitative study into the competitive dynamics of party positioning on immigration, cultural accommodation and racism. Each of them utilises the discursive themes that emerge from studying interview data, party documents and contributions to Assembly debates made by the major parties during the period of our case study. Key areas of conflict and consensus between the parties are teased out using illustrative examples that enable us to characterise the positioning strategies employed by the major political groupings in relation to the concepts under consideration.

Chapter five highlights key fault-lines that emerge in relation to immigration. It will be suggested that there are broad areas of crossover between nationalist and non-aligned party representatives; though the motivational drivers behind these narratives emerge from different strategic calculations. Furthermore, it is shown here that there is evidence of a schism within political unionism that crosses both of the unionist parties. Unionists are characterised as being internally split between a cautious endorsement of immigration and demands for further restrictions to be placed upon inward migration. It will be suggested that this is most likely to stem from underlying civic and ethnic fissures within political unionism.

Chapter six considers what impact immigration has had upon political debates related to the accommodation of cultural pluralism in Northern Ireland. It is contended that there is evidence of a distinction between the larger and smaller parties in their assessment of how immigration has changed diversity in the territory. Smaller parties tend to discuss such issues with reference to a changed cultural context brought about by the impact of immigration. The larger parties focus more upon their perceptions of the work ethic of migrant communities, ignoring the changing nature of cultural pluralism in the territory. It will be argued that this ties in with strategic calculations stemming from the fact that larger parties have prospered through utilising 'parity of esteem' as means to mobilise support. Furthermore, it is suggested

that this approach mirrors their stances on traditions of cultural celebration and performative ritual in the Northern Irish context. Finally, we will see that the smaller parties differ markedly from the two tribunes, due to a shared interest in seeing issues related to the 'two traditions' diminish in political salience.

This contrast is particularly interesting when considered in light of policy frameworks for the management of diversity in Northern Ireland which are marked to some extent by the language of multiculturalism and interculturalism. Despite the fact that the later frameworks were been driven by the OFMDFM, there is a distinct disparity between the semantic content of these policy documents and the narratives adopted by the two largest parties. The chapter utilises the issue of language diversity in order to illustrate the dominance of debates related to internal minority languages, at the expense of linguistic protections for immigrant groups. It will be shown that cultural politics is marked by the powerful pull of ethnic outbidding strategies and that only the non-aligned APNI construct arguments that relate to the totality of linguistic diversity in the territory.

Chapter seven illustrates the nature of inter-party debates over racism in the context of an increasingly diverse society. It will be suggested that there is clear evidence here of the manner in which issues related to immigration become resources for the prosecution of inter-party conflict. The key manifestation of this dynamic is located in Sinn Fein's attempts to utilise racism to support arguments that relate to their characterisation of the Northern Irish sub-state as inherently discriminatory. It will be suggested that this has the effect of pushing unionists to adopt defensive positions on racism that prevent the possibility for cross-party unity in tackling this problematic social issue. Finally, the chapter will highlight a counter-narrative of frustration that emanates from the smaller parties due to the lack of progress made by the OFMDFM in tackling racism during the period of our study. The overarching argument that emerges from these chapters is that immigration issues, in the context of an ethnically defined party system, tend to become absorbed by long-standing trajectories of inter-party positioning.

Chapter eight brings the thesis to a conclusion through explicitly relating the findings chapters to our original research questions. Highlighting the relevance of the research for existing academic debates on immigration at sub-state-level, the politics of cultural accommodation, and racism in the Northern Irish context. It will be argued that due to the tendency for political debate over issues related to traditional communal fissures to absorb matters related to immigration-generated diversity, there is a need for a degree of separation between these areas of discussion. Finally, the chapter will consider a number areas of continuity and change in the Northern Irish context that are likely to underpin further research into these matters in the future. The next chapter will now turn to outline some of the key foundational controversies that will underpin the wider thesis in order to establish a firm theoretical base from which to proceed in the investigation.

# **Chapter Two: The Politics of Immigration and Diversity**

## **2.1 Introduction**

Immigration and diversity management have become central features of political debate in the majority of Western states during the last three decades. This has become particularly evident as globalisation has impacted upon nation-states since the 1990s (Cangiano, 2016). This period has witnessed significant shifts in the movements of people across national borders with profound impacts on diversity in receiving states (Joppke, 2007). In political terms, the effects of these changes have become most obvious in debates over the control of territorial borders and the accommodation of cultural diversity in host states. In the context of our case study in Northern Ireland between 2004 and 2014, we are most interested in examining the effects of immigration-generated diversity on ideological positioning in an ethnically defined party system. Consequently, this chapter will begin by discussing theoretical literature on the accommodation of cultural pluralism in ethnically diverse societies and move on to outline political controversies associated with immigration policies. Collectively, these areas combine to provide the theoretical foundations of the wider study. The later chapters will draw upon these insights in order to guide our enquiry into the specific forms such debates have taken in Northern Ireland during the period studied.

The first section of the chapter begins by outlining the fact that many societies are marked by multiple-strains of diversity. These differing diversities manifest themselves in a number of ways. Firstly, there are the type of deep-rooted, multi-national differences that we see in Northern Ireland (McGarry & O'Leary, 1995). Secondly, there are longer standing migrant communities who have settled in the host-state such as the Commonwealth migrant communities in the United Kingdom (Modood, 2007). Finally, there are short term immigrants who have chosen to work abroad on a transient basis, but may seek to settle in the receiving state (Dustmann & Weiss, 2007). Asylum-seekers represent a further distinctive strand in debates around immigration, though for our purposes in this thesis we will be focussing upon voluntary migration (Hein, 1993).

The most important argument that emerges in this section is that each of these forms of diversity comes with its own distinctive issues. It will be argued that due to these differences, internal diversity of the multi-national variety should be understood as a separate entity to the type of cultural pluralism that arises as a result of immigration. Furthermore, that measures taken to accommodate difference should be tailored to the needs of the minority groups rather than an overarching, singular approach. When we turn to consider the party politics of immigration in Northern Ireland as it has evolved during the timeframe of our investigation, it will become clear that the needs of immigrant communities are distinctive from those of the primary ethnic groups; though in the arena of inter-party conflict they tend to become intertwined. It will be shown that equating these varieties of cultural pluralism too closely serves to swamp external minorities within the overwhelming priorities of bi-national accommodation.

The section will then provide a brief overview of assimilatory and difference-blind, approaches to the accommodation of ethnic diversity, before offering a detailed examination of debates between multiculturalist and interculturalist scholars. It will be argued that while assimilation and difference-blind liberalism are normatively appealing, they are not suited to the realities of dealing with group-based inequalities in diverse societies. It will be suggested that multiculturalism and interculturalism are more relevant to this study as each of these approaches has impacted upon policies aimed at accommodating difference in the Northern Irish context during the period studied.

The next section of the chapter turns to consider more practical debates about the type of immigration policies that should be adopted by receiving states. This incorporates sub-debates about the economic effects of immigration and the extent to which migration impacts upon the social solidarity needed to support welfare systems in receiving states (Banting, 2005; Joppke, 2007; Miller, 2000). The section will outline some of the primary contributions to these academic debates in order to support our study of immigration politics in the context of an increasingly diverse Northern Ireland. Firstly, we will address the central question of expansive or restrictive approaches to immigration and the perceived division between elite

decision-making and public opinion (Freeman, 1995; Statham & Geddes, 2006). Secondly, the section will discuss debates related to the economic drivers of immigration and the effects of migration upon advanced industrial economies (Dustman et al. 2005; Mayda, 2005). Thirdly, we will consider research into the relationship between solidarity and diversity through a discussion of migration and welfare systems in host states (Miller, 2000; Banting, 2005).

It will be argued that these debates provide the substance of contemporary immigration politics, but that they make little reference to the influential role of political parties in shaping such debates. The review of qualitative findings that emerge from our case study later in the thesis will highlight the manner in which these types of argument have become employed as discursive themes in inter-party positioning in Northern Ireland.

With the key facets of these controversies discussed, the chapter then considers the pool of literature that does place an explicit focus upon the party politics of immigration and diversity. It will be shown that the majority of such literature focusses upon state-level party systems defined by a left/right ideological cleavage. We will consider the argument that immigration creates new fissures in such systems, crossing traditional ideological fault-lines and complicating trajectories of party competition (Odmalm, 2012; 2014). The section will then highlight the relatively limited body of research that considers the effects of immigration upon ideological positioning in sub-state party systems. This is particularly important for our study of Northern Irish party politics due to the fact that many devolved systems emerge in response to demands for self-governance made by sub-state, national minorities (Bogdanor, 1999).

We will turn at this point to consider the key findings of a small body of research that engages with the relationship between sub-state parties and immigration (Hepburn and Zapata-Barrero 2014; Jeram et al. 2016). An overview of some of the more pertinent studies into the party politics of immigration in the context of sub-state politics will be discussed. In particular, work on Scotland and Belgium will be highlighted in order to outline what will be added to this body of research through an

in-depth, qualitative study into party political narratives on immigration and pluralism as they developed in Northern Ireland between 2004 and 2014 (Hepburn & Rosie, 2014; Dandoy, 2014).

The broad argument that will unfold throughout this review of academic literature will be that, although a significant body of theoretical texts serve to elucidate the core fissures in contemporary immigration and diversity politics, they fail to offer in-depth accounts of how such debates find manifestation in the cut and thrust of inter-party debate. Furthermore, they do not highlight the manner in which strategic calculations and ideological positioning processes serve to influence the party narratives associated with such issues. Finally, it will be suggested that in most cases, investigations into the party politics of immigration lack sufficient depth of qualitative enquiry to capture the true complexities of these debates as they emerge in the form of competitive ideological positioning. It is in this area that this thesis will make its primary contribution to knowledge through adopting a novel approach to the study of inter-party positioning on immigration and diversity in the context of the ethnically defined party system in Northern Ireland between 2004 and 2014.

## **2.2 The Accommodation of Cultural Pluralism**

Sub-state nationalism and immigration have tended to be dealt with separately in academic literature with very limited overlap between the two (Gilligan & Ball, 2011). Both examine the relationships between cultural groups to some extent, though there are good reasons why the two areas seldom crossover in the field of academic research. Multi-national societies often emerge as a result of historic immigration, most commonly rooted in colonial conquests that have marginalised indigenous groups and established long-standing settler communities (Winter, 2014). This is distinctive from the modern variety of immigration that has tended to see smaller scale movements of people from a number of different places settling in host states in order to pursue employment opportunities (Cornelius & Rosenblum, 2014).

Northern Ireland, during the period of our case study, highlights the importance of recognising the difference between the multinational diversity that is rooted in historical conflict dating back to the plantation settlers of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the more recent arrival of smaller, diffuse groups of economic migrants from a

number of geographic locations (Gilligan et al. 2011). Furthermore, our case study illustrates the need for a particularly sensitive approach to the accommodation of immigrants in the context of an ethnically divided society. The following section will discuss some of the key theoretical approaches that have been advocated for the accommodation of diversity in such settings and highlight some of their strengths and weaknesses.

This section will begin by outlining the idea of cultural assimilation often referred to in common terminology as the 'melting pot'. This theory proposes active measures to be taken in order to reduce the divisive aspects of diversity (Park, 1914; Park & Burgess, 1921; Gordon, 1964; Glazer, 1993). With this position established, the section will consider the idea of liberal neutrality as an approach to the management of cultural pluralism (Marshall, 1963; Rawls, 1999). Thirdly, it will outline the concept of multiculturalism as an ideational framework for the accommodation of different racial, ethnic and religious groups present within contemporary, diverse societies (Kymlicka, 1995; Parekh, 2006; Modood, 2007). Finally, the section will review the concept of interculturalism through an examination of its critical engagement with multiculturalism. It will be shown that interculturalists claim to have adopted a superior approach based on principles of dialogue and interaction. However, it will also be noted that multiculturalists have mounted defensive counter-arguments claiming that criticisms of their theory are unfounded. Ultimately, this section will conclude that interculturalism should be seen as a distinctive framework though one which draws heavily on certain multicultural ideas whilst explicitly eschewing others. (Wood et al, 2006; Bouchard, 2011; Modood & Meer, 2012a; 2012b).

The basic contours of each of these conceptual approaches will be mapped out using relevant contributions to academic literature. It will be suggested that while assimilation and liberal neutrality seem normatively appealing, they fail to take account of the realities of group-based inequality. As these arguments proceed it will be noted that theorists contributing to such debates do not tend to discuss the role that political parties play in shaping the style and substance of approaches to cultural accommodation in democratic societies. It will be shown that such texts primarily focus on the relationship between citizens, cultural groups and the state, largely



ignoring the intermediary role played by political parties. Further, it is suggested that this gap serves to highlight the need for further qualitative research into inter-party positioning around these issues if we are to gain deeper understanding of the politics of cultural pluralism in societies marked by multiple diversities. The first section will now turn to examine the central tenets of assimilation theory.

### *2.2.1 Assimilation Theory*

Advocates of assimilative approaches to the management of diversity argue that processes of intergenerational contact between different racial, ethnic and religious groups present in a given society will see cultural differences gradually diminish until diversity no longer holds social and political salience. This concept first came to prominence in countries such as the United States of America, Canada and Australia. Each of these territories had witnessed indigenous peoples becoming marginalised due to the influence of European colonisation. Each had become dominated by an English speaking, white, Anglo-Saxon majority. Furthermore, all of these countries witnessed further waves of subsequent immigration throughout the twentieth century (Kymlicka, 1995). All of these states were consequently marked by multiple strains of diversity. In the Northern Irish case the issue of colonialism has clear implications in the competing histories of the territory presented by the primary communities (Miller, 2014). The experience of subsequent waves of immigration is a relatively new addition to the cultural mix in the territory (Gilligan et al. 2011).

These similarities in historical context in Australia, New Zealand and North America lent themselves to a degree of convergence on how best to manage forms of cultural difference within a common civic framework. Often, this approach revolved around measures taken to actively anglicise members of minority cultures in order that they may fit more neatly into the cultural mainstream. Whilst assimilation was generally expressed in terms of helping minorities integrate in to the society, in practice it often involved illiberal measures, such as the banning of minority languages or certain forms of religious observance (Parekh, 2006). In the Irish context, debates relating to assimilatory pressures have tended to revolve around the erosion of multilingualism on the island (O'Reilly, 1999).

The concept of assimilation found its clearest expression in academic literature written in the United States in the early part of the twentieth century (see Park, 1914; Park & Burgess, 1921; Duncan 1933). In order to highlight some of the central features of assimilation theory, it becomes necessary to examine some of the key pieces of literature associated with this canon. Some of the earliest examples of assimilation theory are located in the work of a group of sociologists collectively termed 'the Chicago School' (Alba & Nee, 1997).

One of the seminal texts on the subject was written by Park and Burgess (1921) who describe assimilation as:

*A process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments and attitudes of other persons or groups, and by sharing their experience and history are incorporated with them in a common cultural life (Parks & Burgess, 1921, p. 735).*

The piece contends that assimilation is a benign process in which groups separated by fault-lines of race, ethnicity and religion may gradually overcome differences in order to forge a common identity based on mutual cultural exchange. This idea of distinctions gradually eroding and unity emerging is undoubtedly appealing and reflects to some extent the manner in which Western European settlers in the United States gradually forged shared identities as citizens (Glazer, 1993). However, in practice, assimilation is deeply flawed as a means to accommodate cultural pluralism in diverse societies for a number of reasons.

Firstly, processes of cultural exchange are unequal, they tend to favour the largest ethnic group at the expense of minorities. Imbalanced processes of assimilation do not result in a common, shared identity. Rather, smaller groups tend to become swamped by the mainstream culture, losing their sense of distinctiveness due to the pressures of mainstream dominance in areas such as language, artistic expression or religious practices. (Taylor, 1994). Secondly, assimilation is not necessarily a benign and organic process. Often, state driven attempts to enforce unity from above have the potential to promote illiberal outcomes for minority groups. Such results are observable when we consider attempts to enforce Anglo-conformity upon Native Americans in the United States, or legislation banning head scarves in France (Hoxie,

2001; Chrisafis, 2011). Thirdly, groups that are perceived as 'too different' from the mainstream to easily assimilate can become ghettoised in response to the experience of racism and discrimination thereby undermining the possibility of forging a unified citizenry. A prime example of this type of process is evident in the United States where African Americans in particular have suffered generations of group-specific inequality based on historical injustice and antagonistic racial differentiation. The effect of such forms of institutionalised discrimination have served to hinder the possibility for an inclusive cultural melting pot in the territory (Glazer, 1997).

The idea of coercive assimilation still permeates political discussions related to immigration and integration. For instance, a number of overtly anti-immigration parties operating throughout Europe have increasingly adopted narratives based on the perceived failure of some groups to assimilate into the norms of the host society (Bunzl, 2005). Such narratives are deeply flawed in that they assume the existence of a common, uniform national culture into which immigrants can easily assimilate, whilst offering no credible attempt to outline what this model could look like in practice. Given that many societies are marked by internal cultural pluralism these types of argument are clearly misguided. Furthermore, assimilation has the potential to provide justification for illiberal measures taken to be against cultural minorities in order to promote homogeneity.

Due to these weaknesses and the possibility for its abuse, assimilation represents a logically flawed and potentially dangerous approach to the management of cultural difference in societies marked by multiple strains of diversity. The next position that we will examine similarly contains appealing aspects when taken in theoretical terms, but fails to engage with some of the unfortunate realities of group-based prejudice and discrimination. The following section will consider the concept of difference-blind neutrality, most commonly associated with post-war liberalism.

### *2.2.2 Difference-Blind Liberalism*

In the post-war era, the dominant approach to the accommodation of cultural pluralism in the majority of Western liberal democracies has been described as 'difference-blindness', 'liberal-neutrality', or 'benign neglect' (Kymlicka, 1995). The theoretical underpinnings of this approach are rooted in liberal traditions. Firstly,

neutrality assumes that the state has no place interfering in matters such as religion, culture or personal identity. Secondly, where identity is concerned, individuals are seen as participating in a kind of market-place, in which some cultural forms prosper and others wither according to the extent that individuals find them to be valuable. Thirdly, the liberal conception of citizenship, in which individuals participate in the public sphere as uniform citizens, provides an important foundation for the concept of difference-blind neutrality. These ideas have been articulated more or less explicitly in a number of post-war liberal texts on the concept of citizenship.

This is evident when we consider Marshall's conception of the homogenous citizenry participating in a shared civilization (Marshall, 1963). Corresponding views can be located in John Rawls' discussions of individuals arriving at universal principles of justice through imagining away their unique identity and placing themselves behind a veil of ignorance (Rawls, 1999). However, this approach ignores the existence of indigenous diversities that are a feature of many societies and lacks the intellectual tools for accommodating immigration-generated diversity in a sensitive fashion.

It must be noted that the conception of the neutral state has an understandable theoretical appeal. It makes sense to allow all forms of cultural observance to flourish or to expire according to the preferences of individuals making free, informed choices. In an ideal world citizens would leave identity in the private sphere and coalesce around universal principles of justice to which all could subscribe. However, in practice, to ignore cultural pluralism in the name of neutrality serves to favour some groups and to marginalise minorities. In large part, this is due to the realities of group-based prejudice and discrimination such as racism and sectarianism. The stubbornly persistent nature of group-specific forms of inequality means that the state has a duty to take matters of identity seriously, and to actively redress certain imbalances based on pivots of racial, ethnic and religious identity (Glazer, 1997). This idea will be considered more thoroughly when we turn to examine the relationship between racism and sectarianism in the Northern Irish context later in the thesis; however, it is necessary here to offer a brief consideration of these issues in order to support our critique of difference-blind liberalism.

The first reason why the state must play an active role in matters related to identity is because of the pressing and widespread reality of group-based forms of discrimination such as racism and sectarianism. Racism in this thesis follows the definition outlined by UNESCO in its *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, which states that:

*Racial discrimination shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life (UNESCO, 2016).*

While the definition of racism is highly contested in some areas of academic writing, the UNESCO version has the advantage of being sufficiently wide to capture most of its attributes without becoming excessively enmeshed in theoretical controversy (for an overview of wider debates on this matter see Miles & Brown, 2003; Garner, 2010).

Sectarianism represents a similar form of group-based discrimination, but one that is derived from a religious basis rather than biological or ethnic origins (Geoghegan, 2010). However, on many occasions, sectarian division and ethnic differences overlap and intertwine; with religion acting as a form of demarcation between distinctive cultural groups (Modood, 2007; Jarman, 2012). Whilst sectarianism shares many common features with racism, given that both amount to forms of discrimination against individuals or groups due to personal characteristics beyond their control, it is useful to maintain a degree of theoretical distinction between these two concepts. Though racism and sectarianism may overlap in places, they often emerge from entirely distinct social bases, taking very different forms according to the historical and social contexts in play within each community of citizens (Brewer, 1992). Hence, throughout this thesis, these issues will be paired in a number of places, but crucially they will not be merged. We will discuss racism and sectarianism in greater detail later in the thesis when considering their relevance in the Northern Irish context. For

our purposes here, we will simply outline the relevance of racism and sectarianism for our critique of difference-blind liberalism.

Whilst difference-blind liberals may believe that matters such as identity are the preserve of the private sphere and that citizens should participate in a uniform manner, society itself seldom meets this ideal. If all citizens genuinely received equality of treatment regardless of their racial or cultural characteristics, then the state would be justified in taking a passive approach to the accommodation of different identities. However, racism, sectarianism and other forms of bigotry are an unfortunate reality in the majority of culturally diverse societies (Miles and Brown, 2003).

For instance, recent research carried out in the U.S. suggests that 52% of the Hispanic population feel that they have been treated unfairly due to their race or ethnicity (Krogstad & Lopez, 2016). Similarly, a survey carried out in Europe suggested that 47% of Roma felt that they had experienced discrimination as a result of their cultural origins (FRA, 2009, p. 35). More recently, religion has increasingly returned to the fore as a key driving force behind forms of social discrimination. Most notably, in some parts of the U.K., this has become manifest in the rise of Islamophobia as a form of religious discrimination in a number of liberal democratic societies (Modood, 2003; Runnymede, 2016).

This evidence clearly suggests that prejudicial behaviours, far from being the preserve of a handful of committed bigots, are a wide ranging phenomenon and a persistent feature of social reality in societies marked by cultural pluralism. While discrimination is not solely experienced by members of cultural minorities, they are proportionally more likely to encounter group-based forms of inequality such as institutionalised racism as a result of their distinctive identity (Miles & Brown, 2003). For this reason, the state has a duty to recognize the forms of inequality that afflict even the most liberal and democratic political communities. The lived experience of prejudice has the potential to shift ethnic minority communities to the peripheries of the public sphere through contributing to processes of segregation and ghettoisation (Fiss, 2003).

Through failing to recognise and engage with the deeply ingrained nature of discrimination, the state may actually facilitate inequality and the type of social fragmentation that liberal theorists seek to avoid. The idea of the neutral, difference-blind state is built on erroneous logic. In order for the state to be neutral, it must be actively engaged with tackling the imbalances that derive from the realities of prejudice and discrimination. The state must seek to build solidarity between the various different racial, ethnic and religious groups present within the broader society. To fail to do this is tantamount to turning a blind eye to the deeply unfair practices that emerge from racism, sectarianism and other forms of discrimination based on fault-lines of identity.

A second problem with difference-blind liberalism is its excessive focus on the idea of the cultural market-place. While the market-place theory may seem to provide an equitable means to pursue the accommodation of diversity, there is a key factor that prevents this aim from being achieved: the effects of 'swamping' (Kymlicka, 1989). The nation-state is not neutral, it is built upon the idea of a shared culture that ties citizens together within the confines of a community built upon common traditions and a degree of homogeneity. In practice, this means that the state inevitably favours a dominant cultural group (or in some cases dominant groups). This is highlighted by the fact that the state explicitly recognises particular cultural events through measures such as conferring public holidays that tie in with such occasions (Parekh, 2006). Furthermore, the state favours one or more linguistic groups through recognising some languages as official, and carrying out governmental work in the tongues that are deemed to be of greatest importance to the largest number of citizens (Kymlicka, 2001; Kymlicka & Patten, 2003).

Whilst supporters of difference-blind approaches to the accommodation of diversity may argue that it is a mere matter of common sense to favour the majority language group, or to explicitly recognise mainstream cultural practices while ignoring others, this hardly achieves the requirements of equality that underpin liberal ideals. It may make sense from a purely utilitarian perspective that the state confers official recognition on majority practices, but where does this leave indigenous minorities,

or citizens that may not speak the majority tongue as their first language? The answer to this is that it leaves them marginalised to some degree by a state that claims to be neutral. Hence, in the interests of equality, there is a need for the state not to ignore diversity, but to actively seek to redress these forms of cultural imbalance wherever they arise. The failings of the difference-blind approach to diversity bring us now to the concept of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism represents a more sensitive and balanced approach to the accommodation of difference than either active assimilation or passive difference-blindness. The next section will outline the key principles of multiculturalism and engage with some of the main criticisms that this concept has encountered in academic discussion.

### *2.2.3 Multiculturalism*

Multiculturalism represents a collection of responses to the management of difference that recognise the value of diversity and seek to ensure recognition for individuals and groups outside of the cultural mainstream. Multiculturalism principally emerged as a means for managing difference in societies marked by indigenous internal minorities (Taylor, 1994). However, as western societies have become increasingly diverse in recent decades due to the greater possibilities for living and working across national borders, multiculturalism has become a key feature of debates over the accommodation of migrants in the receiving states (Modood, 2007). The term has become maligned in some sections of public discourse, giving rise to the claim that there is a 'backlash' against the multicultural ideal in the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Vervotec & Wessendorf, 2010). The following section outlines some of the core principles of the theory, before highlighting a number of the key criticisms levelled at this school of thought. It will be argued that despite the contributions of these critics, multiculturalism represents the most pragmatic and sensitive approach to the accommodation of cultural pluralism in diverse societies.

The theory begins with an endorsement of the liberal ideal of equality, but recognises that forms of inequality may arise when the state ignores diversity. Some multicultural theorists see their approach as an adjunct of liberalism itself (for instance Kymlicka, 1989; 1995), others argue that multiculturalism should represent a more totalistic perspective that goes beyond the limited aims of liberalism, seeking to reconstitute the state and to create a 'community of communities' (Parekh, 2006).



This thesis favours the former approach as it recognises the value of liberal freedoms, rejecting difference-blindness, whilst maintaining a practical approach to the enduring relevance and merits of the liberal democratic nation-state. Multiculturalism should be seen as a toolkit for overcoming the failings of difference-blind approaches to the achievement of equality, rather than as a replacement for liberal principles.

This form of multiculturalism should be constructed around two basic principles, each of which require some measure of unpacking. Firstly, the suggestion that individual equality requires a degree of state recognition for forms of identity outside of the majority national culture. Secondly, that the pursuit of equality may require group-rights in addition to universal rights in order to counteract the effects of culturally derived inequality. In this endeavour, the thesis consciously adopts a model of multiculturalism outlined in the work of Kymlicka (1989; 1995), though with some degree of criticism aimed at certain aspects of his overarching theory.

The first of these arguments is about recognising the importance of culture and identity to the individual. Difference-blind liberals have tended to assume that formal equality, guaranteed by universal rights, was a sufficient and fair basis to pursue egalitarian outcomes (Barry, 2001). However, when some cultures or identities are given official recognition by the state, and others are ignored, this has the effect of creating a two tier system of citizens: those who are deemed to belong, and others who are to be tolerated or pressured into assimilation.

The argument proposed by the majority of multicultural scholars, is that in some cases, the state should be prepared to accord group-rights to the members of minorities so that they can be protected from the swamping influences of the majority culture. This is most obvious when we refer to indigenous minorities such as Aborigines or Native Americans (Taylor, 1994). There are strong arguments that such groups should have additional rights alongside universal freedoms, in order to protect their way of life from the overwhelming pressure toward cultural assimilation in contemporary Western societies (Nickel, 1997). Furthermore, such arguments suggest that sub-state, national minorities within diverse states should be afforded measures of self-governance where practicable (Kymlicka, 1995).

There has been some degree of controversy within the multicultural canon as to where theoretical distinctions ought to rest between sub-national groups and immigrants. Theorists in the Canadian school have tended to prioritise the needs of sub-state national groups. The argument goes that sub-state nations constitute a distinct societal culture in a geographically defined region of the state (Kymlicka, 1989; 1995). Furthermore, it is claimed that because indigenous minorities have usually arisen as a result of historic conquest they did not choose to become a minority culture. Immigrants, by contrast, are presented in such accounts as being territorially diffuse and having chosen to move to the host society in which they now constitute an ethnic minority group. Hence, Kymlicka (1995) in particular makes a moral distinction between the two forms of diversity and the levels of accommodation that they may expect to receive from the state.

However, this distinction is somewhat heavy-handed. For instance, it cannot cope with demands of immigrant groups that settle in the host state and form a distinctive minority of citizens. This issue is highlighted in the work of Modood who argues that Kymlicka "distorts the circumstances of some kinds of migrants in order to highlight the condition of national minorities and indigenous people" (Modood, 2007, p. 34). Similarly, Parekh claims that Kymlicka "draws too neat a distinction between immigrants and citizens the former are not casual visitors but have come to settle, and are what I might call probationary citizens or citizens in waiting" (Parekh, 2006, p. 103). There is validity in these arguments, whilst it is necessary to draw distinctions between varieties of diversity and to recognise that some minority groups have different needs to others: it is not appropriate to consign immigrant groups to assimilatory pressures. This argument can be highlighted most lucidly through reference to the issue of minority languages which will be explored further as the thesis unfolds.

Kymlicka (1995) argues that because the minority culture cannot be replicated in the host state, matters such as language become an issue for the private sphere and that families should keep their language alive within the home. However, this approach is not far removed from the assimilatory processes that he purports to oppose. It is legitimate for a receiving state to recognise the value of language diversity and to

afford a greater degree of protection than the one outlined in Kymlicka's approach to polyethnic rights (Modood, 2007). While the state cannot give official status to every language spoken in the territory, it is appropriate to afford some measure of support for the full range of linguistic diversity in the society (Bianco, 2010). This may be achieved through the formal educational system or by providing financial support for migrant community groups to allow them to act in the public sphere to maintain their home language, ensuring that linguistic diversity can be passed on to future generations. While some immigrants may not wish to maintain bilingualism, others will, and there is no reason to deny this opportunity to such groups. However, this position is contentious, critics from outside the multicultural school often take issue with the idea of any form of differentiated civic rights.

Critics of multiculturalism have argued that the theory serves to foster societal disunity. The suggestion here is that through engaging with racial, ethnic and religious diversity, the state gives such identities greater status and a sense of permanence that they would not enjoy without this recognition (Kukathas, 1992; Barry, 2001). Secondly, it has been argued that multiculturalism harms internal minorities such as women, children and homosexuals, through privileging established elites within groups, who tend to be conservatively biased older men (Okin, 1999).

The suggestion that multiculturalism creates division is a common criticism. One of the leading proponents of this argument was Brian Barry in his piece *Culture and Equality* (2001). The broad scope of Barry's argument is that universal rights promote a sense of solidarity amongst citizens and that attempts to recognise difference undermine the possibility for civic unity. Additionally, he argues that group-rights are unnecessary as an antidote to discrimination, claiming that equality is enshrined within the liberal model of colour-blind justice. His approach is well illustrated by his suggestion that differentiated citizenship is best understood as "the exaltation of what divides people instead of what unites them" (Barry, 2001, p.8). Barry goes further, arguing that because the politics of difference separates people into groups, it becomes difficult to achieve a broad consensus amongst all disadvantaged individuals in order to tackle the real evil of socio-economic inequality. However, while a universal approach to citizenship is normatively appealing, the facts of negative stereotyping, discrimination and the alienation of some individuals from full

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participation in society as a result of their ethnic or cultural background, undermines the possibility for uniform treatment.

In some cases, the state must recognise difference in order to make equality possible. Multiculturalism does not create division it merely recognises that division exists. If some groups are marginalised on the peripheries of society, then the answer should surely be more activity to remedy such social ills, certainly not to ignore difference and hope it will go away, or to coercively assimilate the members of cultural minorities into following some kind of simplistic formula for national identity. This argument is well captured in the statement below that was taken from Tariq Modood's piece 'A defence of Multiculturalism' (2005):

*And when subordinate groups claim equality within the society, they are claiming that they should not be marginal, subordinate or excluded; [...]. Why, they ask, should we have our identities privatised, while the dominant group has its identity universalised in the public space? (Modood, 2005, p.65)*

This type of argument is important in that it illustrates something that is not addressed in Barry's conception of cultural difference. For Barry, culture and equality are entirely separate concepts, Modood highlights the fact that they are inextricably intertwined.

Secondly, there is no suggestion in multicultural theory, that group-rights should enforce illiberal measures on internal minorities. While critics such as Susan Okin have argued that multiculturalism is harmful to women, this suggestion is countered in multicultural texts (Okin, 1999). For instance, in the liberal account of multiculturalism conceptualised in the work of Will Kymlicka, he is very careful to argue that multicultural policies should provide 'external protection' for minority groups, rather than to enforce 'internal restrictions' on group members (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 35).

Further to this, Anne Phillips directly tackles Okin's criticisms suggesting that multiculturalism and feminism are compatible features of a progressive march

towards equality for both women and ethnic minorities. Phillips takes issue with Okin's claim that differentiated citizenship will inevitably lead to the subordination of women within minority groups. She argues that Okin denies the possibility for female members of minority groups to exercise agency. Hence, Okin suggests that women exposed to Western liberal cultural norms are capable of autonomy, and that women in other communities are passive victims of circumstance (Phillips, 2007). Phillips argues cogently that this vastly oversimplifies the real position of women in minority communities. Furthermore, she explicitly favours an approach to multiculturalism that upholds "the rights of individuals belonging to particular groups rather than the right of groups" (Phillips, 2007, p. 164). This is a valuable distinction as it recognises the potential for tension between group membership and individual equality and mediates between them.

Any conception of group-based rights must work alongside universal rights, rather than contradict them. The protection of individual equality should not be compromised by the promotion of illiberal practices within a particular group. Differentiated rights should only be established in order to remedy forms of inequality experienced by individuals due to their membership of a minority group. Ultimately, the equation here is quite simple: multiculturalism is about the pursuit of equality; any attempt to impose restrictions on individuals, due to group membership, does not adhere to multicultural principles. However, despite the fact that multicultural theory is able to withstand these criticisms, it has suffered from the effects of a political backlash and largely been displaced in recent years by the adoption of interculturalism in policy frameworks aimed at the management of diversity. Most importantly for our purposes this process clearly took place in Northern Ireland during the timeframe of our investigation. Consequently, we will now turn to provide an overview of interculturalism through examining its critical relationship with multiculturalism.

#### *2.2.4 Interculturalism*

As the criticisms of multiculturalism have grown in intensity, a new competitor model has emerged that seeks to maintain a healthy recognition of diversity whilst fostering societal unity. This approach is commonly referred to as interculturalism.

The term is particularly relevant to the wider thesis as it is a feature of certain policy documents associated with the accommodation of difference in Northern

Ireland (OFMDFM, 2013; 2015). Consequently, it is necessary for us to provide an assessment of interculturalism so that we may carry out a more fruitful investigation into policy frameworks aimed at the management of diversity in the Northern Irish context later in the thesis. The next section will outline the key aspects of intercultural theory through examining its critical engagement with multiculturalism. We will see that this has led to a sizeable body of academic debate between multicultural scholars and proponents of interculturalism. In this endeavour we will begin by discussing a number of core criticisms levelled at multiculturalism by proponents of intercultural theory. It will be argued throughout this section, that whilst not all of the criticisms of multiculturalism levelled by interculturalists withstand scrutiny, that the theory represents a distinctive communicative approach that draws on certain ideas associated with multiculturalism whilst rejecting others.

The primary argument made by interculturalist scholars is the suggestion that multiculturalism has placed exclusive focus on the needs of cultural minorities and failed to consider the views of national majorities (Bouchard, 2011). Furthermore, similarly to the liberal arguments discussed earlier it is suggested that multiculturalism is excessively groupist in focus, tending to divide rather than to unite (Wood et al. 2006). Linked with this is the claim that multiculturalism — whilst pertinent in the era of post-war immigration — is insufficiently subtle to deal with the realities of the 'super-diversity' that is a feature of modern societies affected by globalisation (Cantle, 2014).

These theorists present interculturalism as the solution to such problems, claiming that respectful dialogue between cultural groups on terms that are acceptable within mainstream cultural norms are likely to promote the formation of new hybrid identities. The suggestion is that through interaction and dialogue it is possible to create a type of cultural blend that is more than the sum of its parts, simultaneously respecting difference and promoting solidarity. In order to examine these arguments further we will begin by considering Bouchard's (2011) suggestion that interculturalism pays greater attention to the needs of cultural majorities than multiculturalism.

Though Bouchard critiques various aspects of multiculturalism, perhaps the key feature of his work is the argument that measures taken in the pursuit of cultural accommodation should recognise the majority as well as minorities. Moreover, he argues that dominant cultural norms should provide a framework for intercultural dialogue. He moves on to claim that multiculturalism is not equipped to provide the same type of accommodation for cultural majorities. This type of argument becomes evident when Bouchard states that “interculturalism is on the whole very sensitive to the problems and needs of the majority culture, which multiculturalism cannot provide since, [...] it does not recognize the existence of such a culture” (Bouchard, 2011, p. 465). These criticisms lead Bouchard to the suggestion that interaction and dialogue between cultural groups in order to promote blending and sharing is the correct approach to managing diversity.

The second major criticism of multiculturalism that is commonly expressed in intercultural approaches is the suggestion that it is inherently fragmentary in its outlook. This is to say that multiculturalism prevents crossover and integration between cultural groups. This sentiment is evident in the work of Wood et al. (2006), who suggest that “The creative challenge is to move from the multicultural city of fragmented differences to the co-created intercultural city that makes the most of diversity” (p. viii). Similar views are expressed in the work of Zapata-Barrero (2016) who states that “interculturalism presents itself as a framework that tries to challenge the way multiculturalism(s) have always tended to categorise people through origin and nationality” (p. 158). Most accounts of interculturalism proceed from a departure point that suggests multiculturalism divides people according to cultural traits and that interculturalism by contrast will promote dynamic relationships in which inter-group barriers are eroded by mutual interaction.

The third key strand in the intercultural argument is that multiculturalism has failed to engage with the nuances of diversity as it has developed during the era of globalisation and ‘super-diversity’ (Vervotec, 2007). The result of this is that while people are participating in forms of cultural exchange on a daily basis, creating new forms of complex hybrid identities in a multiplicity of different blends, that

multiculturalism is rooted in an outdated understanding of diversity. This finds its clearest expression in the work of Ted Cantle (2014) who argues that:

*The multicultural policies followed by the UK and most European governments have become ever more exposed and, it is argued, are no longer appropriate to mediate the new era of globalisation and super-diversity. p. 313.*

Cantle argues that it is necessary that the accommodation of difference is rooted in a multi-level civic space which operates both above and below the level of the nation-state and the national community. In this sense, his arguments follow very closely those of theorists such as Held (1995; 1998; 2003) and Linklater (1998; 2001) who have argued for cosmopolitan democracy in recognition of the impact of globalisation on the nation-state.

Having outlined this range of criticisms against multiculturalism, interculturalists argue that their theory recognises difference and cultivates positive change through dialogue and respectful interaction between cultural groups. This is evident in Bouchard's argument in favour of interculturalism when he claims that

*while fostering respect for diversity, the model favours interactions, exchanges, connections, and intercommunity initiatives. It thus privileges a path of negotiations and mutual adjustments (Bouchard, 2011, p. 448).*

This idea is also present in the work of Zapata-Barrero who states that "Interculturalism can be seen as a set of policies sharing one basic idea: that the interaction among people from different backgrounds matters" (Zapata-Barrero, 2016, p. 155). What unites these approaches is the suggestion that multiculturalism is ill-suited to the realities of contemporary diversity due to the fact that it does not take account of majority preferences, is inherently fragmentary, and lacks the subtlety to engage with the complexity of diversity in the era of globalisation.

However, these arguments have been rejected by multiculturalists who argue that interculturalism is not a distinctive theoretical innovation, but rather a politically expedient rebranding exercise in response to the criticisms of multicultural policies. Such scholars tend to point to existing texts within the multicultural canon that



cover similar ground to the theories articulated by interculturalists (Kymlicka, 2012; Modood & Meer 2012a; 2012b). Furthermore, a number of theorists suggest that interculturalism may heighten the assimilatory pressures being placed on cultural minorities (Brahm-Levey, 2012; Taylor, 2012).

One of the key battle-grounds between multicultural and intercultural scholars is the argument that multiculturalism favours minorities at the expense of the majority. In response to this claim, multiculturalist scholars have argued that interculturalism has the potential to lead to swamping due its emphasis on maintaining majority norms. This type of argument is expressed in the work of Modood and Meer (2012a) who state that:

*all forms of prescribed unity, including civic unity, usually retain a majoritarian bias that places the burden of adaptation upon the minority, and so is inconsistent with interculturalism's alleged commitment to 'mutual integration' (Modood & Meer 2012a, p. 188).*

Furthermore, multiculturalists have taken issue with the suggestion that their theories fail to promote dialogue across cultural boundaries. In order to highlight this, it is useful once again to begin with the work of Modood and Meer (2012a; 2012b). Modood and Meer argue that not only is dialogue between cultural groups a component of multiculturalism, that it is a foundational aspect of the model.

Their arguments are supported by surveying multicultural literature. For instance, Parekh argues that "every culture represents a limited vision of the good life and benefits from a dialogue with others" (Parekh, 2004). In an earlier text on multiculturalism Charles Taylor argues that "discovering my own identity doesn't mean that I work it out in isolation, but that I negotiate it through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others" (Taylor, 1997, p. 103). Both of these quotations serve to suggest multiculturalist scholars endorsing the types of dialogue espoused by interculturalist theorists. Further to this, multiculturalists have argued that the driving force behind interculturalism was the need for a new political narrative in response to the public backlash against multiculturalism.

For instance, Taylor argues that the origins of interculturalism in the Canadian territory of Quebec were derived from the political imperatives of the Francophone

majority in the region and the desire of elites to distinguish the territory from Anglophone Canada. This type of sentiment is further outlined in the work of Brahm-Levey (2012) who argues that:

*Whether interculturalism differs substantively from multiculturalism is very much beside the point. Rather, what matters is that the term 'multiculturalism' has become so mired in controversy and is so maligned in public debate that its semantic capital, as it were, has been spent. (Brahm-Levey, 2012, p. 223).*

Both of these texts locate the tendency towards greater political and scholarly endorsement for interculturalism within the context of diminishing popular enthusiasm for multiculturalism.

On balance it is fair to suggest that these scholars highlight key areas in which some interculturalists have overstated their case. However, this does not mean that there are not certain elements of distinctive theoretical innovation within interculturalism. Interculturalism is best seen as a refinement of specific multicultural principles which places emphasis on dialogue and makes an explicit rejection of divisive tendencies that are associated with certain multicultural practices. The tone of the debate is marked by tribal divisions between these two scholarly camps, yet the two approaches should be seen as subtly distinct and complementary. It is appropriate to suggest that interculturalism is built upon foundations laid by multiculturalists but has evolved to some extent to suit different needs in the context of globalisation and vastly increased movements of people (Cantle, 2014).

Furthermore, because multiculturalism has always encompassed a range of perspectives, some of which emphasise communitarian roots (Parekh, 2006) and others which identify more closely with liberal ideals (Kymlicka, 1995) this has left a lack of clarity over exactly what it is that multiculturalists stand for.

Interculturalism cuts through this theoretical fog by explicitly rejecting the aspects of communitarian multiculturalism that could be interpreted as placing impermeable boundaries around existing cultural groups. Werbner (2012) makes a useful contribution to this discussion when she states that interculturalism can be understood as a form of multicultural communication employed across religious and

cultural boundaries. This definition neatly captures the manner in which interculturalism has grown out of multiculturalism through a process of critical engagement with its parent theory, yet it does not repudiate multicultural values on a wholesale basis.

Regardless of the specifics of theoretical posturing within these debates, interculturalism has clearly become a common semantic feature of policy frameworks aimed at the management of difference throughout Europe and notably in Northern Ireland. It is for this reason that the theory will be invoked later in the thesis order to help us to make sense of a number of important policy developments that took place in Northern Ireland during the period of our study.

So far this chapter has outlined some of the central theoretical controversies related to the accommodation of cultural pluralism in diverse societies. The importance of these theoretical foundations will become more apparent when we begin to consider the manner in which such debates have emerged in the Northern Irish context. However, we must note at this point the gap between these theoretical models and the substance of democratic politics as practiced in multi-party democracies. This will highlight the need for further research into the party politics of culture in diverse societies.

#### *2.2.5 Theoretical Debates and Party Politics*

It has been argued throughout the previous section that an active approach to the management of cultural pluralism is the most effective way to engage with the realities of difference in diverse societies. This is true for both multi-national sources of diversity and those brought about by immigration, though the particular methods of accommodation may vary. What unites each of the theoretical positions that have been discussed has been their lack of focus upon party politics in democratic societies. Each of these bodies of literature argues in favour of a particular vision of the individual, of cultural groups, and of the manner in which the state should interact with the citizenry. Each places focus on establishing theories appropriate to the accommodation of difference in democratic societies, yet ignores one of the key components of a functioning democracy: political parties.

The manner in which democratic choices are placed before citizens in contemporary democratic societies is inevitably wound in with the machinations of inter-party debate. As political parties seek to position themselves relative to political opponents, they collectively present the range of meaningful choices available to voters when expressing democratic preferences. Furthermore, successful parties will gain access to policy-making forums and to the offices of state, giving party elites a privileged position in the negotiation of policy outcomes (Sartori, 1976; Ware 1996).

If we briefly survey some of the key literature on party systems, the thing that connects their characterisation of political parties, is the suggestion that their primary role is to act as a discursive conduit between the citizen and levers of the state. For Sartori, a party system “allows expressive communication, that is, enables the citizen to communicate to the state. Conversely, a party system provides a communication network devised for communication to the society” (Sartori, 1976, p. 57). Durverger notes a similar function for political parties when he argues that “There is no longer a dialogue between the elector and the representative, the nation and parliament: a third body has come between them, radically modifying the nature of their relations” (Durverger, 1964, p. 353). Nearly all literature that engages with political parties places a significant degree of emphasis on the communicative role that they occupy.

In democratic systems, the representatives of political parties that can garner sufficient popular support to propel themselves into the executive are in a position to place their ideological stamp on the development of subsequent legislation. Other successful parties are able to make a contribution to policy deliberations within legislative bodies. In doing this, they play a central role in the interplay of democratic discussion. In this sense, parties serve as a vehicle that moves in between the citizen and the state (Budge & Keman, 1990). However, it should also be noted that political parties do not form their distinctive narratives in a vacuum. They are bound by constraints emanating from the institutional framework that they operate in, the pressures exerted by other parties, and by the difficulties of navigating the whims of public opinion (Downs, 1957; Durverger, 1964; Hay, 2002).

Parties should be understood as both the creators of distinctive political platforms and simultaneously as a reflection of the prevailing political culture within which they operate. They clearly represent a crucial component in democratic decision-making processes, so it seems odd to overlook their role in shaping political approaches to cultural accommodation. If there is limited research carried out in this area, it is possible that we may find greater engagement with political parties when we consider wider debates on immigration. The next section turns to review literature on key political issues related to immigration. This includes debates over the control of territorial borders, the economic effects of migration and the impact of immigration on contemporary welfare states. Perhaps here it may be possible to discern a more substantial focus on the operation of party politics in relation to these issues.

### **2.3 Expansive and Restrictive Approaches to Immigration**

One of the key questions that consistently frames contemporary debate on immigration is the issue of restriction or expansion. This effectively entails deciding whether the state should seek to open borders and encourage migratory flows into the host society, or try to prevent large scale immigration through restrictive entry policies. This issue has doubtlessly become a feature of political debate in a number of Western liberal democracies. In terms of seminal academic study on this issue, the discussion was largely set in motion by the work of Gary Freeman (1995; 2002; 2011). His contributions contend that policy-makers have tended towards expansionist immigration policies, despite the fact that public opinion generally endorses more restrictive approaches to inward migration.

Freeman argues that there is a significant divergence between the restrictive sentiments that are common place in public opinion and policy outcomes that tend towards expansionist measures. This is well captured in his statement that "The central puzzle of the politics of immigration in liberal democracies is the large and systematic gap between public opinion and public policy" (Freeman, 2002, p. 77). His texts are aimed at explaining this apparent gap between the preferences of the citizenry at large and the outcomes of policy decisions made by political elites. In this sense, Freeman seems to suggest elite responses towards immigration issues are not governed by the normal drivers associated with political parties courting popular support. Following on from this assertion, his key question is how are we to make

sense of this disparity between elites that are rationally expected to adopt vote-maximising strategies and policy outcomes that appear to contravene the preferences expressed in popular opinion?

In order to explain this apparent divergence between public opinion and elite decision-making, Freeman argues that pressure groups described as the 'organised public' have managed to gain the ear of policy-makers more successfully than the diffuse, disorganised and dissenting voices of the public at large. This is evident in the statement that "politicians will be more responsive to the organised public than to the unorganised, poorly articulated views of the general electorate" (Freeman, 2002, p. 79). His construction of the organised public as a lobbying body on behalf of expansionist immigration policies requires some unpacking.

Firstly, Freeman discusses the effects of pro-business organisations seeking cheap, flexible labour for employment in low-skill industries. He argues that this lobbying group has successfully utilised access to political elites to shift immigration policy towards a position that suits their own requirements. Secondly, he cites the influence of migrant groups seeking representation for their communities and a greater degree of cross-border openness. Freeman suggests that such groups are better placed to gain the ear of policy-making elites than the disorganised strata of popular opinion that tends to oppose increasingly open borders (Freeman, 2002). In Freeman's work, small factions with much to gain from expansionist immigration policies are represented as organising in the pursuit of group-specific aims, whilst diffuse costs are expected to be spread across large sections of the wider population who are less able to formally articulate their discontent (Freeman, 1995). However, this raises the question of whether elites in sub-state settings would be subject to the same type of pressures, given that immigration policy is usually devised at state-level or through participation in supra-national associations (Hepburn & Zapata-Barrero, 2014).

In order to evaluate Freeman's claims, it is necessary for us to begin by examining evidence that suggests the public at large are predisposed towards restrictive policies for the regulation of immigration. Survey data certainly suggests that large numbers of people, particularly throughout the majority of Western European states, favour

tighter controls on immigration. These views are generally expressed in terms of fears over greater competition for employment, pressure on welfare systems, and security concerns (Artiles and Meardi, 2014). Some of these concepts will be explored in more detail later in the thesis, but for our purposes, at this juncture, it is necessary to simply illustrate the extent of this anti-immigration sentiment through examining quantitative research carried out in this area.

The majority of surveys carried out in EU countries suggest that Freeman's claims about negative public opinions towards expansive immigration can be upheld. For instance, polls carried out in the UK in 2008 and 2013 suggested that over 70% would like to see immigration reduced, in both cases over 50% specified that immigration should be 'reduced a lot' (Blinder, 2015). Research carried out across the EU mirrors this trend with public opinion in Greece (86%) and Italy (80%) most strongly in favour of curtailing immigration (Pew, 2014 [online]). However, several conclusions drawn by Freeman have been called into question through the work of Statham and Geddes (2006). Their research into immigration debates suggests that political elites actually play the primary role in setting the tone and content of public discussions on immigration and that civil society actors are comparatively weak. Furthermore, their work contends that the public tend to take cues on immigration from the various shades of elite rhetoric present in the debate.

Statham and Geddes begin with the proposition that civil society organisations can only impact on policy-making if they have sufficient access to communicative resources to raise their profile in mainstream media. This prompted them to review British newspaper articles that dealt with immigration issues between 1990 and 2004. Their enquiries were focussed on establishing whether political elites or civil society actors were most prominent in setting the agenda for such discussions, and whether the sentiment of their statements could be described as restrictive or expansionist.

Using quantitative coding techniques the authors established a strong argument that political elites had significantly greater access to communicative resources than civil society groups, and that they consequently played a pivotal role in setting the agenda of public debates on immigration. This is particularly evident in their findings which

noted that 60% of news articles on immigration were driven by political elites and that only 25% came from sources within civil society bodies (Statham & Geddes, 2006, p. 253) Secondly, their work concludes that elites tended to be far more restrictive in their approach than their characterisation in the work of Freeman would suggest.

What is interesting for our purposes here is the role that political elites play in driving the agenda. While elites are generally assumed to adopt vote-maximising strategies, it is clear that they have a degree of autonomy in driving the debate forward in a particular direction due to their privileged access to communicative resources (Statham & Geddes, 2006). It must also be noted that these political elites do not operate in isolation, but that they represent political parties and obtain their mandate for policy-making through obtaining democratic endorsement from the voting public (Lipset, 2000).

While the work of Geddes and Statham serves to suggest an elite bias in public debate on immigration issues, what is missing here is a more detailed breakdown of how such debates function in the arena of inter-party conflict. Their work touches on this in places when they suggest for instance that Labour Party statements tend to be broadly more expansionist than Conservative Party narratives. However, there is very little detail provided on the inter-party dynamics driving political debates over expansionist or restrictive approaches to immigration policies.

This is an area that remains under researched and would benefit greatly from a more rigorous process of qualitative enquiry. While the work of Geddes and Statham does serve its stated aim of tackling the flaws in Freeman's argument, they follow him in offering very little empirical detail on the specific content and tone of these debates across and within political parties. In order to fully illustrate the complex nature of these discussions, it requires us to focus not just on the relationship between broadly defined political elites, civil society organisations, and public opinion, but to dissect such debates within the context of inter-party conflict. It is here that elite positioning on such issues can be more fully understood. Such political narratives are not formed in a vacuum, but in the maelstrom of day-to-day democratic conflict. Often when



restrictive or expansive approaches are discussed, the debate turns to the economic effects of immigration. In order to outline some of the key controversies related to this issue, the section will review a selection of the key economic arguments related to immigration.

### *2.3.1 Economic Arguments*

Opponents of immigration have often chosen to frame their arguments in terms of a negative assessment of the economic impact that migration has upon native born workers. Such arguments tend to suggest that while employers may benefit from an increasingly flexible labour market, that the local population bears the associated costs, through lack of access to potential employment and through falling wages. This has been a common theme in the rhetoric of populist right-wing parties seeking to exploit immigration as an electoral issue (Bale, 2003). Similar narratives have been adopted by a wide-range of anti-immigration groups throughout Europe (Van Spanje, 2010). The next section will consider the extent to which such claims are supported by findings in academic and governmental research.

Academic enquiry into the economic effects of immigration has usually focussed on two key areas. Firstly, upon the impact on employment prospects for local workers. Secondly, studies have been carried out into the effects of immigration on wages in sectors marked by high levels of migrant labour. At this point it becomes useful for us to consider some of the key pieces of research in this area in order to illustrate the true complexity of this aspect of the immigration debate.

The majority of economic analyses of immigration tend to support the theory that migrants follow a 'rational actor' approach, moving from areas with limited employment prospects and low levels of prosperity, to regions with high demands for labour and the possibility of more substantial wages (Chiswick, 2000). It is also assumed that migrant labour will then move on in search of new opportunities when formerly prosperous economic settings are afflicted by economic recession and an associated lack of employment opportunities (Cornelius & Rosenblum, 2005). Such theories are correct if taken in very broad terms, migrant flows tend understandably to move in accordance with the whims of economic demand for labour in specific geographic locations and particular sectors of industry (Mayda, 2005). If this is the

case, then large-scale immigration could be described purely in terms of its ability to plug gaps in sections of the labour force, and the case could be made that immigrants are required to meet the needs of employers in particular sectors. However, the picture is more complex than the model described in these macro-level economic analyses.

Research suggests successful migrants will often return to their countries of origin following periods in host states of less than five years, despite the fact that wages may be lower in their home economy. This contravenes the simplistic rational actor calculations articulated in a number of economic theories of immigration. Work carried out by Dustman and Weiss suggests that once new skills are learned, and new forms of social capital are obtained in the receiving state, that immigrants are likely to utilise them in their countries of origin despite the possibility of higher wages in the host society (Dustman & Weiss, 2007).

At first sight it may seem that large numbers of immigrants would significantly affect average wages in unskilled positions. However, a review of the evidence suggests that though immigration does tend to impact negatively upon wages in unskilled sectors of the economy, such processes are somewhat limited in their effects. In a review of the impact of immigration upon wages in unskilled positions carried out by Nickell & Salaheen (2008), the evidence suggested that a 1% rise in immigration in a particular occupation would lead to a 0.5% reduction in wages at the most and that such effects would be concentrated in specific industrial sectors (Nickell & Salaheen, 2008, p. 10). While these figures are suggestive of immigrants placing pressure on wages to some degree, particularly for unskilled workers in certain industries, they are unlikely to have a profound impact on these sectors of the economy. The next factor we must address is what evidence there is to suggest that immigration will impact negatively upon the employment prospects of local workers.

The majority of research in this area suggests that immigration does not significantly affect employment outcomes for native workers (Dustmann et al, 2005). In 2012, The National Institute of Economic and Social Research carried out a piece of statistical analysis that correlated migrant national insurance registrations against

unemployment benefit applications from the local population and suggested that there was little evidence of a relationship between the two (Lucchino et al. 2012). Furthermore, research suggests that in times of economic downturn, immigrants will suffer disproportionate levels of unemployment in comparison to domestic workers. For instance, during the economic crisis of 2007-2008, unemployment rose significantly faster among immigrant workers than amongst the native population across the EU-15 (Dancygier & Donnelly, 2012).

The data taken from these pieces of research seems to suggest that immigration has generally been beneficial for the functioning of host economies. Furthermore, there is little evidence to support claims that migrant labour has a strongly negative effect on the wages or employment prospects of the domestic population. However, immigration remains a deeply contentious issue for some sections of the electorate. If the drivers behind this are not economic in nature, might they relate to questions about solidarity and diversity in the receiving states? This issue is explored most thoroughly in debates that pertain to welfare and redistribution systems in the host societies.

### *2.3.2 Immigration and Welfare*

Much contemporary discussion of immigration politics revolves around the issue of redistributive welfare programmes provided in Western states. There is a perception that is often articulated by opponents of expansive immigration policies that migrants arriving in prosperous Western states, from less affluent regions in the global community, do so in order to take advantage of generous welfare programmes not available to them in their countries of origin (Bale, 2003; Van Spange, 2010). In the U.K., this has given rise to terms such as 'benefits tourism' (Migration Observatory, 2014). However, the majority of evidence derived from academic and governmental research suggests that migrants are net contributors to social welfare systems.

For instance, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) released figures in 2015 that suggested that 6% of working age non-UK nationals were in receipt of a DWP benefit, compared with 14% of working age UK nationals (cited in Migration Observatory, 2016). While EU migrants working in the UK are marginally more likely than native born workers to claim 'in-work' benefits such as housing benefit, this

actually reflects the fact that migrants tend to work in low-paid, low prestige jobs that are less attractive to sections of the local population, but nonetheless vital to the functioning of the economy (Portes, 2015).

One of the core questions that has emerged in academic debates over immigration has revolved around the relationship between welfare, solidarity and diversity in receiving states (Miller, 2000; Goodhart, 2004; Joppke, 2007). Here, the work tends to focus on the extent to which large-scale immigration may impact negatively upon popular support for redistributive programmes. In essence, the question raised in these texts is whether homogeneity is a necessary component of solidarity. The starting point of this debate requires us to consider the work of T.H Marshall in the field of citizenship theory. For Marshall, the rights of citizenship evolved in a three stage process, beginning with civil rights in the 18th century, through to political rights in the 19th century, culminating with social rights in the 20th century (Marshall, 1963). Social rights in the work of Marshall refer to the formation of nationally based welfare systems of the type that emerged in a number of European states in the post-war era.

For Marshall, social rights were dependent upon “a direct sense of community membership based on loyalty to a civilisation which was a common possession” (Marshall, 1963, p. 96). His argument assumes the existence of an unproblematic national tie that will enable the development of the common bonds necessary to support the costs of large-scale redistributive measures. However, his work pays no attention to the obvious internal diversity within liberal democratic nation-states. The description of a homogenous citizenry does not take account of internal regional or multinational diversities and makes no allowance for immigrant minorities in such societies. However, this understanding of the relationship between diversity and solidarity has become a prominent feature of arguments aimed at limiting immigration.

This is evident in a number of places such as the work of Goodhart who argues that “in a world of stranger citizens taxpayers need reassurance that their money is being spent on people for whose circumstances they would have some sympathy. For that

reason, welfare should become more overtly conditional" (Goodhart, 2004, p. 7). Similarly, Joppke has argued that globalisation has undermined the concept of social rights in diverse societies. His argument about the tension between immigration and redistributive measures is captured in his suggestion that "With the ethnic diversification of society the basis for social rights becomes brittle" (Joppke, 2007, p. 39). This argument is fleshed out most thoroughly in the work of David Miller who has argued in a series of texts that immigration has the effect of diluting cultural homogeneity in liberal democratic societies, thereby eroding the possibility for a sense of shared solidarity between citizens (Miller, 2000; Miller, 2005; Miller, 2008).

Miller begins from the premise that a shared sense of national solidarity is necessary for the proper functioning of a redistributive welfare state. His argument proceeds to suggest that increasing diversity of the type caused by immigration has a corrosive effect on bonds of national solidarity due to a lack of trust and fellow feeling between different racial, ethnic and religious communities (Miller, 2008). This leads Miller to conclude that immigration should be subject to reasonably high levels of restriction in order to protect the redistributive mechanisms associated with welfare states. This sentiment is best expressed in his assertion that "a culturally divided society without a source of unity to hold its constituents together would be unlikely to support a democratic welfare state" (Miller, 2008, p. 9). It is fair to say that Miller's arguments amount to a delicate and nuanced critique of expansive immigration policies. In his texts he makes a case for significantly limiting immigration without offering support for the xenophobic narratives that have tended to characterise this debate in other quarters. However, his arguments are subject to a number of key weaknesses.

Firstly, Miller's theoretical claims that increased cultural diversity will weaken support for redistributive programmes do not take account of the realities of long-standing ethnic and cultural fissures that exist in the majority of nation-states. The culturally homogenous nation-state is a construct created for processes of nation building that has limited historical basis in the majority of sovereign, territorial units of governance (Mycock, 2012). Were homogeneity a necessary precursor to obtaining popular support for redistribution, how would a multinational entity such as the U.K. overcome the barriers created by internal diversity? Such arguments fall into the

same trap as Marshall, imagining the existence of a homogenous citizenry. This ignores the fact that solidarity and diversity are clearly not mutually exclusive concepts as proven by the experiences of a number of multinational societies.

Secondly, Miller contends that immigration should be restricted not to maintain welfare systems themselves, but rather to maintain popular support for redistributive programmes. His claim being that widespread perceptions of outsiders abusing generous welfare packages may undermine popular support for redistributive programmes. It is certainly true that there is evidence of widespread public opposition to immigration based on the perception that migrants tend to claim benefits in host states. In the UK, polling data collated by Ipsos-Mori revealed the extent of this common public concern. In this survey 62% of respondents felt that a major problem with expansive immigration policies was linked to the perception that immigrants were claiming benefits and entitlements that they had not contributed towards (Duffy & Frere-Smith, 2014 p. 50).

Whilst the research suggested that this association between immigration and welfare abuse was most pronounced in the UK, similar sentiments were expressed in surveys carried out elsewhere in the EU (Duffy & Frere-Smith, 2014). This evidence may seem to support Miller's contention that immigration should be curbed in order to maintain social solidarity in such states. If there are widespread perceptions that benefits are being unfairly abused by 'outsiders' this may have the potential to further erode support for such redistributive mechanisms.

However, given the net contribution of immigrants to welfare states due to their high levels of employment, it is perhaps more sensible not to exclude people on this basis. The reality is that the majority of immigrants tend to be young, economically active, educated elsewhere at no cost to the host state, and most commonly they return to their countries of origin before they reach retirement age (Jacobsen, 2013). If we consider research into the fiscal effects of A8 migrants resident in the UK it becomes apparent that 90% of male and 74% of female A8 migrants are in employment, in contrast to 78% and 71% of the native population respectively (Dustmann et al. 2009). Curbing immigration in order to maintain popular support for welfare systems,

may actually serve to undermine such services through depriving the state of the tax revenues raised by immigrants working in the host economy. Consequently, it seems strange to seek to limit immigration on these grounds. We will now turn to consider the implications of these debates in the arena of inter-party politics.

### *2.3.3 Immigration and Political Parties*

Having now reviewed a substantial body of literature pertaining to immigration policies, it is becoming apparent that these texts undoubtedly serve to highlight important themes in contemporary political debates. However, as with our discussion of approaches to cultural accommodation, they seldom consider the manifestation of these controversies as they appear in the realm of party politics. Questions about whether the state should restrict migratory flows are a central consideration when discussing the politics of immigration, yet these decisions are very likely to be influenced by strategic calculations associated with inter-party competition.

When we discuss the impact of immigration upon the economic prospects of the domestic population and upon communal solidarity within the host state we are getting into the practical aspects of immigration politics. Yet, this literature tends to make little mention of the communicative role played by political parties or their influence in the actual formulation and implementation of policy. This highlights a distinct gap in the existing research into the politics of immigration. However, there are some pieces of literature that have emerged in order to bridge this divide. The thesis will now turn to investigate research that is explicitly focussed upon the relationship between party competition, cultural pluralism and immigration.

## **2.4 Party Politics and Immigration**

When assessing literature that is explicitly focussed on party competition, we find evidence of a series of promising overlaps between the politics of immigration and the activities of political parties. However, what is notable here is that the majority of this work tends to engage with the effect of extreme right parties on inter-party positioning. This literature seems to focus exclusively on state-level party systems, defined by a left/right axis of ideological positioning. Before we turn to discuss some of the particular pieces of research that comprise this canon, it is useful for us to use this opportunity to consider some foundational theories of inter-party positioning and

to highlight the difficulties that immigration causes for traditional axes of party competition.

One thing that emerges when engaging with literature on the politics of immigration is the difficulty in relating such issues to classic theories of party competition. Before this can be fully explained, we need to lay some theoretical groundwork through discussing some of the existing literature on political parties. This process will help us to highlight why immigration does not fit neatly into traditional ideological contours. When discussing inter-party competition it is instructive for us to begin with the work of Anthony Downs (1957). Downs outlined a theory of political parties that was centred on rational actor models borrowed from the world of economics. For Downs, parties were best understood as “a team of men who seek office solely to enjoy the income, prestige and power that go with running the government apparatus” (Downs, 1957, p. 137). In pursuit of these ends, elites would agree on policies and sell them using narratives that were calculated to accrue the widest possible popular approval. In this sense, parties are described simply as vehicles for the pursuit of office.

The approach taken by Downs is perhaps a little too simplistic to cover all drivers of inter-party positioning. However, his work does capture an important feature of party competition: the creation of narratives that serve to differentiate one political grouping from another. Such shared discursive structures are necessary to forge a degree of unity between party members as they pursue collective goals. Ideology, in this context, represents a means by which voters can classify political parties along some form of continuum thereby relieving the individual citizen of the need to have in-depth knowledge of each party’s policy preferences. This kind of spatial positioning theory, utilising a linear ideological framework, has become a keystone in the study of party systems.

Influenced by Downs, a number of scholars came to posit approaches for understanding party behaviour and the formulation of party narratives through reference to ideas such as ‘issue ownership’ or ‘dominance and dispersion’ (Budge & Farlie, 1983; Petrocik, 1996; Riker, 1996). These approaches followed a Downsian



perspective on parties but highlighted a more sophisticated understanding of how ideological narratives were formed. These characterisations of party behaviour illustrate an important feature of inter-party competition, with some parties perceived to be strong in certain areas and less capable in others. Consequently, within party systems, each group is expected to place emphasis on certain areas that highlight the strength of their particular arguments.

This enables the party to obtain support from a section of the public due to the perception of their dominance in that policy region (Petrocik, 1996). By contrast, when one group has achieved a degree of ownership in some area of political salience, others may seek to avoid that area and to focus on creating narratives in policy areas where they feel able to gain an advantage (Riker, 1996). Consequently, party positioning very often takes the form of placing greater or lesser emphasis on certain issues depending on whether it is possible to achieve ascendancy in that policy area.

The majority of literature on party systems tends to assume the existence of a linear left/right axis that divides the parties and provides the backdrop against which their spatial positioning can take place (Durverger, 1964; Sartori, 1976). However, more recently there has been evidence of a post-materialist shift in Western politics that has served to undermine the primacy of the traditional left/right axis in party competition (Inglehart, 1981). This theory argues that, increasingly, issues outside of the left/right axis have come to form key political battlefields that cross and stretch traditional forms of ideological positioning. Issues such as environmental politics or immigration are two classic examples that do not fall neatly into simplistic theories of party competition (Green-Pedersen, 2007). Given our particular focus on multinational diversity and immigration, it makes sense at this point to highlight the manner in which these issues contravene traditional, ideologically defined party boundaries.

Centre-left parties have traditionally tended to combine a focus on protecting wages and working conditions for the industrial working class with a cosmopolitan outlook on international cooperation (Wheatley, 2015). By contrast, parties of the right have usually advocated free-market economics combined with a stronger position on

national identity and territoriality (Bobbio & Cameron, 1996). Immigration pushes both of these ideational combinations to a logical breaking point. Firstly, parties of the left may struggle to endorse immigration when there is a widespread perception that it could harm wages for the local population, this creates an inevitable tension between a cosmopolitan outlook and a protectionist ideological strand. Parties of the right may tend to welcome additional pools of flexible labour brought by immigration, whilst struggling with the potential implications for national unity (Freeman, 2011).

Consequently, immigration does not fit naturally into preconceived notions of left/right party competition. Furthermore, it highlights the extent to which traditional centre-right and centre-left parties have become bound by their own ideological orthodoxies, making it difficult to manoeuvre in the political terrain created by large scale immigration. By contrast, the extreme populist right has flourished in the context of large scale immigration (Bale, 2003). This party family has served to provide the basis for a number of instructive studies into party politics and immigration in European states. The following section reviews some of these pieces of literature to provide an indication of the main themes under discussion and also to highlight the limitations of this body of research.

#### *2.4.1 Anti-immigration parties*

One of the few pools of literature that explicitly connects party positioning with the politics of immigration is found in texts that consider the effects of radical, populist, right-wing parties on inter-party dynamics (Bale, 2003; Green-Pedersen, 2007; Van Spange 2010; Mudde, 2012). Such parties are generally defined by an anti-immigration narrative, meaning that any study of their impact must place a degree of focus on immigration politics. The following section will outline some of the key findings from this body of research in order to highlight the relatively limited scope of this canon. It will be shown that studies on the systemic effects of extreme right parties have built a sizeable literature on immigration as a stimulus in party positioning processes. However, these investigations have tended to be conducted using quantitative techniques. These approaches have served to paint over some of the most important details in order to boil down party positioning to statistical averages. It will be suggested that consequently, these studies do not capture the

essence of inter-party competition as it is played out in the parry and riposte of narrative formulation (Finlayson, 2012).

Populist right-wing parties are undoubtedly perceived to be on the rise in a number of European democracies (Bale, 2003; 2008; Mudde, 2012). This has spawned a sizeable body of literature that investigates the effects of the populist right on party systems throughout the region. Literature on these parties suggests that while their form varies according to the political context within which their operations take place, that three core ideological components unite these groups, thereby providing the recognisable characteristics of a 'party family', these traits are: nativism; authoritarianism; and populism (Mudde, 2012). Examples of this type of party have appeared in a range of European party systems with differing degrees of success. Examples include The Golden Dawn party in Greece, the Sweden Democrats and the Danish People's Party in Scandinavia, these are in addition to the longer-standing European radical-right parties such as The Freedom Party in Austria and the Front National in France (Chakelian, 2017).

While such parties have had limited participation in governments across Europe, their effect upon the behaviour of other parties has become a key area of interest for political scientists, particularly as hard-right populists have seen significant increases in their electoral support in certain European countries (Van Spange, 2010). It is often assumed that radical-right parties would have the greatest effect upon centre-right parties through outflanking them on areas traditionally understood to be foundational features of their political platform. However, in practice, radical-right parties have tended to do well in working class areas and to place significant electoral pressure on the centre-left (Bale, 2008; Alonso & Claro da Fonseca, 2011).

These studies also suggest that even in European party systems that have not witnessed any significant surge in support for right-wing populist parties, there is a tendency for centre-right parties to adopt restrictive narratives on immigration. By contrast, left-of-centre parties will more commonly avoid immigration as a political issue, except where there is a threat from the radical-right. In these instances, centre-left parties will harden their stances on immigration leading to the adoption

of increasingly restrictive narratives and policy formulations (Alonso & Claro da Fonseca, 2011).

The majority of these studies into party behaviour utilise forms of quantitative analysis based on analysing manifestoes and observing the frequency of pro/anti-immigration statements that can be found in the texts. For example, one such study is evident in the work of Odmalm (2014). Odmalm carries out a comparative investigation into the politics of immigration in four countries: the UK; Sweden; Belgium; and the Netherlands. His project studied party manifestoes between 2001 and 2010 in order to pin down trends emerging in the field of immigration politics. Odmalm's study suggests that parties will adopt stances on immigration that fit with their broader ideological preferences, but the decision to implement a quantitative approach to the analysis of manifestoes means that there is limited engagement with the actual discursive themes adopted by the political parties.

His research supports his hypothesis that parties will adopt narratives on immigration that suit their preferred areas of discussion. However, his decision to express this in numerical format means that the actual content becomes obscured to some extent. Firstly, the work makes it difficult to assess the extent and form of party positioning on immigration. Secondly, it does not capture the dynamics of actual party competition as narratives take shape through processes of discursive conflict. This requires the use of a more in-depth, qualitative approach that will enable us to map the contours of inter-party debates on immigration politics.

It must also be noted that these studies focus exclusively on state-level party systems, neglecting sub-national units of governance. This leaves us with no real insight into how immigration politics impacts on inter-party positioning below state-level. This is problematic as devolved party systems often host very different forms of inter-party competition to those at state-level, particularly where there is a strong ethno-regionalist tone in such institutional settings (Lijphart, 1975; Horowitz, 1985). For instance, when Alonso & Claro da Fonseca (2011) were carrying out their study into immigration politics they explicitly chose to leave ethno-regionalist parties out of the study stating that "We decided not to consider ethno-regionalist parties in our

analysis because their minority nationalism overlaps with some of the categories we use to define the immigration issue dimension" (Alonso & Claro Da Fonseca, 2011, p. 873).

This omission suggests a gap in the literature that would make it difficult to arrive at theories of immigration politics that are transferable across differing types of party system. Indeed the overlap between sub-state nationalism and immigration is one of the more interesting things to investigate in this area. Without exploration of the party politics of immigration in polities marked by ethnic division, a gap will remain in our understanding of how immigration politics finds expression in the democratic inter-play of ideological positioning. Some attempt to fill this void has been made in the literature of a small number of scholars that have placed explicit focus on the party politics of immigration in sub-state systems. We shall now examine this small pool of literature and outline some the key findings and the limitations of this canon.

#### *2.4.2 Sub-State Politics of Immigration*

Most of the literature on the party politics of immigration has not engaged with sub-state settings. Still less consideration has been given to the manifestation of immigration politics in the context of party systems riven by the fault-lines of bi-nationalism (Hepburn & Zapata-Barrero, 2014). This may be because in sub-state units of governance there is very little tendency for the local institutions to formulate immigration policy. It is perhaps understandable that immigration does not form a major fault-line in inter-party conflict in such contexts. However, issues such as discrimination and cultural accommodation form important aspects of party competition within sub-state polities characterised by internal ethnic division. Such matters are clearly of importance in the Northern Irish context due to the historical communal division in the territory, yet they also overlap with issues related to the politics of immigration.

This crossover between bi-national issues and immigration potentially creates new complications in long-standing political debates. For instance, where party competition is marked by the presence of stateless nationalist and regionalist parties (SNRP), it is likely that approaches to immigration would be hostile if there was a perception that migrants excessively diluted claims to ethnic homogeneity, or positive

if it boosted the demographic weight of the territory in question (Jeram et al. 2016). Immigration-generated diversity provides the opportunity for ethno-regional parties to present themselves as accommodating of difference, but it also has the potential to undermine their appeals to regional autonomy based on claims to ethno-national self-determination (Adam & Deschouwer, 2016).

Given our understanding of how inter-party positioning takes place, we would expect parties to adopt narratives associated with the politics of immigration and to blend them with traditional ideological refrains (Odmalm, 2012; 2014). This is likely to be influenced to a significant extent by the prevalence of civic and ethnic nationalisms present in the operations of inter-party positioning (Banting & Soroka, 2012). Civic nationalists are more likely to present an inclusive approach to immigrants, whereby they can become equal citizens through residence and participation. Ethnic nationalists are more likely to see migrants as outsiders and to advocate protectionist measures for the domestic population (Wisthaler, 2016). Crucially, these developments are only likely when the parties in question see an opportunity to gain a competitive advantage from pursuing either a welcoming or protectionist line of argument (Petrocik, 1996). It is also likely that in some instances we will find examples of political parties seeking to sidestep issues that do not lend support to their wider narratives (Riker, 1996).

One of the few contributions to the study of immigration politics in the context of sub-state polities is found in the work of Hepburn (2009; 2011), Zapata-Barrero (2012) and their collaborative efforts (Hepburn & Zapata-Barrero, 2014). Their connection with a wider pool of research was encapsulated in an edited volume in which Hepburn and Zapata-Barrero establish a conceptual framework for the study of immigration politics in the context of sub-state settings. Other contributors then offered specific case studies drawn from the study of appropriate territories. Further to this, a special edition of the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, built upon this collection through providing a series of similar regional case studies (see Jeram et al., 2016). These collections have forged an interesting new pathway in the study of immigration politics and this thesis owes a debt of gratitude to this collective body of work.

In the Hepburn & Zapata-Barrero volume, the editors first set out conceptual frameworks for the analysis of sub-state governance based on the seminal work of Dahl (1961), in *Who Governs*. They begin by arguing that one of the key fault-lines in the politics of immigration is likely to revolve around centre/periphery considerations. This means that state-wide organs of governance will clash with devolved institutions over policy competencies for immigration and integration issues. It is assumed that because immigration policies tend to be decided at the state-level, and integration is a devolved matter, that there will be conflicts along a state/regional fault-line. Secondly, the text investigates the party politics of immigration in a number of sub-state territories, thereby enabling us to establish patterns in the content and form that inter-party positioning may take in such contexts (Hepburn & Zapata-Barrero, 2014).

The volume is instructive in a number of ways, it asks a series of pertinent questions and offers some tentative answers on subjects that are close to the issues examined in this thesis. Two of the most relevant case studies in the volume are those carried out in Scotland and Belgium. The former is a study into the party politics of immigration in the context of a devolved institutional setting within the United Kingdom, the latter is a study into similar dynamics in a dual-bloc, ethnically defined party system. In the case of Scotland it is argued that anti-immigration narratives have not become operationalised in inter-party conflict due to the dominance of centre-left parties and the reality of somewhat limited immigration into the territory (Hepburn & Rosie, 2014). The key point in this contribution is to highlight the disparity between the state-level parties that were advocating strong restrictions on immigration and the concerns of the regional branches that were operating in a different context. The study of Belgian immigration politics highlighted a much closer connection between regionalist parties and anti-immigration posturing. It was argued that this was due to the polarising effects of extreme right parties operating in both national electoral blocs (Dandoy, 2014).

The findings from these case studies represent steps towards an understanding of the key drivers of party positioning in relation to diversity and immigration in

receiving territories. They go some way towards filling the gap that is left by the dominance of studies that take place in state-level party systems and left/right ideological spectrums. However, the majority of the authors acknowledge the need for more research to be carried out in these areas if we are to proceed towards more generalizable patterns. For instance, following an investigation into the specific context in Flanders, Deschouwer and Adams state that their work represents “the story of one case in one country. Yet the findings are an invitation to further explore the ways in which political parties, and SNRPs in particular, deal with immigration and integration” (Adam and Deschouwer, 2016). It may be that the particularities of such case studies are so distinctive that it is fruitless to seek to establish general patterns of immigration and diversity politics in sub-state settings, but it is impossible to establish this without significant bodies of in-depth research adding to the existing stock. However, it is more likely that with sufficient data collected, patterns will begin to emerge more clearly in such areas of enquiry.

Northern Ireland represents a unique context for a study of this kind, but it may shed light on other areas of study. Similarly to Scotland, Northern Ireland has had relatively low levels of immigration in comparison with other parts of the U.K. and policy competency for these areas remains with the state-wide institutions of governance in Westminster. However, there are distinct differences due to the fact that the political parties that operate at state-level do not organise to any great extent in Northern Ireland. The political parties in Northern Ireland are a unique product of the local context. The devolved party system in Northern Ireland has similarities with the Belgian situation containing mutually exclusive, ethnically defined, electoral blocs operating within a consociational institutional framework. However, despite the political extremism clearly exhibited throughout the history of Northern Ireland, there has been limited evidence of proto-fascist organisations making electoral headway in the region (McAuley, 2013).

The most relevant piece of research into the effects of immigration on party politics in Northern Ireland was carried out by Gilligan et al. (2011). The authors investigate the extent to which immigration has offered the possibility for new approaches to cultural pluralism in the territory. The study draws on survey data in order to



characterise the positions of political representatives. The research suggests that nationalists and centrists were more likely to support expansive policies towards immigration than unionists, but that representatives of all parties agreed that immigration was likely to change attitudes towards difference in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, they note cross-party consensus on the strong rejection of racism.

The authors recognise that taken as a singular source of data, the evidence derived from surveys may gloss over nuances in the positioning of the political parties. This is evident in their suggestion that "The difficulty in interpreting the responses indicates that there is a need for qualitative research that explores attitudes towards the place of ethnic minorities and immigrants in Northern Ireland" (Gilligan et al. 2011, p. 15). This study seeks to contribute to this process through carrying out a qualitative piece of research that delves into party narratives as they emerge in the realm of ideological positioning in Northern Ireland during a period of increasing immigration. The study will contribute data to the body of research into the relationships between sub-state nationalists and immigrant communities, and will add richness to the specific study of migration politics in Northern Ireland.

## **2.5 Conclusion and Research Questions**

The politics of diversity and immigration has arisen in various guises across a vast and expansive literature. Each of these pools of literature is marked with its own range of intricate controversies, creating complex family trees of interwoven debates. In this chapter we have provided an overview of some of the key issues related to the politics of immigration and cultural accommodation as they have emerged in the context of academic literature. We have outlined three primary areas of academic investigation: theoretical controversy on the accommodation of cultural diversity; policy debates on the expansion and restriction of immigration; and investigations in to party political manoeuvring on issues that explicitly relate to immigration. These bodies of literature play an essential role in outlining the key issues at stake when we begin to discuss the politics of immigration and diversity in Northern Ireland.

The first section of this chapter saw us discuss underlying theories about the correct approach to the accommodation of cultural pluralism in diverse societies. Four positions were discussed: assimilation; difference blind liberalism; multiculturalism;

and interculturalism. It was argued that despite a degree of normative appeal associated with assimilation and difference blind liberalism that they did not offer equality of citizenship in diverse societies. The chapter argued in favour of multiculturalism as a counterweight to the pervasive nature of cultural swamping and group-based discrimination that is present in many societies marked by diversity. A further range of criticisms derived from the intercultural school were also given consideration, though it was suggested that multiculturalists had mounted an effective defence of their theory. Furthermore, it was argued that these debates focussed primarily upon the relationship between the citizen and the state, paying no attention to the operation of political parties in navigating controversies related to the accommodation of diversity. This thesis will seek to bridge this gap through outlining the manner in which such debates become operationalised in the arena of party competition in Northern Ireland.

Secondly, we have reviewed literature that explicitly focusses on some of the key issues driving immigration policy debates. This included the overarching policy approaches of expansion and restriction, before moving on to some of the more detailed debates on economics and social solidarity. However, once again these debates seemed to take place in academic literature with very little reference to political parties. The literature tends to focus on a perceived distance between elite preferences and public opinion but without placing significant attention on how differing factions of political elites approach these issues in the context of inter-party debate. Again, this is something that will be considered in the realm of inter-party positioning processes in the Northern Irish context.

Thirdly, we have considered the body of literature that explicitly examines the party political dimensions of immigration debates. We have seen that this literature revolves nearly exclusively around the effects of populist right-wing parties on party systems across European states. Further to this, we have detailed the dominance of quantitative forms of analysis driving these investigations. Finally, the section considered the small body of work that places focus on the operation of immigration politics at sub-state level. The authors of these texts provide a lightly detailed overview of the main contours of immigration politics in such locations. Such studies

provide a useful template for our investigation into the politics of immigration and diversity in Northern Ireland, but their primary focus is upon understanding the dynamics of centre/periphery relationships.

These three pools of literature are useful in helping us to chart the primary contours of immigration politics as they have emerged in receiving states. However, except with reference to the effect of populist radical-right parties, very little of this research considers the inter-party dimensions of these debates. There is even less work that considers the implications of immigration politics in the context of an ethnically divided party system. This is problematic, as political parties act as a vehicle for the formulation and dissemination of narratives on key political issues. The collective array of discourses on a particular issue or constellation of issues that arise from the back and forth of inter-party conflict, effectively sets the range of democratic options available to citizens and provides the discursive context in which political decisions are made. Furthermore, successful political parties are able to influence policy outcomes through direct access to the offices of state or less formally through participating in parliamentary institutions.

If we are to work towards an understanding of how immigration affects inter-party debate and how ideological positioning affects the dissemination of narratives on immigration, then it is vital to carry out in-depth investigations in a range of different party systems. This thesis will contribute to this process through examining the politics of diversity and immigration as they emerged in Northern Ireland during a period of increasing inward migration. The thesis asks three primary questions, each of which will be investigated using an in-depth form of qualitative analysis on party narratives in Northern Ireland between 2004 and 2014.

- What can Northern Ireland tell us about the manner in which immigration debates impact on ideological positioning in an ethnically defined party system?
- What impact has immigration had upon cultural politics in the ethnically defined party system in Northern Ireland?

- Has immigration-generated diversity had a significant impact on inter-party debates related to racism and sectarianism in Northern Ireland?

The first question considers the actual positions adopted by the parties on immigration and focusses on the extent to which issues such as economics, welfare and social solidarity feature in the narratives of the parties. The second question allows us to consider the manner in which ethnically defined parties, with long histories of making claims on behalf of a particular national group, will engage with cultural diversity in a changing context marked by increasing immigration. For this purpose, it will be particularly useful to look at the manner in which parties approach language policy in the context of widening linguistic pluralism. The third question, enables us to investigate the manner in which racism and sectarianism are discussed in party narratives. This will place focus on the relationship between long standing controversies related to inter-ethnic division and new issues that have arisen as a result of immigration into the territory.

At each stage of enquiry, we will consider what these findings mean in the light of theoretical work on inter-party positioning. It will be suggested that political parties adopt rational strategies for optimal performance in inter-party conflict. In particular, the thesis will highlight the tendency for political parties to survey the wide and complex field of immigration politics and to emphasise areas that support their broader ideological and strategic objectives. The next chapter will now turn to discuss the key methodological decisions that have been taken in order to carry out this research. This includes justification of the case study approach and of the methods employed in order to capture the discursive nuances of inter-party positioning on issues related to diversity and immigration.

# Chapter Three: Methodology and Research Process

## 3.1 Introduction

This study focusses upon party positioning around immigration and cultural pluralism in Northern Ireland during a period of demographic change between 2004 and 2014. In order to carry out this project there will be a significant emphasis placed on the scrutiny of political narratives as they emerge in the case study. While a great deal of political science literature engages more or less explicitly with case studies and upon the analysis of language, be that upon the linguistic frameworks employed by individual orators, political parties, institutions, or policy documents, there is a tendency in such research to provide a limited methodological overview of the data collection and the analytical processes (Hay, 2002). The issue here is not that political scientists have not been carrying out in-depth, rigorous forms of data collection and analysis, but rather that there has been a tendency to limit the review of methodological processes in the write up, instead focussing nearly exclusively on the findings of the research.

This potentially leaves the work open to charges of an 'anything goes' approach (Anataki et al. 2002). For instance, Riesigl describes much of the linguistic analysis employed in political science as 'under-theorised' and prone to 'amateurism' (Riesigl, 2008, p. 96). While the amateur label is perhaps unfair to many of the political scientists involved in these processes of linguistic analysis, it is reasonable to say that the majority do not devote the same amount of time to methodological considerations as we often see in other social science disciplines. In order to be sure to highlight the research processes underpinning the thesis, this chapter will briefly outline some of the key methodological decisions that have been taken during this project. In this endeavour, the chapter seeks to tread a path between the under-reporting of method found in some texts and the unnecessarily detailed 'research journey' approach that is often found in social science literature.

The chapter begins by outlining how Northern Ireland will be used as a case study in the thesis and the particular approach of using a single territory, time-bound study in order to locate relevant data that will answer our research questions. This will

include a brief discussion of some of the more pertinent academic literature on case study research in order to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of this methodological approach. The chapter then moves on to justify the decision to focus on political language in order to characterise the positions of the Northern Irish parties. This section will refer to some of the pre-existing literature on the study of political language in order to outline the manner in which parties utilise linguistic frameworks to differentiate themselves from electoral rivals, and to present their platform to the wider citizenry in pursuit of popular support (Freeden, 1998; Finlayson & Martin, 2008; Finlayson, 2012).

The final section includes a self-critical overview of the data collection and the analytical procedures that have been employed in the research process for this thesis. This includes some brief reflection upon actual research experiences before outlining the approach to thematic analysis that has been used to make sense of the data gathered during the project. The purpose of this section is to provide a degree of transparency to the thesis so that others working in the field may critically evaluate its utility as a contribution to knowledge. In some cases, the chapter will admit to points of weakness on the part of the researcher, in others it is bold enough to recognise areas of success. However, it is difficult to be a fair judge of one's failings and accomplishments. Consequently, it is understood that the researcher should explain their methodological choices so that others may consider the validity of the research. It is for this reason that care has been taken to provide a clear and concise audit of the investigative processes throughout this chapter.

### **3.2 Using the Case Study**

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the manner in which political parties operating in an ethnically defined party system will react to the demographic changes brought about by increasing immigration. In order to investigate this, it is necessary for us to draw on a detailed case study. The particularities of Northern Ireland during the period under consideration help us illuminate the key factors underpinning the politics of immigration in the interlinked contexts of an ethnically divided party system and a sub-state level of government. The specific details of the Northern Irish context in this period will be outlined more thoroughly later in the thesis, but for our purposes at this stage, the chapter will offer a general overview of case study

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research. What follows is an outline of how the case study will be utilised and why certain methodological decisions have been made.

The thesis will be carrying out a single setting case study looking at the evolution of party positioning over a defined period of time. The case study approach has most commonly been used in political science to examine a phenomenon across a number of geographic territories, in order to establish areas of commonality that allow for the theorisation of the study object (Peters, 1998; Calvert, 2002). Most notably, this methodological approach came to the fore in studies of democratisation in regions such as South America and Eastern Europe (Stepan & Linz, 1996; Munck & Leff, 1997). Some scholars have argued that the study of a single case does not allow for comparison and generalisation (see Campbell & Stanley, 1966). However, the single case study is useful for carrying out in-depth research on a particular phenomenon, in a specific context. It allows us to establish arguments based on empirical data that can form the basis of at least partial comparison with other test-cases at a later stage (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Most particularly, this research will provide a useful basis for comparison with other case studies into the impact of immigration politics in the context of sub-state institutional settings. We have already summarised some of the case studies that would provide pertinent comparison with the Northern Irish experience when we discussed the body of research associated with Hepburn and Zapata-Barrero (2014) and Jeram et al. (2016). In particular, the cases of Scotland and devolved settings in Belgium provide areas of crossover with this study (Hepburn & Rosie, 2014; Dandoy; 2014). The former highlights an example of responses to immigration in a sub-state system within the United Kingdom, the latter illustrates similar dynamics an ethnically divided party system. It must of course be noted that Northern Ireland has its own particular characteristics that would make it difficult to apply an exact comparison with another case study, though it shares features in common with a number of settings.

The history of recent ethnic conflict provides just one reason why Northern Ireland does not correspond neatly with either the Scottish or Belgian experiences of

immigration. With this in mind, it could make sense to compare Northern Ireland with other post-conflict societies and the effects of immigration on the party politics of such locations. For instance, a useful comparison could be made with political responses to immigration in the Basque Country (Jeram, 2014). Northern Ireland may not provide the basis for an exact comparison with any of these other territories. However, it clearly has certain areas of correlation in terms of immigration, sub-state party systems, and societal division that make it suitable for comparing certain dynamics as they emerge in a number of different settings. In order to contribute to existing bodies of research, this study will focus on elements of consensus and conflict in the party system that have arisen as a result of immigration in Northern Ireland over a ten year period between 2004 and 2014.

One of the most important things to outline at this stage is the significance of using 2004 as a starting point for our collection and analysis of data. We begin with a series of premises drawn from pre-existing literature in order to make a number of assertions about immigration politics in Northern Ireland prior to 2004. Firstly, before the expansion of the EU to include the A8 countries, immigration was very scarce in Northern Ireland, meaning it was of limited political significance (Russell, 2012). Secondly, approaches to the accommodation of diversity were primarily focussed upon negotiating differences between the two primary communities with very little political attention paid to minority groups in the territory (Little, 2003). Finally, racism was not considered to be a major issue by political parties, due to a perception that racial discrimination did not exist in Northern Ireland, or was overshadowed by sectarianism (Hainsworth, 1998; McVeigh, 1998). However, 2004 witnessed the start of a distinct change in migratory traffic into the territory.

While 2004 represents a turning point in Northern Ireland's experience of immigration and diversity it is important to note that prior to this there were a number of ethnic minority communities residing within Northern Ireland, many of whom were already engaged in struggles for greater recognition (see Hainsworth, 1998). However, it is reasonable to say that from this period onwards, Northern Ireland witnessed significantly larger flows of inward migration than it had previously experienced. Furthermore, in this period, issues such as racism increasingly came to the fore as a



social problem in Northern Ireland, highlighting the need for a robust political response in order to tackle hate crimes, discrimination and the marginalisation of minority groups (Rolston & McVeigh, 2007).

This correlation of factors provides the ideal setting for us to investigate the responses of the political parties to these changes in demographic context. The case study will focus primarily on the period 2004-2014 in order to chart trends in party behaviour with relation to immigration, diversity and racism in this time-frame. The significance of 2014 as a cut-off point is threefold. Firstly, in 2014, PSNI statistics on race hate crimes in Northern Ireland saw near parity with the number of crimes carried out due to sectarian motivations; capturing a vital moment for political leadership in the tackling of racism in Northern Irish society (PSNI, 2016). Secondly, by 2014, Northern Ireland had the lowest migration rate of any region of the U.K., illustrating an obvious statistical end-point of this short period of increased immigration (Russell, 2016). Finally, this timeframe captured the most prolonged period of devolved governance in the territory with the Assembly and the executive functioning from 2007 onwards. However, in the concluding chapter of the thesis, some attention will be given to developments that have occurred in the intervening period, this will serve to bring the thesis up to date at the time of writing.

We must also outline in detail exactly what will be studied in order to provide us with an indicator of the party responses to these demographic changes. The thesis seeks to compare and contrast the narratives of the major parties on three issues: immigration; diversity; and racism. Hence, the study will be focussing on the language used by the parties in reference to these areas during this period. The thesis collates material from a number of representative sources and employs a form of thematic analysis on the linguistic data. However, before we proceed to outline in greater detail the exact data collection processes that have taken place during this research project, it is necessary for us to justify the decision to focus on the study of political language. This will be achieved through outlining the relevance of language to the operations of party competition and its importance in constructing democratic choices for the wider citizenry.

### **3.3 Parties, Ideology and Language**

It is the contention of this thesis that political parties utilise language in order to differentiate themselves from electoral competitors and to sell their platform to potential voters (Sartori, 1976; Ware, 1995). The manner in which parties define themselves is through a process of linguistic positioning that serves to mark out their particular ideological niche in relation to electoral competitors (Finlayson, 2012). Furthermore, ideological structures created by party narratives represent a shortcut by which the electorate make sense of the choices available to them at the ballot box (Downs, 1957). Consequently, if we are to understand the positioning processes of political parties, it is necessary to study the language of party representatives. In particular, for the purposes of this thesis, it is important to study the language of party elites when referring to the core areas of immigration, cultural accommodation and racism. In order to capture the subtleties of these positions as they emerge in language a qualitative analytical approach is essential. However, we must first provide a brief discussion of the relationship between ideology and party positioning as it is understood in this thesis. In this endeavour, it is useful to begin by looking at some theoretical conceptualisations of ideology.

In the work of Freedon, ideology is defined as “particular patterned clusters and configurations of political concepts” (Freedon, 1998 p. 54). This articulation of ideology has the benefit of being sufficiently light in touch to encompass the wide ranging nature of conceptual constellations that can be characterised as ideologies, be that liberalism, socialism, conservatism, environmentalism, feminism and so on and so forth. What makes all of these widely divergent ideational structures, each with its own linguistic components and differing degrees of conceptual unity, ideologies; is that they form discursive frameworks for interpreting key aspects of political concern. This linguistic underpinning of ideology is well captured by Hall who argues that “Language is the medium par excellence through which things are ‘represented’ in thought and thus the medium in which ideology is generated and transformed” (Hall, 2006, p. 35) Such clusters of ideas represented in discrete linguistic constellations are utilised by political parties in shaping a shared platform that guides their sense of collective action, their responses to unfolding events, and

to some extent, their policy preferences when holding political office (Schwarzmantel, 2008).

However, these ideological structures are not formed in isolation. They are a response to circumstance that is designed to mark the party's distinctive appeal in the context of their political environment. The dynamic and competitive drivers of ideological formulation are summed up in Finlayson's statement that "Ideological thought and expression are never simply a 'working out' of a series of concepts or propositions but a dynamic interaction of predispositions with both opponents and events, mediated by political actors who must make choices about how to understand and persuasively present a case they must perform" (Finlayson, 2012 p. 758). In this quote, Finlayson captures the active and reactive nature of ideological formulation but also brings our attention to the outward facing, performative actions associated with ideologies as they are presented to the electorate.

Ideologies are not merely central to defining group identity *within* parties, they constitute a broad collection of interwoven narratives that the party must try to sell to potential voters in the pursuit of popular support. Democratic politics in particular, places the need for political entrepreneurs to find wider support for their ideological frames of reference than that of their adversaries (Van Dijk, 1998). This means finding a way to explain a political concept that makes it intelligible and digestible to voters and preferable to that of electoral rivals. The manner in which political parties are formed around discursively fashioned conceptual hubs, and the requirement for parties to sell their particular ideological brand through the vehicle of communication, serves to highlight the essential need for the study of language in order to gain understanding of parties and party systems. Ideological frameworks serve both to define the parties as distinctive entities, and to delineate the range of democratic choices available to citizens at the ballot box.

Consequently, political parties are defined by their manipulation of discursive frameworks. They simultaneously reflect the prevailing political context, and shape it to some degree, through marketing their ideological perspective (Lipset, 2000). The more successful parties could be argued to reflect most clearly the wishes of the

public, but their privileged access to communicative resources allows parties to influence the perceptions of a wider audience of citizens (Statham & Geddes, 2006). It is for this reason that we place our focus on political parties, and use the study of discursive themes, to help us characterise ideological positioning on the key areas of immigration, cultural accommodation and racism.

In research literature, there are a number of notable approaches that have been used for the study of political language. One of the most commonly used methods is discourse analysis as discussed in the work of Fairclough (2001). Fairclough draws on Foucauldian theoretical roots in order to examine the manner in which power relationships are constructed and maintained through operations in language (see Foucault 1976: 1982). However, discourse analysis is the study of language 'beyond the sentence', which is to say that it focusses on meanings or ideas that may not be explicitly articulated, but are located in the text or speech in less obvious ways (Linde & Labov, 1975). This type of study often focusses on choices of grammatical construction or word selections and omissions in order to establish the functions of linguistic communication in particular situations. Hence, its primary use is to study veiled operations of power in language. This makes it unsuitable for our aim of characterising the positioning processes of political parties as they seek to recruit popular support. This research will focus on what the parties say they stand for and then interpret this according to theories of party competition, rather than trying to locate meanings beyond the sentence itself through grammatical deconstruction.

Another popular method for researching political communication is found in the rhetorical approach. Rhetoric, represents a particular style of communication that is often used in order to persuade people of the validity of certain interpretations of events and proscriptions for action. In the context of democratic politics, it is best understood as a form of communication in which political entrepreneurs seek to sell their particular ideological discourses on areas of societal concern to the voting public (Martin, 2014). The term is rooted in the participatory politics associated with the ancient Greek city states: principles of rhetoric were studied to a significant extent in the work of Aristotle (2004). His texts sought to outline the key systems that governed such linguistic exchanges. In particular, Aristotle outlined three primary

types of appeal made within rhetorical argument: ethos, which pertained to the speaker or writer themselves; logos, which refers to appeals to logic and rationality; and pathos, which made emotional appeals upon the listener (Aristotle, 2004). This approach to the understanding of rhetoric has recently re-emerged in a significant canon of research that carries out rhetorical political analysis on various aspects of British party politics. (Finlayson & Martin, 2008; Crines, 2013; Atkins & Finlayson, 2013).

This thesis will study rhetoric, but will not employ a rhetorical analysis. These types of analysis are an interesting addition to the study of political language, but their primary focus is on the techniques employed by the orator in order to persuade an audience. This is to say that these analyses focus on the performative aspects of the language used rather than simply observing the patterns of meaning within the text. Where discourse analysis seeks to delve into the subtext of language in order to provide insight into power relationships, rhetoric dissects the delivery of the message and the devices used to persuade audiences. Both of these approaches are valid, but neither is suitable to our stated aim of mapping out the contours of inter-party debate on the issues of immigration, cultural accommodation and racism. For this, we need to study what is actually said. We are less interested in what is *not* said, or *how* something is said. Consequently, the thesis has chosen to employ a flexible and pragmatic approach to the study of political language, commonly referred to as thematic analysis.

### **3.4 Thematic Analysis**

The analytic method employed in this thesis is a simple but effective form of thematic analysis. The approach is deductive in nature and guided by existing theories of party competition. Thematic analysis revolves around establishing patterns of meaning within qualitative data. Some proponents of thematic analysis argue that it is a methodological process in its own right, where others see it as a technique that accompanies a range of different qualitative methodologies (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2017). In this thesis it will be used as a stand-alone method, though it is understood that forms of thematic analysis can feature in other approaches to coding and thematising data. By taking this direction, we can proceed with analysis without

becoming encumbered by the theoretical baggage associated with a number of other qualitative methodologies (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis involves a series of key stages that should be followed in order to carry out a rigorous and comprehensive dissection of linguistic material. Firstly, it is necessary to become fully acquainted with the data corpus, this can be achieved through regular reading, listening and transcribing of interviews and other source materials. Secondly, it is necessary to break the data down into fragments through a coding process that places labels on key phrases (Charmaz, 2011). Thirdly, these codes are reviewed in order to find recurring patterns within the data corpus that collectively form discursive themes. Finally, the process pieces the themes together so that they provide a satisfactory, logically presented account of the meanings expressed in the data. It is essential that these findings must be presented in a fashion that answers our original research questions (Guest et al. 2012).

Braun and Clarke (2006) identify a number of potential 'pit-falls' that may arise in the practice of thematic analysis. The sections below, detailing the analytic process, will serve to illustrate how these potential problems have been avoided in this study. Firstly, the authors argue that some uses of thematic analysis will be insufficiently detailed and as such will take vast chunks of data as codes in themselves without the fragmentation process associated with a detailed analysis. Secondly, they argue that analysts should not take interview headings themselves to become part of the coding framework. Thirdly, they state that researchers should avoid what they term to be 'superficial' codes, based on very little evidence within the data. Finally, they suggest that some researchers 'mismatch' actual meanings and codes due to their preoccupation with a particular line of argument.

Most of these items are self-explanatory and can be avoided by sufficient focus and rigor in the analytic process. One area that should be considered further is the role that the original interview schedules should play in the allocation of analytic codes. Braun and Clarke suggest that this should be avoided. However, when carrying out a deductive form of enquiry, the researcher will have created the interview schedule with a view to establishing whether certain patterns will emerge from the

investigation. While the coding and thematising process will doubtlessly serve to highlight further depth and complication in the responses, it is not clear that the researcher should dispense with the possibility of using interview schedules as a partial guide to their analytical processing.

As outlined earlier, the key aim of this project is to observe the impact of increasing immigration on party competition in the Northern Irish party system during a period of changing cultural demography. Consequently, the analysis used in this thesis was guided, to some extent, by general theories of party competition and literature on the particular context of Northern Ireland. An attempt to forget the conceptual foundations that had underpinned the interview schedules in pursuit of unattainable objectivity would have been a flawed and pointless endeavour. Hence, the analysis proceeded in a deductive fashion, looking for examples of consensus and conflict within the data across a range of issues. However, these were very broad headings that preceded data analysis. As coding took place, greater levels of complexity emerged from the data itself. What follows is a more in-depth account of the research process with a particular focus on the fragmentation and the reassembly of data. Finally, examples of some of the findings will be expressed using a diagrammatic format. Before we do this, it is necessary to provide an overview of the practical process of data collection. This will be discussed in the following section.

### **3.5 The Research Process**

In order to gain a clear picture of the manner in which immigration has impacted on party positioning during the period studied, it has been necessary to bring together a number of sources of linguistic content that collectively enable us to characterise the positions taken by each party on the primary issues. This process has involved the dissection of party documents such as election manifestoes; press releases; contributions made in relevant Assembly debates; media sources; and a series of semi-structured interviews that were carried out with party representatives between 2013 and 2014. Using these sources in addition to interview data also aids triangulation and increases confidence that an in-depth picture of the chosen case study develops.

The questions under consideration in this study relate to the manner in which political parties in Northern Ireland have adapted to changing patterns of immigration in the territory. Consequently, the study focusses upon the language of elected representatives from the major parties in order to collate useful data. Initially, documentary sources were studied in order to sketch a limited overview of party positioning on the key issues; the process then moved on to seeking out direct contact with party representatives. The aim was to establish contact and build relationships with MLA's in order to facilitate the collation of data from this target group.

A goal was set to capture a cross-section of views that would enable the thesis to characterise key features of each party's narratives on immigration politics, cultural pluralism, and racism. Interview schedules were built loosely on a handful of key conversational areas such as immigration, welfare, employment, discrimination, and language politics. Politicians were asked to discuss their views on these key topics in interviews that lasted usually between thirty minutes and one hour. Before participants were interviewed in this process, they were provided with an overview of the key research aims and asked to fill in a consent form in order to ensure that interviewees were fully briefed on what issues were likely to come up in the study and could provide informed consent for their participation.

In total, twenty six in-depth interviews were carried out with MLA's from across the party spectrum. This included interviews with eight Irish nationalists, seven non-aligned MLA's, and eleven unionists. This balance provided an overrepresentation of non-aligned MLA's in terms of their proportion within the Assembly, though it also reflects a keenness to participate from APNI politicians that is instructive as to which of the parties confidently approach the issues discussed in this thesis. However, this imbalance was remedied to a significant extent by the glut of information in the public domain about relationships between the ethnically defined parties and a relative paucity of information about non-aligned perspectives.

This data collection process was continued until a noticeable degree of 'saturation' became evident whereby sources were repeatedly articulating similar types of



arguments, meaning that additional collection was unlikely to provide much in the way of fresh substantive content (Seidman, 2012). The themes discussed in the interview data were also compared with party representatives' contributions to relevant Assembly debates in order to triangulate the findings against another pool of data. Additionally, representatives from civil society organisations working on behalf of ethnic minority communities were consulted in order to establish their views on the relationships between the major parties and the concerns of immigrant groups. This provided a useful perspective and a basis for comparison with party narratives that will be utilised in places when the thesis turns to discuss the findings of the research process. What follows is an overview of how participants were approached and some of the access difficulties that arose during this process.

### **3.5 Gaining Access**

One of the key challenges in this process was persuading politicians, who had full schedules, to give up their time to participate in a study that would offer them little immediate benefit and may highlight problematic features in their party's approach to immigration, cultural accommodation and racism. Challenges of this nature are faced by researchers seeking access to political elites in even the most benign circumstances (Goldstein, 2002). The particular time period in which data collection took place was marked by a political crisis in Northern Ireland, which saw loyalist groups come out on to the streets to protest against new rules limiting the number of days that the Union Flag would fly above Belfast City Hall (McDonald, 2013). This situation served to highlight the enduring importance of the 'two traditions' paradigm in the politics of Northern Ireland but had a negative impact on the researcher's ability to gain access to politicians in order to interview them.

Often in this period, interviews were cancelled or postponed, with the offices of the participants generally stating that more pressing issues had arisen. Furthermore, APNI participants nearly exclusively requested to remain anonymous in this period. This was understandable given that the party was being targeted by the protestors, and some of the issues raised in the interviews touched on sensitive cultural concerns. Due to the high number of interviewees requesting anonymity in this period, a decision was taken to reference all participants anonymously, thereby achieving balanced treatment of all respondents. In order to overcome these

difficulties of gaining access, it was necessary to employ an organised, methodical and relentless approach to contacting the offices of interview targets by letter, e-mail, and telephone calls. This strategy made it possible to obtain sufficient numbers of quality, in-depth interviews with MLA's from across the party spectrum. The process provided a valuable store of useful data, particularly when coupled up with the findings derived from collecting and examining evidence from other sources.

However, gaining access to interviewees is only the first challenge in the process. Executing semi-structured interviews comes with its own set of unique problems for the qualitative researcher. Fortunately, when assembling and carrying out semi-structured interviews there are vast bodies of literature that can be employed to provide theoretical and practical guidance for the researcher (for example Grbich, 2007; Bryman, 2008; Silverman, 2013; Holiday, 2016). However, this literature is general in scope and does not always capture the particular challenges in elite interviewing in a divided society (McEvoy, 2006). The following section will provide an overview of some of the particular difficulties that arose and the measures that were employed in order to overcome them. Firstly, we will discuss general problems related to semi-structured interviewing and then consider the particular issues associated with carrying out elite interviews in a divided society.

### **3.6 Interviews**

While more structured interviews offer the researcher an easily repeatable process, they lack the ability to capture the richness, depth and the range of perspectives obtainable from the semi-structured interviewing format (Kin, 2011). When employing a looser approach to interviewing, it is necessary for the researcher to begin with wide-ranging, open-ended questions that allow the interviewee sufficient space to express themselves. The researcher must maintain a delicate balance between steering the interview to retain a degree of focus upon core research aims, whilst leaving sufficient conversational space for the interviewee to bring in things that they feel are pertinent to the discussion as it takes place (Russell, 2013).

This balance is difficult to achieve and its application is perhaps more of an ideal to be strived for than a perfectible possibility. The difficulty for the researcher carrying out less structured interviews is the requirement placed upon them to engage in

intense listening in order to make sense of the participant's discussions, while maintaining a certain level of focus on established research aims (Bryman, 2008). This requires great attention to detail and a high degree of conversational dexterity on the part of the researcher. Carrying out these interviews was a learning process in which the early examples fell into difficulties such as asking questions that were overly verbose. This would have the effect of either guiding the responses in a certain direction, or eliciting very short answers. As the process unfolded, interviews became less tightly constrained. This enabled the respondents to steer the conversation in a direction of their choosing and uncovered useful streams of data by highlighting the conversational priorities of the interviewee rather than those of the researcher.

When interviewing elite politicians, it is necessary for the researcher (particularly a novice researcher) to appreciate some degree of power differential. Firstly, it is important to ensure that the interviewee is fully briefed on the aims of the research and the type of questions that will arise in the interview. Once this is established it is necessary to ask questions that fit within these boundaries (Lilleker, 2002). The politicians were participating voluntarily, following ethical guidelines, they were instructed that their consent for the data to be used could be withdrawn at any time. Consequently, it was useful to establish some degree of trust from the participants before proceeding to ask potentially controversial questions (Leech, 2002). As a result of these considerations, the interviews tended to start with the least threatening questions such as asking how they became involved with their party and would move through to some of the more challenging questions at the end. Typically, the interviews would finish with discussions of racism, unless they were prompted earlier in the interview by the participant. This approach enabled free flowing conversation to be established before the schedule shifted onto the potentially difficult issues under examination.

Additionally, there were considerations related to the study of an ethnically divided party system. McEvoy (2006) notes that participants had the potential to view interviewers as biased due to their ethnic origins. In the Northern Irish case, such issues are most acute if the researcher is perceived to be associated with one of the primary ethnic groupings resident within the territory. As an outsider this was less of

an issue, though it became apparent that it was necessary to avoid using certain terminologies with particular respondents. This became manifest around how to label Northern Ireland, with some nationalists discussing 'the six counties' and the 'north of Ireland'. To use such terms could potentially offend unionist participants, but were helpful in gaining the trust of nationalist respondents. Consequently, the terminology employed by the interviewer was moulded to some extent in order to match the likely perspective of the participant. Simple measures such as this were helpful in avoiding contentious breakdowns in communication that would have had a negative effect on the relationship between the interviewer and the participant.

Finally, the interviews required a degree of validation against other sources. Whilst the semi-structured interview offers in-depth accounts of how the participants perceived the issues under consideration, such responses do not necessarily follow party lines. Given that this research is principally interested in characterising the responses of parties, rather than individuals, it was necessary to ensure that the interviews correlated with the broader narratives of the parties being investigated. For this purpose, a further process of research was carried out that focussed on establishing party narratives in the public domain. Data was obtained from sources such as Hansard records of debates within the Assembly, contributions made in media outlets, and policy documents that discussed approaches to the accommodation of difference in the territory. By comparing the interview data with this wider body of material, a degree of triangulation could be achieved that ensured such narratives reflected common patterns within inter-party debate (Davies, 2001). Once the relevant data was obtained, the results were transcribed and then the process of in-depth analysis began.

### **3.7 Analysing the data**

In the first stage of analysis it was necessary to bring together all of the data that had been derived from the various sources. It was split up roughly according to its association with each of the major political parties. With this complete, the next step was to set about reviewing the data with a view to disassembling it and applying codes to the relevant chunks of text. The coding process was informed by wider reading on immigration politics, theoretical approaches to the accommodation of cultural pluralism, racism and sectarianism in Northern Ireland, and the positioning

strategies of political parties that were discussed at length in the literature review section of the thesis. In this sense, a deductive coding process took place in which these interpretative frameworks were employed in order to make sense of the data. The main issues identified in the literature provided a broad framework for beginning to code the interview data.

The coding process began simply by reading and rereading interviews and other data sources in order to become familiar with the data and to start to understand the issues that had been captured in the interviews. When data sources seemed to speak to the study's research questions they were marked up with **codes** using the comments feature on Microsoft Word. Below are some examples of how this took place using sections of interview data with unionist politicians during discussions on language policy. These examples illustrate the manner in which codes were applied to sections of the semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, the excerpts serve to suggest the variety of responses that could arise even when discussing similar issues with members of the same party. Both of the fragments below highlight certain discursive strategies employed in order to block further funding for the Irish language, yet different arguments are used across the two texts to justify this position. The first interviewee cites primarily economic arguments against further funding, the second focuses upon the suggestion that the Irish language has become weaponised in a cultural war prosecuted by Irish nationalists. However, both invoke minority languages as a further defensive mechanism to bolster their broader arguments. The codes applied, then, reflect the main issue (Irish language) and the different perspectives on its funding (economic vs. cultural).




<p>GH: Where do you stand on funding for the Irish language?</p> <p>DUP1: I have no issues with people wanting to express their identity, and the Irish language is part of that, but there does have to be two recognitions here. First of all, financially, there is a limited pot of money, and there are things out there which are much more important than protecting language and that sort of thing. So we do have to be very conscious of that and I think the public want us to be good stewards of the money that we are given in this assembly. At the end of the day we are given a pot from Westminster, we can pretty much spend it how we like, but we don't get anymore. So if we spend it wrong and public services suffer as a result of that we are in trouble. So we have to be conscious of that. I think the second thing is that we have a saying in this country, which is in the news pretty much every day 'both sides of the community' that term is used every day. I don't like that term, I don't accept that term, because it says by default that we only have two communities in Northern Ireland, and we don't. We have a very large flourishing Polish community, a large and flourishing Lithuanian community. So to suggest that there are just two groups would be ludicrous and offensive.</p>	<p> <b>Gavin Hart (Researcher)</b> Economic reasons not support Irish language</p> <p> <b>Gavin Hart (Researcher)</b> Economic reasons not to spend money on support for the language</p> <p> <b>Gavin Hart</b> Immigrant diversity – Shield strategy</p>
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Figure 3.1 – DUP 1 Interview Excerpt





<p>GH: Where do you stand on the issue of funding for the Gaelic language?</p> <p>DUP3: No. (pause) Quite simply because if some wishes to learn Irish Gaelic, they should facilitate it themselves in the same way you would learn French or German or whatever. The Irish language is not used here as a language. It is used as a political battering ram. Less than a thousand families in Northern Ireland speak Irish as their first language, there are far more Poles, Lithuanians and Czech speakers. The Irish language is seen by the Protestant community as a threat rather than an opportunity. It is used as the voice of militant republicanism. There are other aspects of Irish culture, such as Irish dancing for instance which are seen as none threatening. So it's not Irishness that's the problem, it's the way that Sinn Fein have adopted and used the Irish language. Of course there was that famous remark made by Gerry Adams that 'Every word of Irish is another bullet in the struggle to free Eire'. So therefore, no, not for me. De-facto it happens, but not with my acquiescence, I just do not agree with Irish being funded, everyone in Northern Ireland, who was born in Northern Ireland, speaks English: everyone. Obviously there are people from outside who may need help with language that is justified to be funded, but to spend money on the Irish language? Absolutely not.</p>	<p> <b>Gavin Hart (Researcher)</b> Irish language weaponised</p> <p> <b>Gavin Hart (Researcher)</b> Immigrant minorities – shield strategy</p> <p> <b>Gavin Hart (Researcher)</b> Irish language weaponised</p> <p> <b>Gavin Hart (Researcher)</b> Immigrant minority languages - Integration</p>
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Figure 3.2 – DUP 3 Interview Excerpt

Using this coding strategy it was possible to demarcate statements relevant to the research questions as they arose within the data. The codes were brought together for comparison using an excel spreadsheet (for an example of this see appendix 4). When certain codes recurred in the data, it became possible to establish **themes** that carried across different texts. These themes served to highlight important discursive features that underpinned the positioning strategies employed by the different parties, though in some cases these themes crossed party boundaries, highlighting areas of overlap on certain issues. In order to illustrate how codes led to the

development of themes, it is useful to provide a diagrammatic example that outlines the ways that the codes became themes at this stage of the analysis. Codes were grouped in order to develop particular themes (see figure 3.1). In this instance we see codes brought together that show how certain respondents sought to gain ownership over the issue of racism. These codes were largely applied to Sinn Féin respondents who were using racism as a means to prosecute attacks on political unionism. Others codes are derived from the smaller parties’ narratives on the failure of the OFMDFM to tackle racism. Due to the manner in which different parties were seeking to exploit racism as a component in party positioning strategies, this theme was labelled ‘Racism Issue Ownership’.

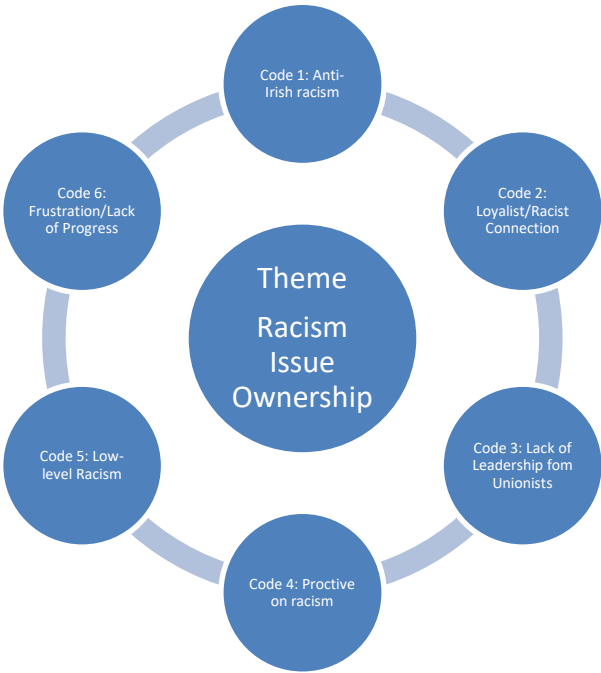


Figure 3.1 – Racism Issue Ownership

The diagram above represents one of the themes related to what then became a **core concept** of ‘Racism’. Below we can see the wider range of themes associated with this core concept. The full list of core concepts, themes and codes can be found in tabular format at the end of this chapter (see tables 3.1, 3.2 & 3.3).

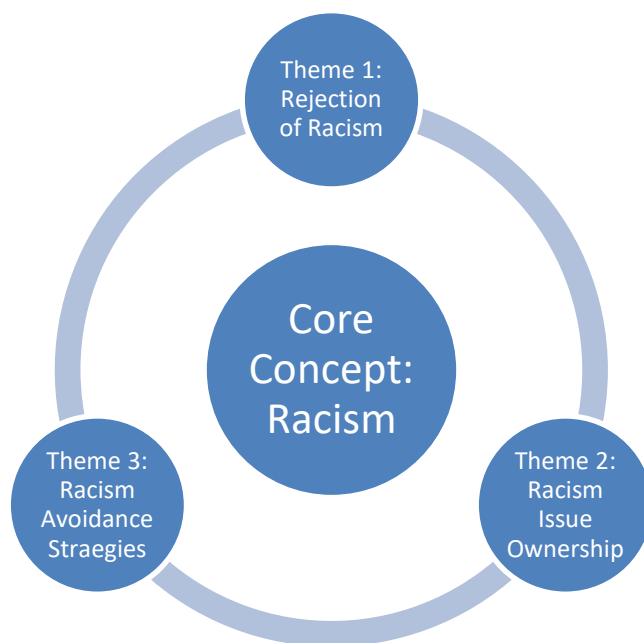


Figure 3.2 – Racism: Core Concept and Associated Themes

As the thesis progresses through the final chapters in which the findings are presented in a more detailed fashion it will become possible to outline the full range of discursive strategies that were employed by the parties in relation to each of the issues under consideration. These chapters will offer an in-depth insight into the codes and themes and core concepts that were established during the analytic process. In order to provide an overview of these findings at this stage, it is useful for us to provide a table illustrating the key themes and the codes that emerged during analysis. The tables below offer a concise review of the outcomes of the analytic process.

Core Concept	Key Discursive Themes	Codes	Consensus/ Conflict
Immigration	Expansive/Restrictive	Welfare and public services	Unionists vs Nationalists/Non-Aligned
		Immigration mythologies	Nationalist/ Non-Aligned
		Abuse of welfare	Minority of unionists
	Work and Employment	Strong work ethic of migrants	Cross-party consensus
		Irish emigration	Nationalist only
		Undesirable jobs	Cross-party consensus



		Immigrants take local jobs	Minority of unionists
		Immigrants drain public resources	Minority of unionists

Table 3.1 – Immigration Themes

Core Concept	Key Discursive Themes	Codes	Consensus/ Conflict
Cultural Accommodation and Language	Cultural Impact	Dilution narratives	Smaller Parties
		Sari, samosa, steel-band approach	Larger parties
	Language Politics (Irish)	Irish belongs to everyone	Nationalists
		Unionists bigoted	Sinn Féin
		Not enough budget	Unionists (civic)
	Language Politics (Ulster-Scots)	Lack of parity with Irish	Unionists (ethnic)
		Fund but parity not possible	Nationalists
	External Minority Languages	Recognise full scale of diversity	APNI
		Matter for private sphere	Sinn Féin
		Support migrant languages not Irish	Unionists

Table 3.2 – Cultural Accommodation and Language Themes

Core Concept	Key Discursive Themes	Codes	Consensus/ Conflict	
Racism/Anti-Racism	Rejection of Racism	Condemnation of racists	Cross-party consensus	
		Racism linked with sectarianism	Cross-party consensus	
		Racism is a big problem	Nationalist/Non-aligned	
	Racism: Issue Ownership		Anti-Irish racism	Sinn Féin
			Loyalist/racist connection	Sinn Féin
			Lack of leadership from unionists	Sinn Féin
			Proactive on racism	Sinn Féin/APNI
			Low-level racism	APNI
			Frustration/Lack of progress	Smaller Parties
	Racism Avoidance Strategies		Racism second tier to sectarianism	Unionists
			Ethnic cleansing of Protestants	Unionists

Table 3.3 – Racism Themes

The findings chapters were based on the core concepts headings in the tables above. Consequently, the three findings chapters focus on expansive and restrictive approaches to immigration, accommodating diversity, and racism/anti-racism. The chapters then turn to elucidate the fault-lines that emerge between the parties and to offer explanations based on theories of party competition. Each chapter marks out aspects of conflict and consensus between the parties in relation to the key issues during the period under consideration. In order to support the arguments made in these chapters, significant space is given to discursive examples that arose within the data.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a working, pragmatic account of the methodological decisions that have been taken in order to carry out this piece of research. It has self-consciously trodden a path that enables us to understand how these research methods have helped us to arrive at answers to the questions outlined in the thesis, without becoming excessively enmeshed in theoretical controversies related to competing methodologies. It has been shown that the Northern Irish experience of migration between 2004 and 2014 will be utilised in order to study the politics of immigration, diversity and racism in an ethnically divided party system. With this established, it was necessary to devote some attention to theoretical accounts of the ideological positioning processes that underpin party competition and voter choice in the context of multi-party democratic systems. It has been argued here that due to the importance of language in defining political parties and thereby shaping party-systems, we must focus on the manipulation of linguistic frameworks if we are to understand how the parties have adapted to the realities of increasing immigration.

The chapter then turned to outline the core principles of the approach to thematic analysis that has been used in this thesis. This included an overview of the manner in which the data were collected in order to facilitate the study. Also we have discussed some of the key challenges faced by a researcher carrying out interviews with elite politicians in the context of a divided society. We then turned to outline the process by which these sources were dissected in order to establish a framework of codes across the linguistic resources, before reconstructing the fragments around

meaningful themes. The next chapter will now provide further detail on why it is that Northern Ireland makes a suitable case study for this investigation. For this purpose, we will outline the specific historical context related to the history of inter-ethnic conflict in the province, the evolution of an ethnically divided party system, and the changes in migratory trends into the territory that emerged during our period of study.

# **Chapter Four: Diversity and Immigration in Northern Ireland**

## **4.1 Introduction**

Given the limited body of research that has been carried out into the impact of immigration on diversity politics in ethnically divided, sub-state party systems and our aim to try and remedy this through the use of a detailed qualitative investigation, it is necessary for the thesis to outline the case study that has been selected for this purpose. Northern Ireland between 2004 and 2014 has been selected as an illustrative example for a number of reasons that will become clearer as the chapter unfolds. The territory represents an ethnically divided, bi-national society with a recent history of conflict over its constitutional status (Horowitz, 2001). This conflict was mediated in the late 1990s using a consociational institutional framework designed to promote cross-cutting affiliation at elite level (McGarry & O'Leary, 2006a; 2006b). The party system in Northern Ireland reflects these underlying divisions in the society with ideological competition primarily defined by constitutional and cultural fault-lines (Tilley et al. 2008; McGlynn et al. 2014).

The particularities of this type of party competition in Northern Ireland serve to provide a suitable test-case in which we may seek to observe the behaviour of politicians operating in an ethnically defined party system. Prior to the peace agreement, very few immigrants chose to work or settle in the territory. It was more common for people to leave the region in search of opportunity elsewhere (Gilligan, 2008). However, with the peace agreement in place and the expansion of E.U. freedom of movement principles to the A8 countries in 2004, this trend was reversed, with significant numbers of migrants choosing to work and settle in Northern Ireland (Russell, 2012). This combination of an ethnically defined party system and a period of increasing immigration provides an ideal setting for us to investigate the core themes under consideration in this thesis.

The chapter will proceed in three broad stages as it outlines in greater detail the particularities of this case study. Firstly, we will consider some of the divisions that affect Northern Irish society. The chapter will utilise existing research to highlight the

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national and constitutional dimensions of societal division. Additionally, focus will be placed upon the political implications of the religious and cultural components of societal segregation.

Secondly, our attention will turn to the nuances of party competition in Northern Ireland as it has evolved in this divided context. Most particularly, this section will outline the bi-national fault-line that underpins party conflict in Northern Ireland, before discussing the dual party systems that have evolved in the province and the various forms that non-ethnic, counterbidding parties have taken in this context (Coakley, 2007). This will include a section that addresses electoral trends since the peace agreement. This will take into account debates over the merits of consociationalism and the rise of 'tribune' parties as the primary political groups in the territory (Mitchell et al. 2009). This will provide the reader with a sense of some of the key ideological contours and electoral trends that have shaped recent party politics in Northern Ireland.

Finally, the chapter turns to address the extent of immigration into the province during the period 2004-2014. It will be argued that while the numbers of immigrants entering Northern Ireland may be relatively small compared with other places in the United Kingdom, it has undeniably impacted on cultural demography in Northern Ireland since 2004. The chapter will review policy documents aimed at the management of difference as they have emerged in this changing context. It will be suggested that such policy frameworks have been ill-equipped to deal with an increasingly diverse society due to their excessive preoccupation with issues that derive from Northern Ireland's particular history of societal division. Finally, the chapter moves on to discuss the emerging body of literature that has explicitly engaged with issues related to cultural pluralism in the context of an increasingly diverse Northern Ireland. This will serve to outline some of the existing findings in this body of research and gaps in our current understanding. The first section of this chapter will now progress to discuss the particular importance of nationality, religion and culture in the context of Northern Irish society.

## **4.2 Northern Ireland: 'Divided Society'**

### *4.2.1 National Identity and the Constitutional Issue*

The distinctive characteristics of contemporary Northern Irish politics are rooted in a long and complex history of conflicting nationalisms. Northern Ireland has become, and remains, a divided society due to a legacy of historical conflict between two distinct national communities; one described as Catholic/Irish/Nationalist and the other as Protestant/British/Unionist. Northern Ireland as a political entity was founded in 1921, in an attempt to grant self-determination to Irish nationalists by establishing the twenty-six county Irish Free State in the rest of Ireland, whilst appeasing the Northern Protestant population of the remaining six counties. The Protestant community in these areas considered themselves to be British, and were generally opposed to being governed by an Irish Catholic majority (Dixon, 2008).

The six counties of Northern Ireland, in which Protestant unionists formed a majority, remained subject to British sovereignty with their own parliament and significant autonomy from Westminster. The devolved administration was dominated by unionists due to their in-built democratic majority. This partition theoretically offered the British community the security they sought from domination in an independent Ireland. However, the divide left a significant minority of Irish Catholics within the confines of the new sub-state. This group was largely opposed to partition, many saw the Northern sub-state as an illegitimate continuance of British colonialism in Ireland and sought the reunification of the Island under a single authority in Dublin (McGarry & O'Leary, 1995). This situation led to the outbreak of ethnic conflict at various points in the history of Northern Ireland, the most protracted of which was fought by paramilitary groups from within both of the primary communities and the British state between 1969 and 1998 (Dixon, 2008). The result of this conflict was the collapse of the devolved administration in Northern Ireland and increased segregation between the two communities.

Northern Ireland's history of constitutional instability has contributed to a situation whereby national identity takes on a particular significance that is not found in other parts of the U.K. Britishness and Irishness have come to be understood in

oppositional terms in the territory. Furthermore, national identity is commonly intertwined with religious background, adding a primordial dimension and an exclusivity that is uncommon in contemporary Western Europe (Moxon-Brown, 1991). Immediately prior to the outbreak of 'the troubles', Richard Rose carried out a survey on identity in Northern Ireland that suggested religion and nationality were not joined by a simplistic binary relationship. For instance, his work suggested that 20% of Protestants considered themselves to be Irish, and 20% of Catholics considered themselves to be British (Rose, 1971, p. 208). As the conflict progressed, and the local institutions of governance were suspended, national identification became more polarised along ethnic lines. By 1986, only 3% of Protestants surveyed stated Irish as their national identity and only 6% of Catholics identified as British (Whyte, 1991 p. 69). In a context of inter-group confrontation with no civic outlet for communal tensions, identity has fuelled violence and violence has hardened identity.

The peace agreement explicitly recognised the centrality of national identity to the conflict and sought to guarantee the preferences of members of both communities when it stated that it was:

*The birth right of all the people of Northern Ireland to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both, as they may so choose, and accordingly confirm that their right to hold both British and Irish citizenship is accepted by both governments (GFA, 1998).*

The agreement sought to recognise the bi-national fault-line in Northern Ireland, but to maintain British sovereignty in the region unless constitutional change was sought by a democratic majority at some point in the future (Horowitz, 2002). However, if the effect of inter-communal conflict was to bolster ethnic exclusivity in national identity, it seems reasonable for us to ask what patterns have emerged in national identification since the peace agreement? For this purpose, we will turn to more recent research into national identity in Northern Ireland in order to examine aspects of continuity and change.



An interesting development in patterns of national identification in Northern Ireland has been the increasing evidence of people choosing to describe themselves as 'Northern Irish' rather than 'British' or 'Irish' (Garry & McNicholl, 2015). The 2011 Census data revealed that 29% of people self-identified as Northern Irish and that this category included a significant number of both Protestant and Catholic respondents (McKeown, 2014). This has prompted suggestions that these data represent growing areas of commonality between the two primary national communities and the withering of exclusive understandings of nationality in the territory. Furthermore, research suggests that those who self-identify as Northern Irish are more likely to exhibit tolerant attitudes to people with different religious backgrounds (Lowe & Muldoon, 2014).

However, it is not clear that this shift represents an increasing sense of connection between the primary communities in the territory. The term Northern Irish could apply equally to a person stating the fact that they consider themselves Irish, but resident in a Northern part of the island, or could refer to someone that considers themselves to be a resident in a legitimately British territory. It is not clear that Northern Irishness represents anything other than a rebranding of more traditional forms of identity. Further research is needed to unpack this terminology and to establish what is meant by 'Northern Irish' when used by members of different cultural communities. In the work of Garry and McNicholl (2015) there is a tentative suggestion that, particularly for Catholic respondents, a Northern Irish identity correlates with political moderation. Growth of an inclusive approach to national identity may suggest the gradual dilution of communal separateness, but in practice, Northern Ireland is still heavily segregated according to religious background. The following section will address some of the key issues related to this ethno-sectarian division in the territory.

#### *4.2.2 Ethno-Sectarian Segregation*

Religion represents a key point of division between the primary communities in Northern Ireland. Some scholars have cited religion as the root cause of antagonism in the territory (Hickey, 1984; Bruce, 1994; O'Brien, 1994). Even commentators that prefer to see the conflict in terms of a dispute over national self-determination recognise the importance of religion as a marker that enables demarcation between

the competing groups (McGarry & O'Leary, 1995). While the Northern Irish conflict was clearly not a 'holy war' it is useful to characterise religion as a boundary between the two primary ethno-national groups (Mitchell, 2006; Coakley, 2007).

In terms of residential segregation in Northern Ireland, it is estimated that around 35 to 40% of the population live in neighbourhoods that are nearly entirely Protestant or Catholic housing estates (Hughes et al. 2007). Social housing is estimated to be further split down ethno-sectarian fault-lines with approximately 93% of public housing in single community areas (Lloyd & Robinson, 2011). Sectarian boundaries in some urban areas are reinforced through the use of murals, flags and in some cases painted kerbstones. The use of national symbols of identity to provide territorial boundaries for sectarian enclaves, serves to highlight the intertwined nature of national conflict and religious division in Northern Ireland (Shirlow & Murtagh, 2006).

This territorial dynamic between ethnic groups has been intensified by demographic shifts within the communal balance in Northern Ireland. The urban Protestant population is waning through low birth rates and a tendency to migrate to suburban areas; the Catholic population by contrast tends to be younger and with higher birth rates (Nolan, 2012). This situation has served to heighten a sense of decline and an accompanying anxiety in certain sections of the loyalist community, particularly those that live at 'interface' areas (Shirlow, 2006). However, demographic shifts have not necessarily been accompanied by territorial adjustment, meaning that many traditionally Catholic areas are now overcrowded, and that a significant number of Protestant urban spaces are underpopulated.

Territorial boundaries between the groups are reflected and reinforced by limited contact in other areas of life. For instance, there is very little crossover between the communities in terms of inter-group intimacy with 87% of NILT respondents (1998-2005) stating that their partner or spouse was of the same religious background to themselves (Lloyd & Robinson, 2011). Schooling in Northern Ireland is largely divided along confessional lines with the vast majority of Protestant children educated in conventional state schools and 90% of Catholics attending a denominational school (Turner et al. 2013). Perhaps the most striking emblems of societal division are

evident in the 'peace walls' that physically split sections of Belfast up in to ethnically homogenous districts (BIP, 2012).

This sectarian segregation has taken on extra salience due to the history of socio-economic inequality between the two ethno-national groups and some degree of inter-group discrimination. While the extent of discrimination has been the subject of academic controversy, (see Rose, 1971; Whyte, 1991; Gudgin, 1999; Dixon, 2008) it is reasonable to suggest that there was discrimination that deprived the Catholic community of equal access to employment and social housing during the era of Protestant ascendancy. Additionally, the security forces of the Northern sub-state were primarily Protestant and did not serve both communities equally as citizens (Whyte, 1986). Nationalists have tended to argue that discrimination is the cause of violence in Northern Ireland and in some cases go so far as to suggest that the Catholic community suffered under an apartheid style regime in the Northern sub-state (Farrell, 1980). Unionists, by contrast, have argued that either there was no discrimination or that its extent was massively exaggerated by nationalists for political purposes (Gudgin, 1999).

If we consider unemployment rates between the two groups it would certainly suggest that there has been evidence of inequality, though it would be harder to argue that this was purely the result of ethno-sectarian discrimination. For instance, according to the 1971 census, 6.6% of Protestant males were unemployed in comparison to 17.2% of Catholic males (Osbourne, 2003, p. 343). Certainly, this statistic will have been influenced by the fact that Catholics were largely denied opportunities to participate in the security forces or certain roles in public administration due to the perception that they were potentially disloyal. However, this was mirrored by the fact that many in the Catholic community deliberately chose not to participate in the organs of the Northern sub-state. In private industry, the majority of employers did tend to be Protestant, potentially offering greater opportunity for anti-Catholic discrimination in the allocation of employment. However, the gap in employment rates between the two primary communities has narrowed significantly in recent years. The graph below illustrates convergence of unemployment rates between Protestants and Catholics between 1992 and 2015:

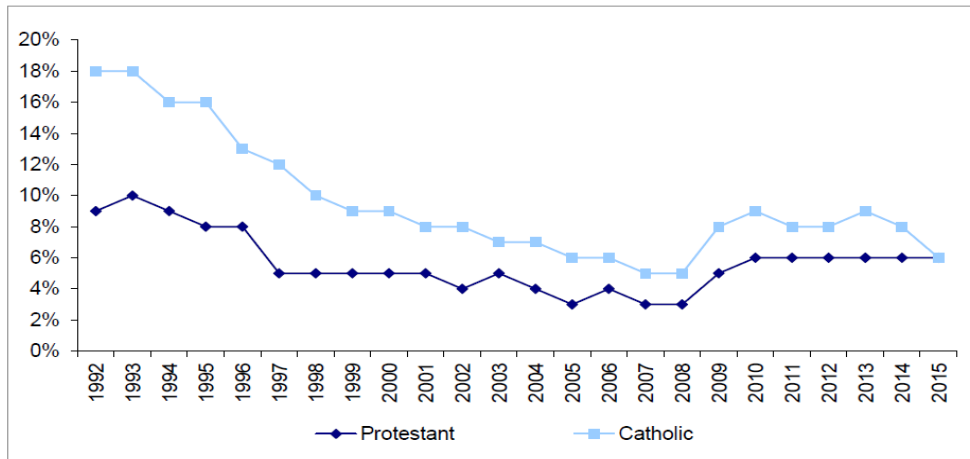


Figure 4.1 – Unemployment Rates: 1992-2015 (NISRA, 2015)

The same piece of research suggests near parity in median wages between Catholics and Protestants in contemporary Northern Ireland. This is expressed in the graph below:

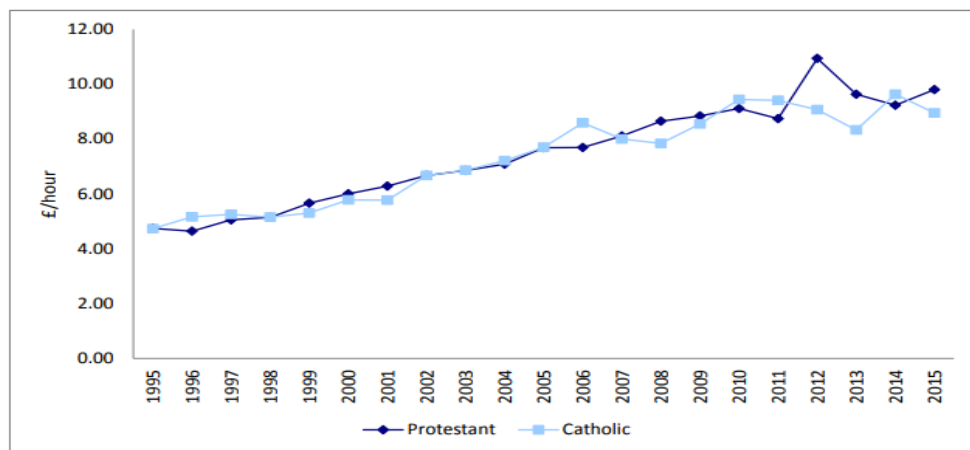


Figure 4.2 – Wage Comparison: 1992-2015 (NISRA, 2015)

This evidence seems to suggest that in terms of employment opportunities the gap between Protestants and Catholics has diminished in salience. On balance, it is difficult to chart the actual extent of inter-communal discrimination. However, it is fair to say that most commentators agree that there was historic discrimination in the Northern sub-state, and Catholics tended to suffer disproportionately. However, contemporary research clearly suggests that such forms of inequality have largely

dissipated in recent years. More recently the debate over inequality has changed with elements in both of the primary communities making claims about discrimination related to cultural recognition in the territory. This mutual sense of victimhood is one of the key driving forces behind the parity of esteem framework set out in the Belfast Agreement, which mediates amongst other things, cultural equality in the territory. We shall now move on to discuss some of the key aspects of cultural conflict in the territory.

#### *4.2.3 The 'Two Traditions' and Parity of Esteem*

In addition to nationality and religion, an interlinked dimension in the societal division is found in cultural conflicts that explicitly set the symbols of British unionism against those of Irish nationalism in a zero-sum game. The importance of this cultural conflict is recognised in the Good Friday Agreement which states that:

*the power of the sovereign government with jurisdiction there shall be exercised with rigorous impartiality on behalf of all the people in the diversity of their identities and traditions and shall be founded on the principles of full respect for, and equality of, civil, political, social and cultural rights, of freedom from discrimination for all citizens, and of parity of esteem and of just and equal treatment for the identity, ethos and aspirations of both communities (GFA, 1998)*

As the constitutional issue diminished in political salience following the Agreement, one of the key fault-lines in political debate has been a cultural stand-off between unionism and nationalism. McAuley and Tonge recognise this when they argue that "A cultural war pitting Irish language and culture against Ulster-Scots traditions is now conducted by ethnic entrepreneurs, displacing the older virulent territorial combat" (McAuley & Tonge, 2009, p. 280). It is certainly the case that Sinn Féin has built much of its agenda around the promotion of Irishness, most notably seeking greater public funding for Irish language programmes. Furthermore, at times Sinn Féin has explicitly equated the promotion of Irish speaking with a reduction in the Britishness of Northern Ireland (O'Reilly, 1999). The SDLP similarly supports state backing for the Irish language, though it holds less relevance to the party's ideological platform than in the case of Sinn Féin (Evans & Tonge, 2013).

One of the most important features of this cultural stalemate is the extent to which members of the primary communities feel that the settlement protects and respects their cultural traditions. Many unionists feel that their particular cultural symbols do not receive the same level of esteem as those of nationalists. For instance, in the 2002 NILT survey when asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "I am confident that my own cultural tradition is protected in Northern Ireland these days", 71% of Catholic respondents either agreed or strongly agreed; only 34% of Protestant respondents agreed or strongly agreed (MacGinty & Du Toit, 2007, p. 26). The significance of this distinction is that it has served to underpin a form of cultural deadlock in the politics of the territory.

In response to this perceived diminution of Britishness in Northern Ireland, unionists have forged counter strategies based on the protection of cultural unionism. (McGlynn et al. 2014). The cultural politics of unionism are best described as a rear-guard action that is being fought on several fronts simultaneously. As Irish nationalism has increasingly stepped on to the front foot in terms of demands for the promotion of the Irish language, unionists have adopted defensive positions to prevent what they consider to be the corrosion of Britishness in Northern Ireland. Firstly, political unionism has supported Orange culture through opposition to the rulings of the parades commission that are perceived to restrict the freedom of the Orange Order to hold contentious parades (Tonge et al. 2014). Secondly, there has been support for the cultural icons of Britishness such as the flying of the Union Flag above Belfast City Hall (Melaugh, 2013). Thirdly, there has been a degree of revival around the linguistic and cultural traditions associated with Ulster-Scots (McCall, 2002). Each of these approaches collectively combines to constitute the defensive politics of cultural unionism.

The first section of this chapter has outlined some of the key fissures in Northern Irish society and the intertwined relationship between nationality, religion and cultural difference in the territory. Of course, we must be careful when attempting to characterise societal division in the context of a relatively short piece of writing. In addition to the simplistic boundaries described in the text above there are the same

levels of societal complexity and interwoven levels of self-identification that characterise any population of people (for a more in-depth articulation of this view see Cassidy & Trew, 1998; Rolston; 1998; Little, 2003). However, due to the centrality of constitutional issues and ethno-sectarian identification in the politics of Northern Ireland, it is necessary for the thesis to utilise the 'two traditions' approach in order to outline important features of the case study. To help us illustrate the manner in which societal division has served to delineate the parameters of party competition in Northern Ireland, the next section will turn to discuss some of the key ideological groupings that collectively comprise the political spectrum in Northern Ireland.

### **4.3 Party Competition in Northern Ireland**

The party system and the operations of inter-party conflict in Northern Ireland are deeply complex, with a range of different factors dictating the form and content of inter-party positioning. The following section goes on to highlight some of the key distinctions between the major parties in Northern Ireland with reference to three primary ideological blocs and the parties within these broad groupings. This will begin with a discussion of some of the key divisions within unionism, before moving onto the nationalist bloc, and then to a discussion of the APNI as the most significant non-aligned party. The final section will consider key trends in party competition utilising academic literature on consociationalism in order to illuminate the relevance of recent developments. The purpose of this section is to highlight the particular features of the party system in Northern Ireland that make it a suitable setting for our investigation into the politics of immigration in the context of an ethnically divided polity. The first sub-section will consider some of the primary features of the unionist wing of the ideological spectrum.

#### *4.3.1 Unionism*

Unionism can be divided into two broad ideological traditions: liberal unionism, which advocates ties with the United Kingdom in terms of material advantages and loyalty to the civic institutions of the British state; and Ulster loyalism that sees the value of the union in terms of a defensive mechanism for protecting the northern Protestant community from domination in a predominantly Catholic island (Todd, 1987). The former approach is understood to be a civic form of nationalism, the latter focussed

on ethnic protection and opposition to the cultural 'other'. This binary approach has the disadvantage of glossing over a range of other positions within unionism and should not be taken as a comprehensive guide to contemporary unionist thought (Aughey, 1997). However, this does not undermine its utility as a broad definitional boundary that can help us to make sense of some key distinctions within the unionist movement.

Further to this fissure, unionism has also been subject to internal division over constitutional preferences for governance in Northern Ireland. Some have advocated direct rule from Westminster, others have argued for devolved power-sharing institutions, and a final strand have sought devolved governance without power-sharing mechanisms, preferring the reintroduction of a majoritarian system that guarantees a unionist legislative majority (Breen, 1996). As a general rule, though not exclusively, civic unionists have preferred power-sharing or direct rule, with majority rule more closely associated with ethnic unionism.

The dominant party within the unionist bloc was traditionally the UUP who managed to combine elements of both ethnic and civic unionism within the confines of a loosely federated party structure. The UUP was able to maintain a strong degree of unity between differing ideological factions for most of its history for two reasons. Firstly, unionism was guaranteed electoral ascendancy due to the nature of electoral politics in Northern Ireland in between 1921-1970, in which the Unionist Party dominated the devolved institutions (Dixon, 2008). Secondly, within the unionist bloc there was little threat from internal competition. However, from the late 1960s challenges to the UUP began to arise in the form of ethnic outflanking by the VUPP and subsequently, the DUP (Evans & Tonge, 2005).

The DUP came into existence in opposition to the perceived liberal measures taken by the ill-fated O'Neill administration. The party was strongly opposed to making concessions to the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland and wholly against the prospect of power-sharing arrangements proposed in the Sunningdale Agreement of 1973 (McDaid, 2013). The DUP was a much clearer representation of the Ulster loyalist ideological strand and represented a formidable force for internal opposition



within unionism. The tightly organised party structure and the charismatic leadership of Iain Paisley stood in stark contrast to the loosely structured, establishmentarianism of the UUP (Bruce, 1994). Despite making significant in-roads into support for the UUP amongst evangelical, rural Protestants, and urban, working-class loyalists, the party remained very much secondary to the UUP throughout most of its history. However, underlying tensions in the UUP came to the fore when faced with difficulties in implementing the provisions of GFA. It was at this point that unionism became more fragmented, ultimately allowing the DUP to outflank more moderate unionists.

The Protestant/unionist electorate were quite evenly split over the Agreement which was perceived to offer too many concessions to violent republicanism; it is estimated that just 57% of Northern Irish Protestants voted in favour of the Agreement (Hayes & McAllister, 2001). Issues such as the slow pace of the decommissioning of IRA weapons and evidence of continued military activity on the part of dissident republicans, heightened discontent amongst the unionist community and provided the perfect context in which the rejectionist stance adopted by the DUP could flourish (Mitchell et al. 2001).

The chapter will return later to discuss in more detail some of the developments that have taken place within unionism in the post-agreement era. For our purposes at this stage, it is necessary merely to highlight some of the dominant ideological strands within the unionist tradition, and to note that these differing visions have served to underpin inter-party competition in the unionist bloc. Recent developments suggest that ethnic unionism has achieved a significant degree of intra-bloc ascendancy due to the DUP becoming the dominant party within the bloc (McAuley et al. 2011). We will now turn to examine similar processes of ideological positioning within the nationalist party system.

#### *4.3.2 Nationalism*

The nationalist spectrum has been traditionally split between two broad positions: constitutional nationalism; and republicanism. Both schools favour a united Ireland, but there have been significant differences over the strategic approaches advocated to achieve this end. Republicans have traditionally considered the British presence in Ireland to be that of an exploitative, colonial power. As a result, their demands have

been for immediate British withdrawal and they have considered violence a legitimate tactic to achieve this end (McGarry & O'Leary, 1995). By contrast, constitutional nationalists have argued against the use of violence to remove the British, instead focussing on equal rights for the Catholic community and progress towards a united Ireland by obtaining democratic consent from the people of Northern Ireland (Murray, 1998).

Since the 1970s, the two primary parties associated with Irish nationalism in Northern Ireland have been the SDLP and Sinn Féin. The SDLP have represented the constitutional nationalist position and Sinn Féin have been the political representatives of violent republicanism. However, the story of these two parties throughout the peace process and in the early days of power-sharing has been one of ideological convergence in which Sinn Féin have adopted the key principles associated with constitutional nationalism (Tonge, 2005). The following section will highlight some of the key areas in which these parties have overlapped as the peace process unfolded.

The SDLP was formed out of the civil rights movement of the late 1960s, the party was originally intended to be a social democratic entity, with nationalism not central in its ideological platform (Murray, 1998). The SDLP sought to appeal across communal boundaries, obtaining support from working class voters of Protestant and Catholic backgrounds. However, the party's membership and electoral support was nearly exclusively Catholic in origin (Evans & Tonge, 2000). As the party progressed it became more clearly Irish nationalist in its outlook. A particular aspect of its appeal was its strong rejection of violence as a means to achieve Irish self-determination, placing the party in direct opposition to the violent republican movement (Hume, 1980).

The SDLP advocated a distinctive intellectual approach to overcoming conflict in Northern Ireland. The collapse of the Sunningdale agreement due to unionist opposition in the early 1970s, led Hume and other leading figures in the SDLP to pursue an 'external strategy' towards achieving peace in Northern Ireland (Darby, 2003). This was to recognise that focussing purely on internal aspects of the conflict

could not deliver lasting peace due to the corrosive nature of unionist intransigence. The party advocated a 'three strand' approach to the accommodation of political differences in Northern Ireland: firstly, a 'north-north' dimension to promote power-sharing structures for internal governance of Northern Ireland; secondly, a 'north-south' dimension that would focus on cooperation and consultation between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland; and finally, an 'east-west' dimension that enabled meaningful dialogue between Ireland and Great Britain (McLoughlin, 2011). These three strands became central features of the GFA and served to illustrate the powerful influence of the SDLP on the peace process. However, the party won an ideological battle whilst sacrificing an electoral advantage to Sinn Féin.

In its early days Sinn Féin operated purely as a communication device for the reinvigorated IRA that was operating in Northern Ireland at the outbreak of the troubles. Their stated aim was the creation of a thirty-two county socialist republic in Ireland free from British colonial interference. As the conflict evolved, the party came to greater prominence within the republican movement. As a stalemate became evident in the conflict, it was increasingly apparent that a united Ireland would not be achieved by force of arms and that political strategies were a necessary adjunct to the use of violence.

The hunger strikers of the early 1980s helped to create widespread public sympathy for the republican movement and Sinn Féin leaders saw an opportunity to turn this goodwill into electoral support. At this point, Sinn Féin adopted the 'armalite and ballot box' strategy (Hannigan, 1985). This meant that the party supported the military campaign of the IRA whilst pursuing electoral success. This shift brought the party closer to the democratic mainstream than previously, when rejection and abstention from electoral contests had been the cornerstone of their political strategy. This was the first step in a process throughout the 1980s and 1990s that saw Sinn Féin make increasing progress towards participation in democratic politics.

These shifts are evident when we survey the party's *Towards a Lasting Peace* document, in which they call for the British government to convince unionists to support Irish unification and for consultation processes between the sovereign

governments in London and Dublin (Sinn Féin, 1994). Ultimately, as the peace process unfolded, Sinn Féin came to adopt the vast majority of the SDLP's policies. The party endorsed power-sharing with unionists, accepted the need for a democratic majority in Northern Ireland to support any potential island-wide reunification and condemned republican paramilitary activity (Bean, 2007). This was doubtlessly a victory for the principles of constitutional nationalism, but this ideological convergence served to completely disarm the SDLP in inter-party conflict. The effects of this ideological repositioning will be discussed later when we consider party competition in the post-agreement era. At this point we will turn to consider the most significant non-aligned party currently operating in the Northern Irish party system.

#### *4.3.3 Non-Aligned Parties*

While party competition in Northern Ireland is often characterised in terms of a binary fissure between nationalist and unionist, there have always been non-aligned parties seeking to provide an alternative to ethno-national politics. These parties have admittedly been very limited in success, often finding themselves squeezed between the dominant political formations arising from within the 'two communities'. Instances of non-aligned parties that have failed to garner sufficient electoral support include The NILP, a democratic socialist party, affiliated with the British Labour Party that operated in Northern Ireland between the 1920s and the late 1980s, and the NIWC which was formed to pursue greater representation for women during the peace process (Edwards, 2009; Cowell-Meyers, 2014). However, the most significant non-aligned party during the conflict and since the Agreement has been the APNI.

The APNI was another political vehicle that arose during the fallout from the civil rights movement and the breakdown of devolved governance in Northern Ireland during the early 1970s. Following on from O'Neill's failed attempts to implement a legislative programme based on liberal unionist principles, a number of leading figures within the unionist movement sought to promote a liberal agenda through the activities of a pressure group called the New Ulster Movement (NUM) (McAllister and Wilson, 1978). The group quickly attracted a large support base and some within the group saw the potential to create a viable political party based on liberal unionist values.

The APNI originally argued in favour of maintaining the union, but purely in terms of the economic and liberal merits of association with the United Kingdom. However, the party eschewed the ethnic protection narratives associated with unionist traditions. Further to this, the APNI advocated the consent principle, theoretically allowing for the possibility of constitutional change, should the majority of people in Northern Ireland agree to it. More recently, the party has sought to present a more neutral approach to the union, but in practice this has still meant tacit support for the constitutional status-quo. This neutral position was tested, and arguably broken, when three APNI MLA's designated as unionist in order to prop up David Trimble's administration in 2001 at a time when his own party was split over support for the Agreement (Hunter, 2001). However, this tactical shift was only for a short period and once the immediate danger to the devolved institutions had passed, the APNI members resumed their non-aligned position within the chamber (Eggins, 2015). The party remains the most viable and stable non-aligned party operating within the devolved institutions.

The chapter has now outlined the three key ideological groupings that collectively constitute the pillars of Northern Irish party politics. Though we have yet to consider the institutional setting within which party competition takes place. There is a need for us to consider this framework because specific institutional formulations serve to inhibit or to incentivise certain trajectories in inter-party positioning (Durverger, 1964). It is for this reason that much of the existing literature on party competition in Northern Ireland is built around the analysis of consociationalism and its ability to manage ethnic tensions in a divided society (Horowitz, 2001; Mitchell et al. 2001; 2009, McGarry & O'Leary, 2006a; 2006b, Dixon, 2008; Tilley et al., 2008; Wilford, 2009). We will now provide a critical discussion of the main arguments related to this controversy and use this section as a means to highlight some of the recent trends in party competition in the territory.

#### *4.3.4 Consociationalism*

Consociational democracy is a type of constitutional framework designed to govern ethnically divided societies in a stable fashion. It rests on the principle that communal antagonism can be overcome by elite cooperation (Lijphart, 1975). However, it is a controversial method for managing ethnic tensions. Critics of the theory argue that

the system actually entrenches traditional divisions within an institutional framework, and that it lacks the motivational incentives to moderate conflict in an ethnic party system (Horowitz, 1985). By adopting such an institutional framework, the Agreement clearly recognises claims to autonomy and demands for self-government on the part of the primary national groups in the territory (McGarry & O'Leary, 2006a). Such measures bear clear similarities to the type of group-rights espoused for the accommodation of sub-state national minorities discussed in multicultural literature (Taylor, 1994; Kymlicka, 1995). This makes it particularly interesting to consider what the impact of widening diversity brought about by immigration would be likely to have on cultural accommodation in such a setting. However, before we delve deeper into the debate about consociationalism, we will begin by outlining some of its defining features.

There are four core elements of the consociational model. Firstly, executive power sharing: placing elites from each community in the government, thereby ensuring that all groups have a stake in decision-making processes. Secondly, cultural autonomy: this recognises the validity of each group's identity providing assurances that matters of cultural significance to each group will be governed according to their own unique traditions and heritage (Lijphart, 2004). Thirdly, proportionality: in the electoral system and in the allocation of fiscal resources. This principle seeks to confirm that each bloc is treated fairly according to their relative size within the community as a whole. Finally, veto rights: in order to prevent any group from dominating the legislative process. The veto principle delivers either agreement or deadlock. Consequently, this is expected to force groups to seek consensus and to protect the rights of minorities (O'Leary & McGarry, 2006a). The consociational model is clearly reflected in the institutional settlement of the GFA, which contains parliamentary measures to ensure cross-community support, mutual veto mechanisms, and the selection of the executive from the largest parties, proportionally, according to their share of the vote (Wilford, 2009). However, the model has attracted significant criticism from a group of academics that can be broadly categorised as civil society or social transformation theorists.

The critique essentially rests on motivational failings in the electoral dynamics of consociationalism and the rejection of cultural autonomy due to its potential to promote segregation. For instance, Taylor (2006) argues that the requirement for MLA's to designate as 'unionist', 'nationalist' or 'other' reinforces barriers between political groupings and effectively designates non-aligned representatives to a secondary tier of importance within decision making bodies. Dixon (2012) describes consociationalism as a form of 'voluntary apartheid' and claims that it serves to favour ethnic hardliners at the expense of moderates (Dixon, 2012, p. 107). Wilford argues that the workings of the consociational institutions have led to a stand-off whereby ethnic parties nominally share power but fail to offer joined-up government in the territory (Wilford, 2009). At this point it becomes useful to consider empirical data from the Northern Experience of consociationalism in order to consider the validity of these criticisms.

Developments in party politics since the Agreement seem to provide evidence to suggest that the system has served to reward ethnic hardliners and to marginalise moderates and non-aligned parties. For instance, within the nationalist bloc there has been a significant swing towards Sinn Féin at the expense of the SDLP. The SDLP, between 1997 and 2007, saw their share of the vote drop by 8.9 %. In the same period, the Sinn Féin vote increased by 7.4%, making them the largest nationalist party in the Assembly (Ark, 2017). Electoral shifts within the unionist bloc are even more striking. Since 1997, the electoral balance has shifted radically in favour of the DUP. Between 1997 and 2007 the UUP vote decreased by 17.8%, while the DUP's share increased by 16.5% (Ark, 2017). These patterns have largely stabilised with Sinn Féin and the DUP continuing to dominate electoral contests in the region.

The designated 'other' bloc has also been squeezed in this period, the NIWC lost representation in the Assembly, meaning that for some time the APNI was the only party offering a non-aligned perspective in the chamber. The early Assembly elections saw the APNI vote reduced to an incredibly low-level, but more recently the party has regained lost ground. A second non-aligned voice has emerged in the form of the Northern Ireland Green Party who gained their first seat in the Assembly in 2007, receiving 1.7% of first preference votes (ARK, 2017). This dipped to 0.9% in 2011,

though the party retained its seat. In 2016 and 2017, the party saw its share of the vote rise to above 2% and was able to secure two seats in the Assembly on both of those occasions (ARK, 2017). Whilst this certainly represents progress for the Green Party, it can hardly be understood as a significant shift away from the dominance of ethnic politics in the territory.

Taken in its simplest form, this electoral data suggests a victory for ethnic outbidding. For instance, if we consult the work of Horowitz it is argued that this type of centrifugal dynamic is inevitable in ethnically structured party systems when it is stated that "By appealing to electorates in ethnic terms, by making ethnic demands on government, and by bolstering the influence of ethnically chauvinist elements within each group, parties that begin by merely mirroring ethnic divisions help to deepen and extend them" (Horowitz, 1985, p. 291). However, proponents of consociationalism have formulated a counter argument, stating that in the case of Northern Ireland there is a more complex, underlying, centripetal dynamic in operation. This theory states that extreme parties have profited through the use of 'ethnic tribune appeals' (Mitchell et al., 2009 p. 397). This is to suggest that the DUP and Sinn Féin maintain strong negotiating stances on communal issues, but have become more pragmatic in pursuit of electoral success and governmental office. This has become evident with shifts such as Sinn Féin's endorsement of the PSNI and the DUP side-lining its more overt rhetoric on Catholicism (Tonge, et al. 2014). Furthermore, it is argued that voters are not rewarding these parties for extremist behaviour, but because they are considered to be the most effective negotiators on behalf of their respective communities (Mitchell et al. 2009).

For a reasonably sustained period there was evidence of increasing accommodation between these traditional hard-liners. For instance, the adoption of more conciliatory modes of expression and the use of symbolic gestures such as Martin McGuinness' decision to shake The Queen's hand on her visit to Belfast, or Peter Robinson's attendance at the Catholic mass of a murdered police officer. Both of these events would have been unthinkable less than a decade earlier (see Clarke, 2011; McIntyre, 2012). However, more recently this relationship has broken down amid pressures on the DUP First Minister Arlene Foster over the 'cash for ash' scandal and the withdrawal



of Sinn Féin support for the executive (Osbourne, 2017). Furthermore, the issue of state support for the Irish language has impacted significantly on the cultural deadlock between the tribune parties and continues to prevent the formation of an executive. Subsequent attempts to restore power-sharing in the devolved institutions have so far failed to make serious progress (McAleese, 2017).

Despite the apparent deadlock at executive level between Sinn Féin and the DUP, an interesting shift in strategy has recently emerged on the part of the smaller parties. While the consociational system entitles members of the smaller parties to participate on a proportional basis in the executive, the UUP and the SDLP have recently opted to remain outside of the executive and instead act as parties of opposition against the dominant tribune parties. As leaders of their respective parties, Colum Eastwood and Mike Nesbit both launched attacks on the failure of the Sinn Féin/DUP led coalition that had dominated Northern Irish politics since 2007. Nesbit stated that "We have had 10 years of the DUP and Sinn Féin in Stormont Castle. People must ask themselves, 'do we want more of that or do we want change?'" (cited in Breen, 2016). Eastwood made similar statements when he was invited to address the UUP conference in 2016, he argued that "They believe the symbolism of their coalition suffices, and offer nothing more. They're all guff and no governance. Even with 55 press officers, 16 special advisers and their new press secretary they struggle to fabricate the illusion of progress" (cited in McBride, 2016).

These sentiments were echoed by APNI leader David Ford when rejecting the sensitive Justice Ministry portfolio. In explaining his decision he stated that "Alliance does not want more stop-start politics but rather is concerned with taking Northern Ireland forward faster. We sought reassurances the DUP and Sinn Féin agreed with us on fundamental reforms to benefit our community. However, judging by their response, that is not the case" (cited in Williamson, 2016). While Alliance do not have the numbers in the Assembly to form part of an 'official opposition', it seems likely that the future of Northern Irish politics will see the smaller and larger party distinction become increasingly important. It is early days for this new type of oppositional politics and given the uncertainty surrounding the ability of Sinn Féin and the DUP to overcome the current stalemate in negotiations over a new portfolio

for government in Northern Ireland, it remains to be seen what impact this development may have (McDonald & Walker, 2017).

On balance, this evidence seems to suggest three key things that are of importance to critics and supporters of consociationalism. Firstly, there is a clear trend towards support for ethnic hardliners in Northern Ireland. This is encapsulated by the electoral dominance of Sinn Féin and the DUP. Secondly, it must be noted that these parties have become more moderate in this period. Both Sinn Féin and the DUP have dispensed with some of the more overtly divisive components of their electoral platform and made moves towards the political centre. Thirdly, the limits of consociationalism have been highlighted by the periods of executive deadlock that have emerged in this context, particularly over issues related to the accommodation of cultural diversity. This suggests that consociationalism has a moderating tendency, but by rewarding communal defence strategies it hinders progress in tackling political issues that require cross-communal compromise.

This section has served to outline some of the key developments in party competition, providing a brief history of the primary parties and a discussion of key ideological trends. However, so far we have not yet begun to discuss immigration in any detail. The reality is, that literature on party politics in Northern Ireland makes very little mention of diversity outside of the primary traditions. However, there are some exceptions to this rule (Hainsworth, 1998; Gilligan et al. 2011). For our purposes it is necessary to provide an overview of the extent to which immigration has impacted on Northern Irish society and to consider what effects these developments have had on inter-party positioning. Consequently, the next section will now seek to outline some of the key developments in Northern Ireland that have arisen as a result of increasing immigration into the territory.

## **4.4 Immigration in Northern Ireland**

### *4.4.1 Patterns of Immigration*

Northern Ireland has traditionally been understood as a society affected by outward migration. During the period of 'the troubles', Northern Ireland experienced high levels of emigration, with very little immigration compared to other territories

throughout the United Kingdom and elsewhere in Western Europe. In this respect, Northern Ireland's experience of migration is far closer to that of the Republic of Ireland (Russell, 2012). Consequently, literature on the accommodation of diversity in Northern Ireland has tended to focus upon managing the conflict between the two largest ethno-national groups, with little interest in other forms of ethnic pluralism (Finlay, 2007). However, excessive focus on this binary fissure has served to overlook the true depth of cultural diversity and to set-back important debates on immigration and integration in the territory (Hainsworth, 1998). Ethnic diversity outside the two primary communities has long been ignored or overshadowed, with the concerns of the majority groups dominating the political agenda.

In recent years this has become increasingly problematic as Northern Ireland has become more diverse in its demographic composition. Two primary factors have precipitated this significant shift in migratory patterns in the province. Firstly, the period of relative peace between the major paramilitary organisations in Northern Ireland. Secondly, changes have arisen as a result of the E.U. expansion that allowed greater freedom of movement between Western Europe and the A8 accession countries (McGarry et al. 2008).

In research papers written for the Northern Irish Assembly, Raymond Russell outlines three distinct periods in Northern Ireland's recent history of migration (Russell, 2012; 2016). Initially, during the 1970s and 80s, Northern Ireland experienced significant outward migration as a side-effect of ethnic conflict. In the 1990s and in the early part of the 21st century, migration flows became more balanced leading to a period of parity between inward migration and those leaving Northern Ireland. There were pronounced spikes in the numbers of inward migrations associated with key events in the peace process, such as the IRA ceasefire of 1994 which saw large numbers of people returning to Northern Ireland as ethnic conflict became less heated. Finally, following the GFA and the expansion of E.U. membership to include the A8 members, there followed a sustained period of significant inward migration into Northern Ireland, which then tailed off to some extent following the financial crisis of 2008. This precipitated dips in immigration during 2010 and 2012 when more migrants left the territory than those who entered, but in these periods there were still significant

numbers of foreign workers resident in the territory. This is captured in the graph below which serves to highlight these changing patterns:

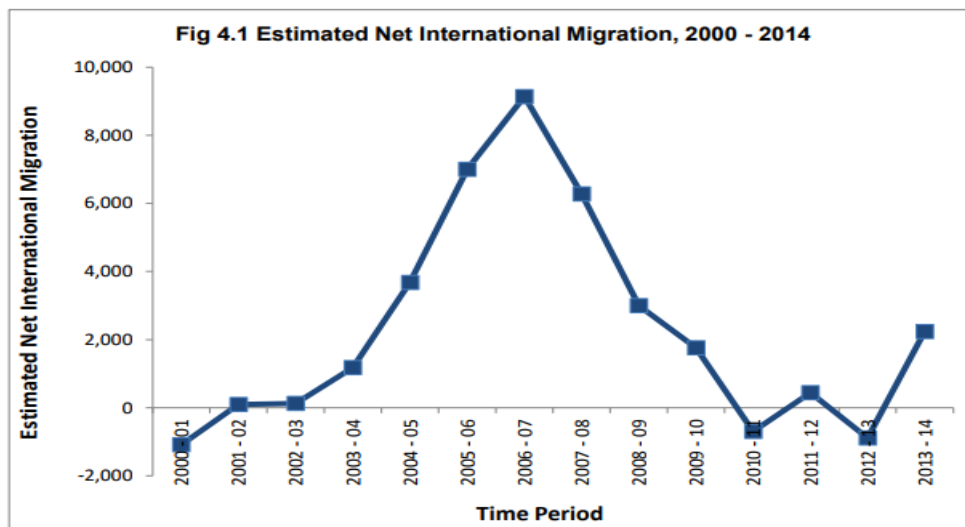


Figure 4.3 – Net International Migration: 2000-2014 (Russell, 2016)

One of the most striking statistics is evident if we consider that 10% of Children born in Northern Ireland in 2009 had mothers from outside of the UK and Ireland (NISRA, 2011). Furthermore, a study conducted by NISRA detailing the number of languages other than English spoken by pupils in Northern Irish schools illustrates the pace of shifts in the cultural landscape. For instance, in 2005 no pupils spoke Polish as their first language, by 2009 this figure had grown to 834. Additionally, there were growing numbers of Lithuanian, Filipino, Portuguese, Slovakian, and Latvian speakers, to list but a few (NISRA, 2011). Overall, 110,000 migrants are estimated to have entered Northern Ireland between 2000 and 2009. Given that the total population of Northern Ireland is only around 1.8 million, this suggests the significance of these changes for the accommodation of diversity in the territory (Russell, 2012).

While these statistics seem to point to a seismic shift in the landscape of cultural diversity in Northern Ireland, it is important to qualify this by outlining the transient nature of economic migration. Since the financial crisis of 2008, inward migration has slowed significantly and in some cases reversed as migrants and indigenous young people have sought to find better employment prospects elsewhere. NISRA estimates

that approximately 24,000 A8 migrants have settled in Northern Ireland on a more or less permanent basis, primarily concentrated in a handful of urban areas (NISRA, 2011). However, despite the reasonably small numbers that have chosen to make Northern Ireland their home in the longer term, the impact this has on the wider society should not be underestimated. Russell identifies the importance of this development when he states “While many have returned to their country of origin, a significant proportion have decided to remain. And it is those who settle in Northern Ireland to bring up their families who will transform and irreversibly change our society” (Russell, 2012).

What literature there is on the impact of immigration in Northern Ireland has tended to focus on racism and anti-racism, language politics and a small group of research contributions that look into attitudes towards immigration (McVeigh & Rolston, 2007; McMonagle, 2010; Gilligan et al. 2011). These pieces on immigration, racism and language issues in Northern Ireland overlap in crucial areas with the central concerns of this study. The following section will outline some of the key findings in these bodies of research in order to provide context for our later analysis of primary data.

#### *4.4.2 Immigration and Political Parties: Existing Research*

As migration into Northern Ireland began to gather pace following E.U. expansion, a small canon of research emerged that considered the particularities of immigration politics as it had developed in the Northern Irish context. One of the few pieces that has actually explored party responses to immigration is found in the work of Gilligan, et al. (2011): ‘Fractures Foreigners and Fitting in: Exploring Attitudes towards Immigration and Integration in ‘Post Conflict’ Northern Ireland’’. The article was based on quantitative techniques and compared data taken from the NILT survey (2006), with original survey material collected by the researchers between 2007 and 2008. The piece presents a number of findings that are helpful in interpreting some of the data that has emerged in this study. In places the findings of this thesis serve to corroborate and to expand upon some of their conclusions. Their results serve to demarcate a number of important fault-lines of conflict and consensus in the politics of immigration as it has been played out in inter-party debate in Northern Ireland.

Firstly, their research suggests a degree of correlation between nationalists and APNI representatives in contrast to the separateness of unionists, this is something that will be highlighted further as we carry out our own review of the research findings. Secondly, the piece highlighted evidence of a split in political unionism which saw a small number of representatives that were strongly in favour of greater restrictions upon immigration, again this is something that will be returned to as the research findings of this thesis unfold (Gilligan et al. 2011).

These factors are both instructive in helping to make sense of the qualitative findings of this thesis and provide a foundation upon which to build as we present the results of this project. However, the authors themselves note that there are weaknesses with adopting quantitative approaches for this area of enquiry. Their work comes with a call for further research of a qualitative nature to be carried out in order to flesh out the statistical skeleton outlined in their article. One of the key strengths of this thesis is that it will serve to provide greater support to some of these pre-established concepts and to further this limited pool of research.

#### *4.4.3 Racism and Sectarianism*

The issue of racism in Northern Ireland has given rise to a reasonably substantial body of research (see Hainsworth, 1998; McVeigh, 1998; McVeigh & Rolston, 2007; Geoghegan, 2008a: 2008b; Knox, 2011, Gilligan, 2017). This literature discusses various facets of debates on racial discrimination in Northern Ireland, touching in places on the responses of political parties to issues of racism in Northern Ireland. In doing this, the work raises a number of points that are instructive to this thesis.

Academic debate on racism and sectarianism in Northern Ireland has tended to focus on whether sectarianism should be considered to be a form of racism, or as an exceptional and distinctive form of hatred that is peculiar to British/Irish relationships (Gilligan, 2017). While racism is often understood to be related to biological characteristics and sectarianism stems from religious differences, the issue becomes problematic when the concept of ethnicity is brought into the discussion. For instance, McVeigh states that most conceptions of racism account for ethnic differences as a driver of discrimination in addition to physical characteristics (McVeigh, 2014). He further argues that religion acts as an ethnic marker in the Northern Irish context

and that hate crimes and discrimination often classified as sectarianism are actually underpinned by ethnic and not religious differences. Consequently, McVeigh supports the classification of sectarianism as a sub-set of racism in order to bring Northern Ireland into line with wider international standards of human rights. However, other commentators have argued that sectarianism and racism should be understood as distinctive issues.

Brewer (1992) argues that racism and sectarianism should be seen as separate entities. His argument is that even though the two issues overlap in places, race is a visible form of social stratification and that sectarianism represents an issue that requires in-depth knowledge of the particular historical antagonism in Northern Irish society to be understood. Geoghegan makes a similar point when he states that sectarianism is defined by a complex relationship between religion and politics, while racism is based on the assumption that people can be divided into groups according to biological characteristics (Geoghegan, 2010). Both Gilligan (2017) and McVeigh (2014) counter these arguments citing the importance of ethnicity in driving sectarianism. They claim that because ethnicity is of a greater importance than religion in determining sectarian behaviour, it is appropriate to understand these forms of bigotry as a variety of racism.

However, Gilligan and McVeigh seem to be united by a desire for conceptual clarity at the expense of glossing over practical differences related to racism and sectarianism. McVeigh argues that keeping sectarianism separated from racism has the effect of removing it from current human rights standards in international law. Hence, the desire to retain some level of distinction between the two issues is tantamount to tolerating a degree of sectarianism. Gilligan argues that "Geoghegan's choice of definition of racism seems to have been adopted because it allows him to clearly differentiate racism from sectarianism, not because of its applicability for analysing Northern Irish society" (Gilligan, 2017, p. 27). However, it will be argued in this thesis that to equate racism and sectarianism too closely has the effect of swamping issues related to ethnic minorities within the long-standing communal dispute that divides the majority communities.

Sectarianism is deeply pervasive in Northern Irish society providing sharp definition to the communal schism in the territory. We have already discussed earlier in the chapter the manner in which sectarianism divides housing, education and the provision of public services in certain parts of Northern Ireland. This type of division is clearly distinct from the issues that are faced by members of ethnic minorities seeking to navigate their new surroundings with limited understanding of the particularities of sectarian geography in Northern Ireland. Where racism and sectarianism do overlap, there are pre-existing terminologies that can be invoked in order to describe their parallel nature. For instance, discrimination, prejudice and hate-crime are all terms that can be utilised in order to capture the similarities in the expression of racism, sectarianism and indeed other forms of bigotry such as homophobia. While Gilligan and McVeigh make a good case that the ethnic dimension of sectarianism enables its categorisation as a type of racism, failing to recognise their differences is potentially harmful to the needs of ethnic minorities (Yu, 2011).

In terms of its effects on political debate, the relationship between racism and sectarianism has been explored in a number of texts. Firstly, there is a recurring suggestion that political parties have been slow to react to the realities of racism in Northern Ireland (Hainsworth, 1998). This is evidenced by the fact that ethnic minority support groups fought to gain racial equality legislation in the late 1990s through campaigning within the United Nations rather than seeking to utilise the dysfunctional political framework that governed Northern Ireland in this period (McVeigh, 1998). As politicians had largely failed to provide leadership in this area, minority communities took it upon themselves to lobby for this legislation outside the arena of Northern Irish politics. This lack of interest on the part of political parties has been argued to derive from the erroneous assumption that Northern Ireland is not affected by racism due to the prevalence of sectarian issues in the territory (McVeigh, 1998)

It must be stated here that racism has undoubtedly had a lesser impact on Northern Irish society historically than the sectarian divisions that have affected the territory. Of course, racism cannot be said to demarcate the society in the same manner in which historical sectarian rivalries have shaped Northern Ireland. However, in recent



years, hate crimes motivated by racism have come to nearly match the number of similar crimes committed with sectarian motives in the province. The chart below serves to illustrate the near convergence in terms of figures related to hate crime offences committed with racist or sectarian motivations between 2005 and 2014:

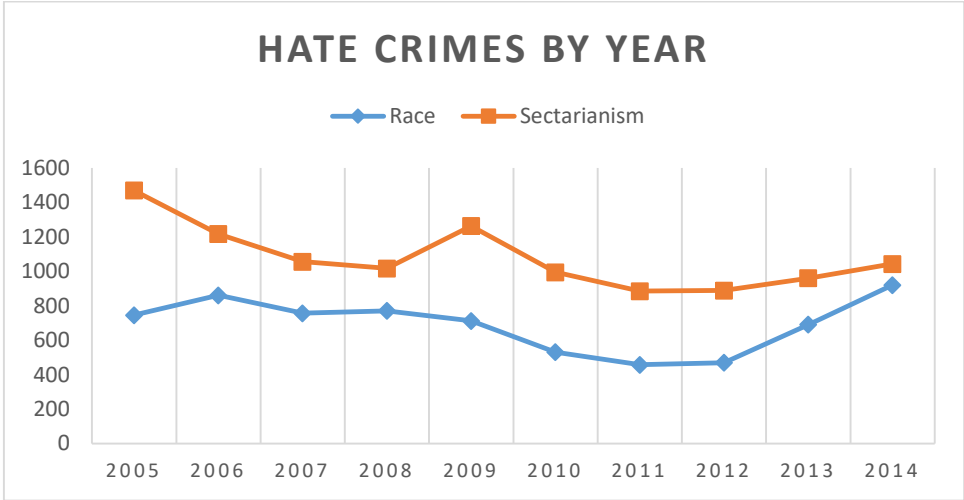


Figure 4.4 – Hate Crimes: 2005-2014 (PSNI, 2016)

Given the high profile nature of some of these racially motivated attacks in recent years, it seems unlikely that politicians in Northern Ireland would be able to argue that racism is not a significant political issue. In 2009, following a number of attacks on members of the Roma community living on the Lisburn Road in Belfast, the city became labelled in the popular media as a centre for racial hatred in Europe (Macdonald, 2009). The frequency of these types of crime diminished to some extent between 2009 and 2012 before beginning to climb again in the period between 2012 and 2014 (Kilpatrick, 2014). More recently, there have been pipe bomb attacks perpetrated upon the homes of Roma families living both in Derry and in Belfast, suggesting a degree of crossover between paramilitary activity and racism in certain parts of Northern Ireland (Young, 2016). Given the profile of these incidents, it could perhaps be expected that it is now less possible to relegate racism to a second tier consideration to that of sectarianism in Northern Ireland.

In practice, a significant majority of racist attacks have occurred in areas that have been traditionally considered to belong to loyalist communities (McVeigh & Rolston, 2007). Furthermore, there has been clear evidence in some cases that loyalist paramilitary organisations have been behind some of the more disturbing high-profile incidents (Knox, 2011). However, it must be noted that some loyalist groups have launched campaigns to tackle racism within their communities (Geoghegan, 2008a). However, the connection between racist incidents and loyalist areas cannot be discounted (Macdonald, 2006). This is most likely to be accounted for by the combination of two inter-related factors. Firstly, as discussed earlier, the relative decline of the Protestant population in urban parts of Northern Ireland has had the effect of heightening propensities towards territorial defensiveness in these areas. Secondly, one of the symptoms of the declining Protestant population has been increased availability in housing stock in these areas (Shirlow & Murtagh, 2006). Conversely, nationalist areas tend to be marked by high demand and limited numbers of private rental properties. Consequently, the members of immigrant communities seeking residence in Northern Ireland have tended to settle predominantly in loyalist areas. This combination of territoriality and demographic change has clearly heightened the possibility for racism to flourish in these locations. While there are accounts of similar racist incidents in Catholic areas (see Macdonald, 2014), the weight of numbers clearly suggests the significance of such issues for sections of the loyalist community.

One of the key aims of this thesis is to establish how political parties have approached racism in light of such debates. Furthermore, the study will investigate whether parties purely focus upon the high profile attacks or whether they engage with the totality of racism in its pervasive low-level forms. As the thesis progresses, a significant focus will be placed on this key area of public concern in order to assess the extent to which the denial and diminution of racism has continued in elite discussion, and the manner in which the parties have responded to this new context. However, before we proceed to consider the findings of the research in relation to these issues we must offer some consideration to the issue of cultural accommodation in the context of an increasingly diverse Northern Ireland.

#### *4.4.4 Culture and Language*

In this chapter so far, we have outlined some of the key ethno-sectarian divisions in Northern Ireland, discussed the manifestation of diversity in the party system, and reviewed some of the changes in cultural demography that have been brought about by immigration into the territory. Two of the potential areas in which we may expect to see immigration bring political change to Northern Ireland are in approaches to cultural diversity generally and more specifically in minority language debates. It is reasonable to state that in academic literature and in policy documents, Northern Ireland has increasingly been recognised as a diverse society. Furthermore, ethnic minorities have proven adept at creating civil society organisations to promote group interests and to provide a hub for their communities (Geoghegan, 2008a; 2008b).

A significant change for the recognition of diversity in Northern Ireland came with the census of 2001 which captured results based on ethnicity and helped to identify the range of cultural pluralism outside the 'two traditions'. Whilst this may not have been a major breakthrough in terms of new governmental initiatives, it recognised the implications of diversity for the formulation of future policy in the territory. The 2001 census recorded that there were small, yet significant, Indian and Chinese Communities resident in Northern Ireland. Overall, around 14,000 respondents identified as belonging to an ethnic minority outside of the primary traditions (Geoghegan, 2008a, p. 96). These changes have prompted some academics to question the extent to which changing patterns of diversity have impacted upon the 'two traditions' understanding of ethnic accommodation in the territory (Finlay, 2007; Geoghegan, 2008a; 2008b; McMonagle, 2010; McMonagle & McDermott, 2014).

For instance, Finlay (2007) discusses the adoption of new approaches to cultural pluralism in the territory, but concludes that in the political sphere, multicultural narratives have amounted to little more than a re-articulation of bi-national grievances aired between the primary communities. Geoghegan investigates multicultural initiatives prompted by civil society organisations at grass-roots level and concludes that despite attempts made to reach out across cultural boundaries, there is an 'awkwardness' associated with the lack of cross-communality in these enterprises. To put this more clearly, he describes a nationalist multiculturalism and

a unionist multiculturalism being played out in two separate communities with very little overlap (Geoghegan, 2008b). Similar issues have come to be reflected in the policy documents aimed at managing diversity in Northern Ireland. Such frameworks recognise widening diversity, but are limited in scope due to the overarching dominance of internal issues related Northern Ireland's historic communal division (Knox, 2011).

A key indicator of the relatively limited embrace of migrant diversity in Northern Ireland is evident when we turn to discuss minority languages in the territory.

In its linguistic composition, Northern Ireland remains overwhelmingly Anglophone; minority language debates have tended to focus Gaélic and Ulster-Scots. However, language diversity has increased significantly since immigration has become more commonplace in the territory (McMonagle, 2010). Therefore, it might seem reasonable to assume that debates around minority language rights could move outside of the confines of Irish and Ulster-Scots funding and take into account a broader spectrum of linguistic diversity. However, recent research carried out by McMonagle (2010) and McMonagle & McDermott (2014) seems to suggest that this has not been the case. They explicitly cite the influence of political parties as a barrier to this when they state that

*Although policy debates have acknowledged that increasing linguistic diversity has occurred, the competing interests of the political parties have tended to act as a barrier to the actual implementation of policy and legislation that fulfil the real needs of the languages in question (McMonagle & McDermott, 2014, p. 247).*

McMonagle and McDermott refer here to a stand-off that sees republicans point the finger of blame at British colonialism for the demise of the Irish language; unionists counter this with a suggestion that the language has become a political tool. Despite the fact that the *St Andrews Agreement* (2006) explicitly states that the government will introduce an Irish language act, so far the DUP has continued to block legislation in this area.

This stalemate over the legislative support for Gaélic dominates the arena of language policy discussion. This is despite the fact that the 2011 census revealed that there were about 50,000 people resident in Northern Ireland that spoke non-native languages. By far the largest population were Polish speakers who accounted for around 17,000 of these respondents (Migration Observatory, 2014). The impasse between the parties over the issue of minority languages remains in the foreground of political debate in the devolved institutions. At the time of writing, there is no executive in Northern Ireland due to the failure of the largest parties to agree terms on a language initiative (Macdonald, 2017). This type of impasse between the two tribune parties has been described by leading academics in the field as a 'culture war' and is increasingly likely to form a key fissure in the party politics of Northern Ireland (McDaid, et al 2013).

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a detailed overview of the case study that will enable us to investigate the core concerns of the research project. It has outlined the central fault-lines of the communal divide in Northern Ireland, the manner in which underlying societal fissures have impacted upon the party politics of the territory, and the recent history of immigration into the territory in the period under consideration. Collectively, these factors combine to create the outline of a case study that allows us to test theories on the motivational incentives for parties to engage with the politics of immigration in an ethnically defined party system.

When looking at societal division in the territory, it was necessary for us to consider the importance of national identity, religion and culture in Northern Ireland and the manner in which these overlapping areas of division have served to form an ethnically segregated society, in which group membership is defined in terms of a binary, oppositional format. Whilst this particular view of Northern Irish society serves to obscure the true depth and the complexity of diversity in the territory, it is necessary for us to articulate and categorise the key dimensions of this societal division in order to highlight the sense of distinction between the primary communities. With this established, we then moved to discuss the impact of ethnic division upon the particularities of party competition in the territory.

The chapter outlined the overarching ideological backdrop to party competition that is constructed around the constitutional issues that have historically divided the territory. However, it was necessary to highlight the existence of distinct party systems operating within this broader archway of ideological competition. Hence, the chapter turned to discuss the trajectories of intra-bloc competition. It is necessary to conceive of the Northern Irish party system in terms of a unionist bloc, a nationalist bloc and a non-aligned centrist pillar which is currently comprised of the APNI and the Green Party. With the key groupings discussed, the chapter then outlined aspects of the academic debate over consociationalism in the territory and recent electoral trends that have witnessed the hard-line parties emerge as the largest groupings within their respective electoral blocs. This evidence serves to illustrate the success of ethnic tribune appeals and the pressure placed upon the smaller parties, who have begun to exhibit signs of a joined up approach to tackling the ethnic tribunes by forming an official opposition within the Assembly. The importance of these developments for our study is that they highlight the dominance of culturally exclusive politics in the territory. Our questions revolve around what impact immigration would have upon competition in the context of an ethnically defined party system, which leads us now to review of the final section of this chapter.

With the specifics of ethnic party competition in the Northern Irish context discussed, the chapter then turned to outline the key variation that makes this a useful case study when researching the effects of immigration on an ethnically divided party-system. For this purpose we have detailed the changing nature of diversity in Northern Irish society that has been established through a sharp spike in immigration that began in 2004. Despite these demographic changes we have witnessed the fact that policy-making aimed at the management of difference is very much rooted in internal issues within Northern Ireland and focuses excessively on cultural celebration rather than the real barriers to integration faced by members of immigrant communities. Furthermore, we have reviewed the findings of the limited body of relevant literature that considers the impact of this new diversity in Northern Ireland in order to provide foundations for the study that takes place in this thesis. It has been shown that there is a small, but useful, body of emerging research into the

effects of immigration upon politics in Northern Ireland. These texts focus on attitudes towards immigration, approaches to diversity, and racism in the context of an increasingly diverse territory. This thesis will build upon these limited pools of research through examining the primary political narratives surrounding these issues during a key period of demographic change. The thesis will now turn to the reporting of results in order to provide a detailed and thorough discussion of conflict and consensus across the major parties in Northern Ireland with reference to immigration, cultural accommodation, and racism between 2004 and 2014.

# Chapter 5: Immigration

## 5.1 Results Overview

Having outlined the foundations of our study of diversity politics in Northern Ireland during a period of changing cultural demography between 2004 and 2014, we will now turn to review the results that have emerged from our qualitative enquiry. This will enable us to consider the manner in which political parties have adapted to changes in cultural demography in the territory. The following three chapters will utilise the interview data captured in this process in conjunction with other sources such as Assembly debates drawn from the Hansard records, election manifestoes, and contributions to public media made by the representatives of the parties under consideration. This part of the thesis proceeds in three chapters in which we examine the key discursive themes that have emerged from our analysis of the data corpus.

The key themes that will be presented are the discursive manifestations of fault-lines in ideological conflict and areas of partial consensus between the parties. Through outlining the chasms that separate the parties and the bridges that connect them in relation to immigration, cultural accommodation and racism, the thesis will map the terrain of diversity politics as it developed between 2004 and 2014. One of the key findings that consistently emerges during this analysis is a tendency for parties to modify issues related to immigration so that they can be utilised as either swords or shields in the prosecution of inter-party conflict. Numerous examples will be brought to the fore that highlight this tendency to enmesh matters related to immigration within long-standing ideological frameworks.

The first results chapter considers party responses to immigration in light of our earlier literature review on immigration politics (Freeman, 1995; Statham & Geddes, 2006). The primary focus of this chapter is to consider the degree to which the different parties adopt restrictive or expansive approaches to immigration and the particular discursive themes employed in order to support their stances. This covers the extent to which issues such as welfare and employment are utilised in the discussions of the parties. In broad terms, the chapter highlights a tendency for nationalists and non-aligned politicians to offer greater support for expansion than



unionist politicians: though there are splits within unionism in terms of support for immigration with modest controls and the adoption of strongly restrictive measures. Additionally, it will be shown that Sinn Féin, in particular, utilise immigration as an opportunity to highlight some of their favoured ideological refrains. These results serve to support the findings established in the work of Gilligan et al. (2011), though they add a greater degree of engagement with complex nuances of the discursive themes used to present such arguments.

The second results chapter delves into party approaches towards cultural diversity in the changing context between 2004 and 2014. The chapter begins by highlighting the importance of interculturalism in policy documents aimed at managing cultural difference in Northern Ireland during our timeframe. It will be shown that multiculturalism and interculturalism are at the heart of such documents, yet the parties seem to lag behind this approach in their understanding of diversity in the territory (OFMDFM 2005; 2007; 2013). The chapter uses the issue of language policy in order to highlight the bi-national character of debates over the accommodation of diversity in the territory. It will be argued here that unionists, in particular, utilise minority languages as a shield to repel nationalist demands for greater state support for Gaélic programmes. It will be shown that only APNI representatives tend to embrace a truly inclusive approach to the accommodation of language diversity in Northern Ireland. This chapter highlights the specific tensions related to the accommodation of multiple diversities in a society marked by sub-state nationalism as discussed in the multicultural canon of literature (Kymlicka, 1995; Parekh, 2006; Modood, 2007)

The third results chapter considers party responses to racism in Northern Ireland during the period of our study. It will be shown that there is a strong cross-party condemnation on racism but that this does not translate into unity between the parties. Sinn Féin representatives tend to utilise racism in the prosecution of political assaults on unionism. These attacks tend to equate loyalism with racism in Northern Ireland, to suggest that the sub-state itself is institutionally racist, and that political unionism has failed to offer leadership in this area. This promotes a bunker mentality amongst unionists who either seek to avoid discussions of racism or to invoke

defensive territorial narratives based on the perception of ethnic cleansing suffered by Protestant communities in some parts of Northern Ireland (Shirlow & Murtagh, 2006). APNI members, by contrast, seek to shift debates on race politics to mount attacks on what they identify as political deadlock at the heart of government due to a stand-off between the OFMDFM parties on racism and sectarianism.

At the end of each of these chapters, theories are discussed to explain the particular approaches adopted by the parties. For this purpose, we will employ an analysis informed by theoretical approaches to ideological positioning. Most particularly, the work of Downs (1957), Petrocik (1996), Riker (1996) and Finlayson (2012) are used as a means to help us dissect the reasons why the parties may adopt particular positioning strategies. In order to bolster these theories, evidence is cited from measures of public opinion in Northern Ireland that serve to illustrate the incentives driving parties to adopt certain conversational themes (NILT, 2007; 2008; 2010a; 2010b). With these arguments outlined, this will provide a basis from which we can draw together the key evidential strands to support our conclusions in the final chapter.

## **5.2 Introduction**

The first of the results chapters in this thesis considers whether increasing immigration leads to the formation of new ideological fault-lines in an ethnically divided party system. For this purpose, we will focus on expansive and restrictive approaches to immigration and the forms that these arguments take when articulated in the narratives of the political parties in Northern Ireland (Freeman, 1995; Statham & Geddes, 2006). In particular, the study is interested in the stances taken by the parties over the expansion or restriction of immigration, and the discursive patterns used to frame these arguments. The chapter will also seek to uncover the extent to which arguments on welfare, public services, and employment are invoked in these debates. Through examining these discursive themes, it will become possible to outline the key areas of cross-party consensus and inter-party conflict in relation to immigration. With this achieved, the chapter will turn to explain the driving forces behind these narratives using theories of ideological competition as a guide to aid our interpretations. Ultimately, the chapter will argue that the parties tend to frame

immigration issues within existing ideological structures in order to support their wider platform.

However, before we can attempt to explain why the parties adopt particular positions on immigration, we need to spend some time examining the substance of the study. For this purpose, the chapter will outline the detailed and nuanced findings that have emerged from our investigation into immigration politics in an ethnically divided party system. This begins by appraising party narratives on restriction and expansion, before moving on to highlight some of the complex fault-lines that have emerged when discussing welfare, public services and employment. It will be shown that while there is generally a positive tone towards immigrants and the contribution that they have made to Northern Irish society, there are a number of interesting differences that emerge between the parties when we examine the manner in which such arguments are articulated.

For instance, it will be shown that in a number of areas there is a clear distinction between the narratives adopted by nationalists and non-aligned members, and those articulated by unionist representatives. This trend is not absolute and there are notable exceptions, but there is clear evidence of correlation between the arguments of nationalists and those of the APNI that are not shared in unionist narratives on immigration. The findings derived from the analytic process serve to suggest that nationalists and non-aligned representatives share commonality in their assessment of migrants as a positive force contributing to the economy and supporting public services. The chapter highlights a less positive approach adopted by unionists and shows evidence of a split within unionism between a recognition of the economic benefits of migration and a certain reticence that emerges when welfare and employment are discussed. This division amongst unionists does not follow a simple line of party demarcation. Rather, it will be argued that significant minorities in both of the unionist parties are in favour of much firmer controls on immigration.

The final section of the chapter will draw on Downsian theories of ideological competition, and wider literature on political parties, in order to explain these responses to immigration (Downs, 1957; Petrocik, 1996; Finlayson, 2012). It will be

suggested that despite evidence of correlation between the nationalist parties and the APNI there are different ideological drivers underlying these responses to increasing immigration. It will be argued that for Sinn Féin, immigration allows them to draw on pre-existing narratives that relate to the historic Irish diaspora. Contemporary immigration into Northern Ireland offers Sinn Féin the opportunity to bring forth this well-established linguistic paradigm and to use this to associate themselves with the new communities in Northern Ireland.

Further to this, it will be argued that because the APNI's long-standing narrative about moving beyond the two-traditions fits well with the realities of an increasingly diverse society, the party can easily accommodate immigration within this broader ideological framework. Through arguing in favour of increasing immigration, the APNI finds itself on comfortable ideological terrain discussing diversity outside of the two communities binary. It will be suggested that because the SDLP is a moderate nationalist party, it finds itself ideologically squeezed between Sinn Féin and the APNI. Consequently, the party's narratives on immigration share similarities with both Sinn Féin and the APNI. It will be shown that the SDLP tends to place some degree of focus on the Irish history of emigration, whilst also seeking to invoke a wider vision of diversity in Northern Ireland.

Finally, the chapter argues that the narratives adopted by the unionist parties are testament to the ideologically fragmented character of political unionism. The majority of UUP representatives discuss their endorsement of immigration in terms of a pragmatic assessment of the economic benefits of migrant workers. However, a significant number articulate doubts about the motives of migrants entering Northern Ireland and the potential impact of immigration upon the local population. The DUP is similarly divided with a significant focus upon the work ethic of migrants, but again a sizeable minority seem to favour much tighter restrictions on immigration. It will be suggested that this division is best explained by reference to overlapping and untidy areas of crossover between civic and ethnic unionism. This is to suggest that civic impulses within the unionist community welcome the material advantages of immigration into the United Kingdom, while ethnic elements are more protectionist in outlook (Todd, 1987).

### 5.3 Expansion or Restriction?

One of the first things that must be mentioned before we proceed to our detailed presentation of the research findings is that the majority of politicians interviewed in this study, and the bulk of the data derived from other sources, spoke of a generally positive and welcoming approach to immigrants resident in Northern Ireland. The discursive themes outlined by the party representatives, when discussing immigration, tended to coalesce around three core approaches. Firstly, there were those that supported immigration and stated that they would like to see greater expansion in the future. These arguments tended to come from nationalist politicians and members of the non-aligned APNI. Secondly, there are unionists who endorse immigration but with some degree of qualification. Thirdly, there are those unionists who would like to see immigration curtailed to a significant degree in order to protect welfare provision and the economic prospects of the local population. The overall picture seems to suggest that in the confines of the Northern Irish party system, elite positioning on immigration is guided by the traditional workings of party competition in that vote-maximising strategies are adopted within the confines of established ideological structures (Downs, 1957). This evidence seems to counter Freeman's thesis that elite strategies on immigration issues are divorced from the requirement to court public opinion (Freeman, 1995; 2002; 2011).

If we turn to examine some of the arguments articulated by nationalists and non-aligned politicians, we can begin to outline the contours of their general consensus upon the desirability of immigration. For instance, if we consider the following quotes — the first of which is taken from an interview carried out with an Irish republican, the second coming from a discussion with a member of the moderate nationalist SDLP, and the third from a non-aligned APNI representative — we can begin to identify certain similarities in their approaches to the politics of immigration. Firstly, let us consider this statement made by a representative of Sinn Féin:

*Well I think that the people who have made this place their home have contributed an awful lot to our society, immigration is something that should definitely be encouraged (SF3, 2013).*

Similar discursive themes are present in this quotation from a member of the SDLP:

*I think that immigration has undoubtedly been a real benefit in Northern Ireland. I hope we see much more of it in the future (SDLP4, 2013).*

Obvious parallels are also apparent when we compare this quotation from a member of the APNI with that of the Irish nationalists above:

*Immigration is a social good that should be encouraged as far as possible. It works for the enrichment of Northern Ireland in many ways (APNI3, 2013).*

What unites these quotations is the suggestion that immigration into Northern Ireland is something that they would wish to see becoming more commonplace. This is not something that is obvious when we examine discursive themes emanating from representatives of the unionist parties. This distinction between unionists, and the other party representatives, serves to outline the contours of a key discursive schism associated with immigration politics in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, this evidence supports suggestions in existing research about the extent to which the nationalist and non-aligned parties find commonality when discussing immigration (McGarry et al. 2008; Gilligan et al. 2011). If we compare the quotations above with two statements made by unionist politicians, we can see evidence of a clear distinction whereby unionists are rather more measured in their support for immigration; arguing that it might be for the best if immigration was subject to further controls. The first statement below is taken from an interview with a member of the UUP:

*We are fortunate to be an island nation, we don't have as fluid a border as some people and maybe we should try to keep it that way (UUP5, 2013).*

This statement is clearly more reticent about the encouragement of immigration than the positions articulated by the nationalist and non-aligned politicians. A similar point is made more forcefully in the statement below that is derived from an interview with a representative of the DUP:

*Well my view is that the EU statute about free movement needs to be radically changed, because at the moment, while it may seem unlikely, there could be literally ten, fifteen, twenty five thousand people seeking work in Northern Ireland from Romania and Bulgaria within the next few years. That would radically transform job prospects for everybody (DUP2, 2013).*

This attitude within the unionist parties was further echoed in the public domain, with both parties arguing for greater controls over the extent of immigration into Northern Ireland. For instance, consider the following quotation taken from the UCUNF manifesto for the 2010 Westminster Election. This manifesto was the outcome of UUP's ill-fated electoral pact with the Conservative Party and as a result reflects wider debates on immigration that were taking place in the U.K. at this time. However, despite this distinctive focus it was one of the competing platforms presented to the Northern Irish electorate during this democratic contest:

*We want to attract the brightest and the best people who can make a real difference to our economic growth. But immigration today is too high and needs to be reduced. We do not need to attract people to do jobs that could be carried out by UK citizens, given the right training and support. So we will take steps to take net migration back to the levels of the 1990s – tens of thousands a year, not hundreds of thousands. (UCUNF, 2010, p. 21).*

The DUP has articulated similar narratives, but there is also evidence that the larger unionist party has increasingly adopted a narrative on immigration tied in with a rejection of certain E.U. policies. For instance, the following quotation was taken from the DUP Manifesto for the 2014 European election:

*While we believe that free movement across the EU brings many economic benefits, it has also become apparent that the influx of immigrants can create many economic tensions. Diane Dodds believes that the costs of immigration are most keenly felt within our welfare system, especially in regard to health provision and social housing. We will advocate tighter controls on EU immigration into Northern Ireland (DUP, 2014, p.19).*

What these quotations serve to illustrate is a tendency for nationalists and non-aligned politicians to coalesce around certain discursive formations that contrast with unionist arguments. In this instance, it highlights the extent to which Irish nationalists and non-aligned politicians actively endorse wider and more expansive approaches to immigration: while unionists tend to be more restrictive in outlook when discussing this issue. The next section now turns to examine the issue of welfare in relation to the politics of immigration. Interesting patterns emerge here that serve to further highlight the discursive fault-lines that exist between unionists and the nationalist/non-aligned bloc.

### *5.3.1 Welfare and Public Services*

Throughout most of the data reviewed in this thesis, narratives across the parties have tended to suggest that migrants did not enter Northern Ireland in order to abuse welfare systems. Furthermore, the majority of interview participants stated that when welfare has been accessed by immigrants, they have generally earned the right to do so through contributions made in the form of income tax payments. Similar sentiments are clearly expressed across ideological boundaries, with ardent nationalists and hard-line unionists finding areas of commonality. What is striking is the lack of discursive themes associated with the type of argument articulated by theorists such as Miller (2000), Goodhart (2004), or Joppke (2007). There is no suggestion that popular support for welfare would be undermined by immigration. This is perhaps because in the context of a divided society such as Northern Ireland, arguments based on the assumption of societal homogeneity clearly bear little resemblance to the history of the territory. In order to highlight some of the themes that characterise these discussions, let us begin by considering the following quotations; one from a DUP MLA and one from a Sinn Féin representative:

*I don't get the impression that there are large groups of people from outside Northern Ireland standing in line to receive unemployment benefit or any other form of benefit, so it hasn't become an issue (DUP3, 2013).*

Similar sentiments were echoed in a number of responses from MLA's representing Sinn Féin:



*The migrants that have settled here in Northern Ireland, aren't here to claim benefits. They come to work and actually contribute to welfare and services through the taxes that they pay in to the public purse (SF3, 2013).*

Comparable arguments were also articulated in the narratives of the smaller parties. This gives the impression that immigration politics does not form a major discursive fault-line in inter-party conflict. The parties tended to find large areas of overlap on these issues. However, despite this lack of overt conflict, it is possible to detect differences in the narratives of the parties as we delve deeper into discussions related to welfare and immigration.

One particular branch of argument, that was commonly articulated by Irish nationalists and APNI representatives, is found in the suggestion that not only were immigrants net contributors to welfare systems, but that the safety net of state support should be widened to include migrant groups not currently allowed to access such provisions. This section serves to highlight a tendency on the part of nationalists to argue in favour of widening public provision to immigrants not covered by current legislation. The first statement we shall consider is made by an MLA representing Sinn Féin in an Assembly debate, where he refers to the provision of school meals for Roma community pupils despite the fact that they were not legally entitled to such provision. This decision was taken by Sinn Féin's Catriona Ruane in her capacity as education minister:

*Does the Member acknowledge that at least one Minister, the Minister of Education, despite advice to the contrary from the Department and many other commentators, including some MLAs, ensured that provision was made for Romany children to receive free school meals? They were not entitled to that under the legislation and the state's immigration provisions (Hansard, 2009a).*

Similar arguments seeking to widen forms of state support for migrant communities were commonly articulated in interview contributions made by representatives of the SDLP, for instance:

*We have had the shameful situation where members of the Roma community who have no access to state support because of the transitional status of Romania, with relation to the European Union are arriving here and finding themselves outside of the system. What has been really admirable though is how the system has found ways to try and meet that community's needs. Schools have still found places for the kids; GP's have found ways of treating members of that community. I think we should be looking at more formal ways to support people like this (SDLP2, 2013).*

This area of consensus is something that was most commonly articulated by the nationalist parties, though in some cases it was mirrored in the discussions of the APNI. The APNI representatives also tend to place some degree of stress on immigrants supporting public services. This came in statements that were based on the impact of immigrants both in staffing and accessing public services. For instance, the quotation below is drawn from a contribution made in the Assembly by a representative of the APNI and refers to the role played by health workers from foreign countries:

*You cannot get much more front line than our nurses, and we commend them all for their dedication and devotion to duty over the years. At a time when there is once again a lot of scaremongering around immigration, it is worth emphasising the vital contribution that is made to our health service by nurses from overseas. All are extremely welcome to Northern Ireland, and we appreciate their work at all times. (Hansard, 2014a).*

Regarding the positive role played by immigrants as service users, see the quotation below that was taken from an interview with an APNI representative:

*In the school down the road from me, I think there are children that speak twenty eight different languages. Almost half of the children are from outside Northern Ireland. Had there not been an increase from members of ethnic minorities sending their children there, the school would have closed. So the migrant population has helped to keep the doors open. (APNI1, 2013).*

This was an argument that was located most commonly in APNI narratives on the impact of immigration, though there were a handful of similar examples from other parties. These types of argument serve again to highlight areas of commonality between nationalists and non-aligned representatives in their strong endorsement of immigration and their keen support for the migrant population resident within Northern Ireland. In the following section we will see the tendency of nationalists to crossover with non-aligned members on another key area of immigration politics. In this instance, the discursive overlap revolves around 'myth-busting' narratives.

### *5.3.2 Immigration Myths*

A number of discussions in the interview process related to welfare and migration turned toward an acknowledgment of the mythologies that surround immigration politics, particularly in some sections of mainstream media. The broad thrust of the following statements places explicit focus upon popular misconceptions associated with welfare and immigration. A degree of cross-spectrum consensus is notable in the quotations below which highlight the myth-busting narratives located in discussions on immigration with Sinn Féin, the SDLP and the APNI. The first quotation here outlines a perspective articulated by a representative of Sinn Féin:

*We should try to reject the idea that has been pedalled by some politicians and in the right-wing media that immigrants are bad or they're scroungers. That idea should be challenged at every opportunity. Frankly, I'm sick of hearing about things like 'they come here with massive families to claim our benefits' it just isn't true! (SF3, 2013).*

A similar reference to the prevalence of immigration mythologies and a degree of frustration is evident in the following quotation from an SDLP respondent:

*It does get pedalled in the media that they are all vultures, they are here for dole or child-benefit, but most of these immigrants are hard-working people. This is fiction, the reality of the situation is that these people come over here to work and to improve their quality of life (SDLP, 2013).*

Corresponding arguments were also expressed in the interviews carried out with politicians representing the APNI. The quotation below serves to highlight the degree of unity between nationalists and non-aligned members when discussing immigration mythologies:

*Immigrants come to make a contribution to society and many of them are involved in extremely important jobs. I think it's important that we cut through the myth that people aren't contributing and that they aren't involved in important roles in the community. We've all read the stuff in the newspapers about 'benefit tourism' and such like. Politicians in particular have a responsibility to tackle this stuff head on and to say 'don't believe everything that you read' (APNI2, 2013).*

Some unionists outlined similar statements, recognising the existence of immigration mythologies but were less robust in denying the plausibility of these narratives. One such example is found in the statement below made in an interview with a representative of the DUP:

*I don't subscribe to what I sometimes describe as the 'Daily Mail route' which is to believe that migrant workers arrive here, with seventeen children and end up claiming thousands of pounds a week in benefits. I don't think that happens very often, despite some of the press coverage. At the same time there are instances, there is some evidence of that. (DUP3, 2013).*

Again, the evidence outlined in this section serves to highlight the clear and recurring tendency of nationalists and non-aligned representatives to share common ground when discussing a number of issues related to the politics of immigration. This correlation of views clearly crosses certain party boundaries as indicated by the quotations above. However, whilst the majority of nationalists, non-aligned members, and indeed, many unionists were positive in their assessment of the impact of migrants upon public provisions, a significant number of politicians from both of the unionist parties seemed to suggest a degree of suspicion about the motives of migrants entering Northern Ireland.

### 5.3.3 Abuse of Welfare

A minority of unionist statements made references suggesting that immigrants came to places like Northern Ireland in order to make claims on welfare support systems. These statements were not exclusive to either of the unionist parties but featured at times in the narratives of both. The first quotation below was made in an interview with a member of the DUP when discussing the relationship between immigration and welfare; it clearly represents some degree of apprehension about the potential for migrants to abuse welfare provision:

*Migrant workers have excelled in some areas and that should continue to be the case, but that shouldn't mean opening up the doors so that anyone can come and possibly over a period of time begin claiming significant benefits that they wouldn't receive in their own country. I do think that there has been some level of abuse of the system and the generosity of welfare provision in the United Kingdom (DUP2, 2013).*

These types of narratives were expressed by representatives of both unionist parties. The similarities are evident when we consider the quotation below from a member of the UUP:

*There will be a small number of people, who arrive in Northern Ireland, work for a very short period of time, until they are eligible for benefits and then begin claiming benefits that they wouldn't get in their country of origin. That's the key, I don't think that should happen and in some cases I think it probably has. (UUP4, 2015).*

These sentiments were not only discussed in the face-to-face interviews but also arose in debates within the Assembly. For instance, in an Assembly debate on the adoption of the 2005 *Council of Europe Convention on Action against the Trafficking in Human Beings* (C.O.E. 2005), the following statement was made in opposition to the motion:

*Unfortunately, the Ulster Unionist Party cannot support the motion, as the UK Government has stated that the 1990 United Nations convention is not*

*com-patible with UK immigration law. The main difficulty is that, under the convention, the UK Government would not be able to control the conditions under which migrant workers can stay in the country [...]. The ramifications of the UN convention would put extra stress on already strained public services. (Hansard, 2008).*

Similar sentiments were echoed in the chamber in the statements of some members of the DUP. This is highlighted in the following exchange between Stewart Dickson of the APNI and Sammy Wilson of the DUP on the regionalisation of welfare provisions to reflect local living costs:

**Mr Dickson:** *I believe that it is not appropriate to introduce the regulations at this stage. They are being put forward to combat what has been termed as benefit tourism, yet, when you examine the issue, there is very little evidence to suggest that this is a problem in Northern Ireland, let alone throughout the rest of the United Kingdom [...]. The regulations, therefore, are designed to tackle a problem that is not a problem, but they will have a significant impact, as others have said, on UK and Irish citizens.*

**Mr Wilson:** *I take the point that the Member makes that this may not be a huge issue in Northern Ireland at present. However, it is an issue for other parts of the United Kingdom. Does he accept that if the regulation here is different to other parts of the United Kingdom, the problem could shift from other parts of the United Kingdom to Northern Ireland, hence the reason for uniformity? (Hansard, 2014b).*

The exchange above is particularly useful as it serves to highlight the reactive dynamics between these narratives as they emerge in forums such as the Assembly. In reaction to the APNI member's myth-busting narrative, the DUP member suggests that migrants are likely to move around in pursuit of more generous welfare packages. For our purposes at this stage, it is useful to highlight the tendency amongst a number of unionist representatives to suggest that immigrants further place strains upon public services. This tendency towards separateness on the part

of this group of pro-restriction unionists is something that will be highlighted further on a number of occasions as the thesis unfolds. The next portion of this chapter now turns to consider the related, yet distinctive issue of work and employment.

#### **5.4 Work and Employment**

The majority of party narratives on immigration share a strong degree of overlap on the economic desirability of immigration. This sentiment crosses ideological boundaries, establishing a core of consensus between all of the political groupings represented in this study. In order to highlight the width of this consensus, it is useful for us to draw upon a collection of examples that illustrate this type of argument articulated by each of the political parties. The following statements move from representatives of the hard-line, nationalist Sinn Féin across the ideological spectrum until we arrive at the unionist tribune party, the DUP. This collective body of quotations covers the entire party system and serves to highlight the breadth and depth of the cross-party consensus on this issue. Each of the statements are taken from Assembly debates between 2007 and 2009 during a period of significant inward migration in Northern Ireland. The first quotation comes from Sinn Féin MLA Francie Molloy speaking on the subject of human trafficking in a private members debate:

*Migrant workers have been good for the economy. It could be argued that many businesses in areas such as Dungannon and Cookstown would not have located there had it not been for migrant workers. Other businesses may have relocated when they were expanding because they would not have had the necessary workforce. (Hansard, 2008).*

Similar arguments are made here by Dolores Kelly of the SDLP during a debate on the racial equality strategy:

*Many of our hospitals and many industries within the agrifood sector would be unsustainable in the short to medium term if that labour force were not available. Migrant workers also contribute to the economy by spending their wages in Northern Ireland (Hansard, 2007a).*

Anna Lo of the APNI has consistently spoken on behalf of migrants in her contributions in the Assembly. The quotation below is drawn from a debate on the rights of migrant workers and refers to the positive economic impact made by migrant workers in Northern Ireland:

*The majority of the migrant workers live in Belfast, Dungannon, Craigavon and the Newry and Mourne areas and have jobs in administration, manufacturing, food processing, hospitality and construction. Research from the European Commission and the UK shows that migrant workers have had a generally positive impact on the economy. (Hansard, 2009b).*

In this area of discussion, most unionist representatives shared in the cross-party consensus over the positive economic effects of immigration. This is evident when we turn to consider the statement below made by Esmond Birnie of the UUP during an Assembly debate on equality issues:

*It is important to say from the outset that migrant workers have performed a major service to our economy. In the short to medium term, that inward migration has allowed the Northern Ireland economy to continue to grow and not be held back by labour shortages, which might otherwise have become critical. (Hansard, 2006).*

Finally, we see the consensus on the economic benefits of immigration extend across the full party-spectrum, when we observe the quotation below made by Jimmy Spratt of the DUP, during a discussion of the Shared Future strategy:

*People of more than 60 nationalities are now contributing to our economy and society. In towns such as Portadown and Dungannon, major employers would be unable to operate without Portuguese and eastern European staff, particularly in the food manufacturing sector. (Hansard, 2007b).*

Each of these quotes, taken together, serves to demonstrate a general, cross-party consensus about the economic benefits of immigration in to Northern Ireland. This agreement transcends party divisions across the political spectrum. These narratives



on immigration politics are common to nationalist, non-aligned and unionist representatives. However, interesting patterns begin to emerge when we consider the emphasis that these narratives place upon the work ethic of migrants. At this point it becomes possible to discern differences emerging in the way that the political parties endorse immigration. The following section turns to examine a number of key arguments that have arisen in the research process about the work ethic of migrants, and the emphases that different parties have adopted in order to articulate their particular endorsement of migrant workers.

#### *5.4.1 Work Ethic*

When discussing their endorsements for immigration, most of the politicians that were interviewed in this process made at least some reference to their perception of the work ethic of migrants. However, what stood out was the sheer weight of emphasis that the two largest parties placed upon work ethic at the expense of other considerations such as the changing nature of diversity in Northern Ireland. At this stage in the analysis a number of different patterns emerged: some of which highlighted areas of cross-party consensus; and others that served to illustrate discursive fault-lines. Firstly, we will look at the broad consensus associated with the argument that immigrants in Northern Ireland have brought a strong work ethic. This correlates with earlier discussions suggesting that immigration was good for the economy but focusses on the specifics of exactly how migrants have created positive impacts through their own efforts.

Unpicking these data allows us to highlight a key area of cross-party consensus. More interestingly, this evidence highlights a shared emphasis that is common to the dominant tribune parties. This discursive overlap is evident when we turn to consider the quotations below. The first statement arose during an interview with a member of the DUP:

*People in general see immigrants working hard and making a positive contribution. I think there are a small group of people who have grave resentment against economic migrants but it is a tiny minority (DUP4, 2013).*

This type of discursive theme is repeated to a greater or lesser extent across the party system. This is in evidence when we consider the next contribution made by a member of Sinn Féin:

*A large number of the Eastern Europeans seem to be concentrated in areas such as the poultry industry and agriculture generally. They play an important role, they are extremely good workers, the ones I know from my local community (SF3, 2013).*

This focus upon the work ethic of migrants is a key feature of narratives on immigration when discussed by the two largest parties in the region. What is interesting here is not that the smaller parties do not pay attention to the work ethic of migrants, but rather that representatives of the smaller parties tend to list work ethic as just one of many positive characteristics of immigrants; where the larger parties focus nearly entirely upon this area of the discussion. In the next chapter we will return to this distinction between the more successful tribune parties and the smaller parties when we begin to consider narratives related to the cultural impact of immigration. At this stage, it is sufficient to state that the tribune parties place nearly exclusive emphasis upon their admiration for the work ethic of migrants. However, there are further elements of cross-spectrum consensus in evidence when we appraise party narratives on the educational achievements of immigrant children.

#### *5.4.2 Educational Attainment*

A significant number of the politicians that participated in the study suggested that migrant children have had a positive impact in the field of educational achievement in Northern Ireland. This correlates with broader narratives about the work ethic of migrants, seeming to suggest an almost inter-generational effect that immigration is having upon Northern Ireland. A wide spread of representatives articulated these types of narrative. This is evident in the statements below. In order to avoid further repetition, a handful of quotations will be used to represent this general trend. The first quotation that we will consider came from an interview with a representative of Sinn Féin:

*Many of us could learn from their work ethic and their approach to education. I note that a lot of ethnic minority children have only been over here for a few years maybe and they are often top of their class, or near the top in terms of examination results. I think it is very impressive (SF2, 2013).*

Non-aligned politicians often articulated similar narratives, again placing focus on the educational prowess of the immigrant children. This is apparent in the quotation below made by a representative of the APNI when discussing the impact of immigration:

*A lot of these pupils bring an energy to education which our local students don't match. I'm talking about at primary level, there are very hard-working Asian and also Polish students, who will work very, very hard to achieve a much higher level of attainment in their school work. (APNI3, 2013).*

Similar appraisals of the work ethic of migrant children were outlined by members of both unionist parties. The example below came from an interview with a member of the DUP:

*I'm very impressed with a number of their children that are in some of our local primary schools that are learning English rapidly as well as learning Polish at home. You get the feeling like they put in the time and effort, they go over and above (DUP3, 2013).*

When considering these areas of consensus about the desirability of immigration and the work ethic of immigrant communities, it would seem reasonable to assume that this represented a relatively uncontested area of political discussion. This is until we begin to highlight other discursive themes that serve to demarcate underlying ideological distinctions between the parties. One of the obvious manifestations of this is evident when we begin to unpick contributions made by nationalists and their attempts to relate the position of migrants in Northern Ireland to the experiences of the Irish diasporic community living and working abroad.

### 5.4.3 Irish Emigration

While members of all of the parties often choose to praise the work of ethnic of immigrants and particularly their children, we begin to see interesting distinctions emerge in the themes utilised by Irish nationalist representatives when discussing this issue. Their difference in emphasis serves to outline a vision of immigration that has a distinctly Irish dimension. Nationalist narratives shift focus to a discussion of the hardship experienced by the historic Irish diaspora that left the island in search of opportunities abroad, and their participation in difficult and dangerous occupations. This allows the nationalist parties to tie their endorsement of immigrant communities in with longer standing narratives about the historical difficulties faced by the Irish national community. This correlation between minorities and Irishness is a feature of Sinn Féin narratives in a number of areas under consideration in this study, but also emerges at times in statements made by the SDLP. The following quotations are taken from debates in the Assembly during the period in which immigration in to Northern Ireland was at its highest. The first example is taken from a contribution made by John Dallat of the SDLP in a debate on human trafficking:

*[...] the New World often forgets that the Irish built it. Irish people built the tunnels in Britain and the skyscrapers in America. However, even today, they cannot get the right to come and go as they should. The Irish people have enough history behind them to know not to do the same thing to the people who are building this economy. (Hansard, 2008).*

A more emotive account is articulated here in the following quotation from Sinn Féin's Martina Anderson in the same debate:

*Women and men have been leaving their homelands in search of work ever since payment in return for labour was introduced. Nowhere is that more true than in Ireland. For generations, oppression, starvation and poverty forced our people to distant lands in order to survive. (Hansard, 2008).*

The work ethic of Irish migrants tended to be invoked in order to establish areas of commonality with current immigrants, this was particularly frequent during interviews with Sinn Féin representatives:

*If you go to where these migrants work, they are often noted as being some of the hardest working people there. That was also one of the comments that was often made about Irish people that worked abroad. So you can see we have an awful lot in common with these people (SF3, 2013).*

Here, a connection is explicitly made between the circumstances of the new migrants entering contemporary Northern Ireland and the experiences of the historic Irish diaspora. However, emigration also proved a useful linguistic refrain that would help Sinn Féin make an anti-austerity case in response to the spending cuts imposed by the 2010 coalition government. The following quotations are taken from debates between 2010 and 2012 and show the adaptability of the emigration narrative as a linguistic resource in Sinn Féin's ideological toolbox. This quotation was taken from a question posed by a Sinn Féin member to the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:

*Could the Minister let us know what concrete plans she has put in place to tackle the soaring numbers of unemployed young people here? Everywhere I go I hear family members talk about their young people who do not have jobs, and they ask what your Department is doing. There is mass emigration from this island. Could the Minister update me on her plans? (Hansard, 2011).*

Occasionally, but less frequently, similar issues were raised by members of the SDLP. For instance, the following statement was taken from an SDLP member's contribution to a private members' debate on unemployment:

*We now have 23.5% youth unemployment. How are we going to tackle that? What are our young people going to do? Do we just let them despair? Do we allow them to emigrate? As many Members know, young people are going to Australia, Canada or elsewhere to get employment. (Hansard, 2012a).*

Taken together, these quotations highlight a trend amongst Northern Irish nationalists to twist discussions about contemporary issues on to comfortable ideological terrain. Emigration features as a linguistic resource that can be adapted to meet the requirements of a number of different situations, it is particularly helpful in outlining a vision of commonality with immigrants entering Northern Ireland. Following on from these discussions related to the work ethic of migrants, many interview respondents from all parties would often tend to move towards conversations focussed around the types of roles that immigrants filled in the domestic economy.

#### *5.4.4 Undesirable Jobs*

The vast majority of respondents in this research process stated that rather than immigrants impacting negatively upon the employment prospects of the local population, they tended to take on roles that the Northern Irish work force did not want to accept. This was a recurring theme that was articulated by representatives of all of the parties consulted in this study. The quotations below serve to illustrate this widely held opinion. Again this tends to confirm a high degree of cross-party consensus about the desirability of immigration into Northern Ireland. However, it is notable that a small number of unionist representatives go against this general trend, articulating arguments that suggest migrants may impact negatively upon employment prospects for local people. The series of quotations below serve to highlight the extent of the general cross-party consensus on this issue. The first quotation we will consider comes from an interview with a representative of the UUP:

*When people do come out with that stuff about 'they've stolen our jobs', well that doesn't turn out to be actually quite right. Often people here didn't actually want the jobs, so that's the real problem (UUP2, 2013).*

There are obvious parallels in the next statement that was made by a member of the DUP during a discussion about immigration and its impact on employment prospects for the domestic population:

*It is raised on occasions. It is a natural reaction that if someone loses their job, the blame game starts, and the easiest person to blame is the immigrants. I always remind them, that the immigrants are here to do the jobs that local people don't want to do (DUP4, 2013).*

These arguments also found expression in discussions with non-aligned members of the APNI. For instance, consider the statement made below:

*Particularly in certain industries for example, poultry workers and the meat packaging industry. They say that they advertise the jobs, but they can't staff them from the local people. Sometimes people would rather stay on benefits than to fill those jobs. It is dirty work, physical work and low-paid, often people are not interested (APNI1, 2013).*

Nationalists of both parties were also keen to argue that immigrants tended to fill gaps in the employment market that had emerged because local people did not wish to apply for such positions. This is in evidence when we consider the following statement made by a member of The SDLP:

*Let's face it very often these people from immigrant backgrounds are here to do jobs that the indigenous people do not want to take at the rates on offer. It is good that the young people here have high aspirations and want to do skilled jobs, but it does mean that industry has to look outside to recruit people in some cases (SDLP3, 2013).*

These statements serve to illustrate the tendency of most politicians to agree that in the majority of cases, immigration has served to plug gaps in the labour market that could not be filled by the domestic population due to a lack of interest in the low paid, low status jobs on offer. However, despite this element of cross-party consensus, a significant number of representatives from both of the unionist parties brought in different arguments, raising questions about the potential for immigration to impact negatively on employment prospects for local people.

#### 5.4.5 Protectionist Narratives

A sizeable minority of unionist representatives argued that competition from migrants was creating difficulties for the native population through harming their employment prospects. Again, this confirms the suggestion that while most party representatives are positive about immigration, certain sections of both unionist parties harbour fears about the potentially negative impact of immigration into Northern Ireland. This sentiment is well captured in the statements below that were made by representatives of both unionist parties. The first example comes from an Assembly contribution made by former UUP leader, Reg Empey:

*Many immigrants are skilled workers, such as welders or surveyors, but many others are receiving the minimum wage. If that was to be lowered, it would be likely that part of the indigenous population would be pushed back onto benefits. However, because migrant workers are not immediately eligible for benefits, they would take minimum wage-jobs because the wages would still be relatively high compared to those in their home countries. The net effect would be that in areas where low wages are paid the indigenous population would be driven back onto benefits, which could create tensions in the community (Hansard, 2007c).*

A similar approach is articulated in the statement below that came from the former Environment Minister and DUP representative, Sammy Wilson:

*In any country citizenship confers certain privileges on people. It has obligations to its own citizens before those of other countries, otherwise what is the value of citizenship?[...] Do you really want to put someone from here on the dole and have to pay for their upkeep, family and lifestyle when someone who has chosen themselves to be mobile could be the one in employment? (Belfast Telegraph, 2009).*

The significance of these restrictive arguments is that once more they serve to highlight the negative approach to immigration adopted by sections of political unionism. Unlike the majority of representatives consulted in these interviews who



tend to state that migrants fill gaps in the labour market through taking on roles not widely sought by the domestic population, these arguments state that immigration impacts negatively on the local community. This collection of statements, coupled with those made earlier in reference to immigration and welfare, can be taken together to highlight the existence of a pro-restriction bloc that exists in both of the unionist parties. This bloc stands in opposition to the majority of political representatives who are either supportive of mild immigration controls or those who would actively welcome greater expansion. The final section of this chapter will sum up these findings and consider their relevance in terms of ideological positioning processes.

## **5.5 Discussion and Conclusions**

The evidence in this chapter points to the suggestion that in an ethnically defined party system, immigration issues become absorbed by pre-existing ideological structures. This contradicts suggestions that elite stances on migration are not subject to the usual considerations that drive inter-party positioning (Freeman, 1995; 2002; 2011). Parties are most likely to adopt stances that they consider to be palatable to their supporters and that seem to be consistent with their longer standing ideological positioning. We know from our earlier survey of literature that parties will tend to explain events and phenomena in a manner that maximises their potential for popular support, but they are bound by the need to ensure that their arguments fit with their established ideological platform (Downs, 1957; Petrocik, 1996).

With regard to immigration, there is some degree of evidence of a split in public opinion that may partially explain the strategies adopted by some of the parties. Using religious background to demarcate each party's potential supporters has a degree of crudeness to it, though there are clear patterns of affiliation. For instance in the 2010 NILT survey, 68% of Catholic respondents stated that they voted for one of the two main nationalist parties, 63% of Protestant respondents voted for one of the two largest unionist parties (NILT, 2010a). Support for the APNI has less of an overt communal affiliation, with support split between Protestant, Catholic and others. The importance of this becomes clear when we observe NILT survey data on attitudes towards immigration. For some of the key indicators, Protestants were clearly more reticent about immigration than Catholics. For instance, in response to

the question: 'do the needs of migrant workers' children put a strain on schools?' 65% of Protestants surveyed stated that they either agreed or strongly agreed. This contrasts with 37% Catholic respondents that gave the same responses to this question (NILT, 2010b). These findings are not perfectly suited to enabling us to explain all aspects of party behaviour, as they do not account for the unanimity of the nationalist/non-aligned bloc on the desirability of immigration. However, they do provide an indication as to why unionists are more inclined to adopt restrictive positions on immigration than the other parties.

While parties are keen to recruit popular support, they cannot say whatever they like at any given moment. They are tied to some extent by the specific linguistic formulations that their platform is constructed around. Consequently, the parties will seek to utilise their preferred ideological frameworks when engaging with emerging events. It is the contention of this chapter that these dynamics are evident when we consider the data that has been showcased in the text so far. On some occasions, immigration is invoked when it supports long-standing ideological positions adopted by the parties. At other times we tend to see ideological narratives bent and twisted in order to accommodate aspects of societal change that have arisen as a result of changing patterns of migration. This type of behaviour is in line with the broad theories of party competition referred to above. The positioning process is played out by the parties as they adapt their discursive frameworks to explain social phenomena in way that is harmonious with the party's favoured ideological refrains.

For instance, let us turn to consider the reasons behind the nationalist and non-aligned consensus about the desirability and further encouragement of immigration into Northern Ireland. This is best understood through reference to wider linguistic refrains employed by these parties. For Sinn Féin, immigration provides an opportunity to draw upon one of their favoured ideological devices. Through twisting discussions of immigration to enable narratives about the harsh conditions that have historically forced many Irish people to work abroad, Sinn Féin representatives are able to align themselves with the immigrant communities in Northern Ireland. This ties in with the party's keenness to present itself as open and progressive in contrast

to the perceived close-mindedness of political unionism and it provides comfortable linguistic territory for the party representatives.

The APNI have historically constructed their appeal on speaking outside of the 'two traditions' narrative. The party has sought to highlight the fact that diversity in Northern Ireland should not be reduced to simple binary categorisation. Immigration issues tie in neatly with this ideological position, meaning that the party can quite easily accommodate expansive narratives into their broader platform and use migrant communities to bolster their arguments. The SDLP, as a party that is squeezed ideologically between the constitutional nationalist incarnation of Sinn Féin and the non-aligned APNI, reflects aspects of both of these narratives, at times discussing historic Irish emigration and also utilising refrains about the recognition of greater diversity in the territory. All of these shifts are very much in line with the theoretical work on ideological positioning which suggests that parties will seek to accommodate emergent issues within their favoured discursive frameworks (Finlayson, 2012).

Unionists by contrast, are split over the desirability of immigration into Northern Ireland. This split divides the unionist electorate and the political parties. While the majority of unionist politicians are entirely comfortable with discussing the economic benefits associated with immigration and the excellent work ethic of migrants, many would like to see further restrictions placed upon freedom of movement. The best way to explain this is through reference to longer term ideological fractures within political unionism. Both unionist parties contain civic and ethnic elements in their political make up. These ideological positions are broad definitional fault-lines that help us to understand some of the central political instincts of unionism, but they are not mutually exclusive and there are significant degrees of overlap within and between the parties.

Where unionists bring in discussions about the economic desirability of immigration in the context of a broader UK-wide pattern, we can see clear evidence of an attempt to utilise civic narratives to frame immigration politics in the territory. Where we see arguments suggesting migrants may abuse welfare and harm the employment prospects of the local population, there is evidence of a protectionist streak

associated with exclusive conceptions of territoriality and ethno-national community. Hence, it seems likely that the messy and uneven civic and ethnic fissures, within and across the unionist parties, influences the adoption of narratives on immigration. The next chapter will build upon these arguments by focussing upon narratives related to the potential for immigrants to change Northern Irish society. It will be shown that there is evidence of a schism between the larger tribune parties and the smaller parties when discussing the cultural impact of immigration.

# Chapter 6: Language and Cultural Accommodation

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the manner in which cultural politics have been played out in inter-party debate in Northern Ireland during the period under consideration in our case study. It will be argued that there is very little emphasis placed on the accommodation of migrant cultures due to the dominance of inter-party debates that relate to the 'two traditions' framework. Most particularly, this has become evident due to the preeminent position of debates related to parading, flags and other forms of performative ritual associated with the cultural division in Northern Ireland. The issue of minority languages has implications for parity of esteem between the majority groups but also impacts on integration processes for migrant communities in the territory. For this reason, we will be placing our primary focus on political debates related to the accommodation of minority languages in order to outline some of the more pertinent aspects of cultural politics in the period of the study.

The chapter will begin by highlighting some of the aspirations for approaches to cultural accommodation that have been expressed in policy frameworks for the governance of Northern Ireland, before considering how the parties themselves have approached these issues. It will be suggested that the aspirations for multicultural and intercultural accommodation that are set out in such documents lack a sense of theoretical clarity and are seldom reflected in political discussions on these issues. As the chapter progresses it will be argued that debates over the accommodation of difference in Northern Ireland seem entirely distinct from wider theoretical positions due to their grounding in the historic particularities of the territory. Illustrative quotations will be used to highlight the contours of a split within the party system that does not follow constitutional fault-lines, but is best expressed in terms of a distinction between the larger and smaller political parties. In order to illustrate this, the first section of findings focusses upon the manner in which parties discuss the impact of increased diversity on Northern Irish society.

It will be argued that there is evidence of a tendency on the part of the smaller parties to focus upon the potential for change offered by immigration. The SDLP, APNI and

UUP all argue that immigration has had a significant influence in diluting the cultural binary that has been traditionally associated with the history of division in Northern Ireland. These narratives tend to suggest that migrants have helped or may help to create a fundamental change in approaches to the accommodation of diversity in the territory. It is notable that these arguments are largely absent in statements drawn from the DUP and Sinn Féin. The two larger parties instead tend to focus upon the performative cultural displays of ethnic minorities making few references to the potential for societal change associated with immigration.

The chapter then turns to provide a detailed investigation into language politics in Northern Ireland in order to highlight the extent to which the parties engage with the cultural accommodation of ethnic minorities. It will be argued that the evidence suggests that ethnically defined parties, particularly the tribune parties, focus nearly exclusively upon traditional fault-lines in cultural politics. For this purpose, an overview of contemporary language debates will be provided. This area of cultural politics serves to highlight the dominance of the parity of esteem framework in such discussions. It will be shown the needs of ethnic minorities are usually only discussed in these debates either by non-aligned members arguing in favour of moving the debate beyond binary calculations, or by unionists invoking minority languages as a blocking tactic against greater legislative support for Gaélic programmes. In this sense, ethnic minority languages become employed as a defensive stratagem to subvert the political demands of Northern Irish nationalists. The final section of the chapter will consider the relevance of these findings, utilising theories of ideological positioning and literature on party conflict in Northern Ireland to aid our interpretations. However, before we can proceed to analyse the statements made by the party representatives on these issues, it is useful for us to dissect some of the legislative provisions that have been made for cultural accommodation in the territory. This will serve to highlight the lack of theoretical clarity associated with such documents and the gap between policy aims and the positions of the political parties.

## **6.2 Cultural Diversity Policies**

During the period of our case study, three different overarching policy frameworks have been in place for the management of cultural difference in Northern Ireland:

firstly, there was the *Shared Future* strategy (2005); secondly the *Cohesion, Sharing and Integration* framework (2010), (CSI); and thirdly, the *Together: Building a United Community* package (2013), (T:BUC). Additionally, there are some other pieces of relevant legislation in place such as the *European Charter on Minority Languages* (C.O.E, 1992). By providing a brief examination of these documents we are able to outline the legislative context in which cultural diversity is expected to be accommodated in the territory.

Each of the legislative frameworks invoke either multiculturalism or interculturalism to some extent as discursive devices. It has been argued earlier in this thesis that despite the differences between these positions that they are mutually complementary and both exhibit sophisticated understandings of cultural diversity (Wood et al. 2006: Bouchard, 2011: Modood & Meer, 2012a; 2012b). The language used in policy documents during the period of the case study does reflect some recognition of the increasingly diverse nature of Northern Irish society. Though the form that this has taken has varied according to the wider political contexts in which these documents were shaped. The first of these frameworks, *A Shared Future*, was written during a period of direct rule from Westminster. The document highlights a keen engagement with the needs of immigrant communities in Northern Ireland and was accompanied by a wide-ranging racial equality strategy. The framework draws on linguistic components that are associated with some of the theoretical models discussed in our earlier literature review chapter. Most notably linguistic patterns associated with liberalism, multiculturalism and interculturalism are invoked in the document. For instance, there is a strong emphasis on tolerance and individual equality in the text, which are most commonly associated with liberalism. This is apparent when we consider the following quotation:

*This policy document sets out that we need to establish over time a shared society defined by a culture of tolerance: a normal, civic society, in which all individuals are considered as equals (OFMDFM, 2005, p. 3).*

Elsewhere the document utilises the term 'multi-cultural' in order to describe the changes that were taking place in Northern Ireland in this period, this is evident in

the statement "Cultural diversity training is vital in a divided society that is becoming more multi-cultural" (OFMDFM, 2005, p. 36). The document also draws on intercultural terminology in order to discuss educational measures taken to promote cultural accommodation in school settings.

Overall, the document seems to reflect the ideas of liberal multiculturalism associated with scholars such as Kymlicka (1989; 1995), though there is limited usage of explicitly multicultural terminology. One plausible explanation for this is that during this period the 'backlash' against multicultural principles discussed in our earlier literature review was already taking place and policy-makers were beginning to avoid using this terminology in such documents (Vervotec & Wessendorf, 2010). Despite the ambiguous use of language in the framework there is a clear recognition of the complexity of diversity and identity that we find in both liberal conceptions of multiculturalism and intercultural texts. For instance, there is an explicit recognition of the nuanced and variable nature of identity when the framework states that:

*A 'cultural variety' in constant motion is very different from, and highly preferable to, a limited 'variety of cultures' set in aspic. Nor, however, are we talking about a process of homogenisation, or of assimilation to one official ethos, but a ring of diverse cultural expressions where interactions, can thrive.*  
(OFMDFM, 2005, p. 8)

Furthermore, the document makes explicit recognition of the wide range of different languages spoken in Northern Ireland other than internal linguistic forms when it states that:

*In addition to English, many other languages are used in Northern Ireland, including indigenous minority languages (Irish, Ulster-Scots, and British and Irish Sign Languages) and minority ethnic languages (such as Cantonese, Portuguese, Cant and Arabic). Research which mapped minority ethnic languages in Northern Ireland reveals over 50 languages, most of which are in daily use here and all of which are an important part of our both shared and*



*diverse cultural heritage. Our different languages are an intrinsic part of our cultural capital* (OFMDFM, 2005, p. 35)

In this sense, the document goes some way towards recognising the extent of cultural diversity present in Northern Irish society. However, it has little to offer in terms of specific support measures for minority languages other than Irish and Ulster-Scots which are afforded certain protections under the European Charter for Minority Languages (C.O.E. 1992). Despite the failings of the *Shared Future* framework in offering support for migrant languages it does engage to some extent with the changes brought about by an increasingly diverse society. Subsequent policy frameworks written at the devolved level within Northern Ireland have tended towards a difference in emphasis with less focus on migrant issues than *Shared Future*. This will become evident as we begin to dissect the CSI consultation document that was put forward as a replacement for the *Shared Future*.

Following on from the St Andrews agreement which saw Sinn Féin and the DUP formulate agreements on mutual participation and power-sharing, a changed context emerged in which devolved, consociational governance became more stable for a significant period (Knox, 2011). During this timeframe, the OFMDFM put forward a new programme for the management of difference in the territory that reflected their own specific concerns rather than those of the government in Westminster. This prompted the consultation process for the CSI framework (OFMDFM, 2007). The adoption of the term 'cohesion' in this document seemed to suggest some correlation between the Northern Irish situation and the trends towards the idea of 'community cohesion' that was becoming a common feature of discussions about the management of diversity in other parts of the U.K., particularly with reference to the accommodation of difference in Northern England (Cantle, 2005).

Given that these terms were most closely associated with the work of Ted Cantle who was discussed earlier in this thesis as a proponent of interculturalism, it is perhaps unsurprising that CSI began to adopt similar linguistic features. There are a number of references to interculturalism in the CSI framework. This trend is evident in the statement below:

*Our vision is for an "intercultural" society – a dynamic process where different cultures and communities interact, learn about and question their own and each other's cultures. Over time this may lead to cultural change. It recognises the inequalities at work in society and the need to overcome these. It is a process which requires mutual respect and acknowledges human rights (OFMDFM, 2007, p. 44)*

The CSI consultation framework prompted a significant academic response much of which was negative in its appraisal. Some of the first contributors to this critique were Todd et al. (2010) who argued that CSI had side-lined some of the more ambitious proposals put forward in the Shared Future framework. Knox (2011) provides a pointed review of CSI that is well expressed in the quotation below:

*In short, it is a woolly benign document and one which offers little by way of specific and measurable objectives, policy priorities, or an implementation strategy. It is the product of a political consensus between the DUP and Sinn Fein replete with good intentions but lacking in specificity. (Knox, 2011, p. 551)*

It is certainly fair to say that CSI is marked by a number of key flaws. Firstly, there is a tendency to discuss interculturalism whilst offering little of substance to explain what is meant by this, or how such principles could find expression in practice. Following the work of intercultural scholars such as Bouchard (2011) we might expect to see provisions set out to explain how intercultural dialogue could be promoted in order to facilitate cultural blending, yet in practice the document does not achieve this. The document showcases certain examples of grass-roots organisations that have engaged in cross-communal work, but this does not clearly mark-out how further intercultural initiatives would be formulated and supported by the devolved government. Furthermore, the document is notable for the fact that when it addresses actual approaches to cultural accommodation it seems to utilise linguistic refrains associated with excessively simplistic conceptions of multiculturalism. In a number of places there are signs of a 'saris, samosas and steel-bands' approach

which is rejected by the majority of multicultural theorists and interculturalist thinkers (Modood & May, 2001; Cattle, 2014). For just one example of this type of emphasis consider the quotation below:

*New arrivals provide new occasions and new celebrations which add to the range of cultural traditions which we can enjoy and embrace (OFMDFM, 2007, p. 29)*

There is a distinct focus on the importance of cultural festivals and displays in CSI that is not present in the Shared Future strategy. An example of this is evident in the following statement:

*Community festivals are about participation, involvement and the creation of a sense of identity and are important in contributing to the social well-being of a community (OFMDFM, 2007, p. 33)*

This change in focus could be explained in terms of reflecting the priorities of the dominant tribune parties. This is something that we will consider further later in the thesis when we outline our findings related to cultural accommodation and discuss the motivations driving the political parties to adopt particular narratives in response to the challenges of an increasingly diverse society. Ultimately, the CSI framework did not move beyond the consultation process and was replaced by the T:BUC document. However, this framework shares a number of similarities with CSI in terms of its discussions of a vague interculturalism coupled with a focus on cultural displays as a means of accommodating diversity.

T:BUC is in many ways an ambitious policy document. It sets out some challenging goals aimed at fostering greater accommodation between the two primary cultural communities. However, it contains virtually no focus on measures to accommodate linguistic diversity. Furthermore, there is scant mention of minority communities outside of the two traditions. Once again, this suggests that the document reflects the priorities of the two dominant parties and their inability to overcome deadlock in certain areas. Despite this, the document frequently invokes the lexicon of

interculturalism. One such example can be found in the quotation below which states that:

*We must work together both in Government and with community and statutory partners to build trust and increase understanding of the range of cultural backgrounds that exist here. We believe that an approach based on intercultural dialogue can help facilitate greater integration and build a more united community (OFMDFM 2013, p. 79)*

However, similarly to CSI, the only measures to promote cultural accommodation discussed at any length in the document focus nearly exclusively on the promotion of simplistic varieties of cultural celebration. This is evident in the quotation below which highlights this tendency:

*As we move towards achieving our vision of a united community, we are committed to developing an open and tolerant society in which everyone is free to mark and celebrate their identity, or indeed identities, in a peaceful and respectful manner (OFMDFM, 2013, p. 86)*

In addition to its focus on celebration, the discussion of celebrating in a 'peaceful' manner seems to suggest the primary preoccupation of the document is in dealing with managing differences within the two traditions model rather than the full spectrum of diversity in the territory. Overall the policy documents designed at devolved level seem to offer less focus on immigrant generated diversity than the *Shared Future* strategy despite the fact that Northern Ireland was becoming increasingly diverse during the period in which they were written. Whilst some degree of focus upon cultural celebration is to be welcomed, such documents fail to outline actual measures to promote intercultural dialogue and do little to address the real needs of migrant communities.

It is clear that all of the policy frameworks recognise the changing nature of diversity in Northern Ireland. By using terms such as 'intercultural' and 'multicultural' the documents suggest that the sub-state should play an active role in formulating

measures to ensure the accommodation of difference in an equitable fashion based on the protection of diversity and cross-cultural dialogue. Though there is little clarity as to what these terms should mean with respect to policy outcomes. Furthermore, the approach to language issues that is adopted in these documents seems to suggest the manner in which policy-makers have stepped back from engaging with the actual true of extent of linguistic diversity in the territory. Consequently, the main policy framework for the protection of minority languages in the province comes in the form of the European Commission Charter on Minority Languages (C.O.E, 1992). The difficulty with this is that the document focusses purely on local languages and says nothing about linguistic diversity brought about by inward migration. The charter seeks to work toward:

*Realising that the protection and promotion of regional or minority languages in the different countries and regions of Europe represent an important contribution to the building of a Europe based on the principles of democracy and cultural diversity within the framework of national sovereignty and territorial integrity (C.O.E, 1992, p. 1).*

However, elsewhere the charter explicitly states that migrant languages or dialects of official languages are not covered by the provisions of the document (C.O.E. 1992) Consequently, in Northern Ireland we have seen a strange situation whereby as the society has become increasingly marked by cultural diversity, which is perhaps most obviously exemplified by the changing linguistic variety in the territory, the legislative frameworks aimed at accommodating difference seem to have become less engaged with migrant languages.

This leaves linguistic accommodation set firmly within the 'two traditions' approach in which local minority languages dominate the agenda. The data gathered by this thesis seems to suggest that the ethnically defined parties have a very limited sense of engagement with the multicultural and intercultural terminology set out in such documents when discussing diversity outside of the 'two traditions'. Despite this, the ethnic parties are often keen to invoke protection narratives on behalf of 'their' community. This highlights the need for fresh thinking and further political leadership

in this area. However, as we proceed it will become apparent that with the exception of the APNI, there is very little thirst to discuss the accommodation of difference outside of the parity of esteem framework. The first section of evidence taken from party representatives revolves around the impact of the migrant communities on Northern Ireland.

### **6.3 Cultural impact**

When discussing the cultural impact of immigrants in Northern Ireland we see evidence of a distinctive fissure that splits the larger parties from the smaller ones. Firstly, we see the smaller parties often focussing on their perception of migrants as a dilution to the cultural binary that is associated with Northern Ireland. Secondly, we tend to see the representatives of the larger parties discussing the cultural impact of migrants in terms of superficial ritualistic displays. The former view presents immigration as a means to potentially undermine the 'two traditions' narrative through changing the cultural balance in Northern Ireland. The second view outlines a reductive narrative on the cultural impact of migrants that is often expressed in academic literature as the 'saris, samosas and steel-bands' approach (Modood & May, 2001). This narrative tends to characterise the minority communities according to certain limited stereotypes that are associated with their ethno-cultural displays. We will turn firstly to highlight some examples of the smaller parties articulating narratives about the potential for immigration to bring about further cultural dilution in Northern Ireland.

#### *6.3.1 Dilution narratives*

The smaller parties tend to focus on dilution narratives when considering the cultural impact of immigration. This is evident in the following statement made by a representative of the UUP. The quotation highlights a perception that immigration has served to widen the cultural playing field and to further diversify the society through breaking down or diminishing some of the traditional communal fissures:

*Remember we have been stuck here for years with basically Protestant or Catholic and Irish or British, Orangeism or GAA, Irish language or Ulster-Scots. So I think immigration does make a valuable contribution. It is good for*

*Northern Ireland because it shows us that there is a much bigger world out there (UUP2, 2013).*

This type of remark was echoed in the next statement made by a member of the APNI when discussing their particular endorsement of immigration:

*It certainly has changed cultural diversity in Northern Ireland. Particularly in South Belfast. You walk down the street, down the main street, Lisburn Road. You hear people speaking different languages for instance and I think it's great for Northern Ireland which for so long has been all about orange and green. I certainly hope that it will us help to create a new kind of society (APNI1, 2013).*

The following quotation, made by a member of the SDLP, again serves to highlight commonalities between the smaller parties and their assessment of the cultural impact made by immigration:

*All of those people bring some colour and enrich our society, both in terms of language, in terms of their sheer presence, their cultural presence if you want to call it that. I certainly think that this new diversity could help us to overcome some of our historical hang-ups about 'us' and 'them' if you know what I mean? (SDLP1, 2013).*

Each of the statements outlined above, serves to illustrate wide areas of overlap between the smaller parties when discussing the impact of immigration on the cultural politics of Northern Ireland. They coalesce around a common core in which the new diversity created by immigration is juxtaposed favourably against the traditional communal binary. This new diversity is described in terms of its ability to impact upon Northern Irish society: to challenge and to change existing divisions. The tribunal parties that have made more overtly sectional communal appeals tend to focus upon superficial aspects of cultural celebration. We will move now to provide some examples of these types of narrative.

### 6.3.2 *Saris, Samosas and Steel Bands*

The two largest parties tend to recognise the cultural presence of migrants, but paint a picture of the immigrant communities performing ritualistic displays that add colour to the society rather than making any serious differences to binary understandings of ethnic division. This becomes evident when we consider the statements below. The first of which was made a representative of Sinn Féin, the second by a member of the DUP:

*I think it is great that we do have diverse cultures and that we celebrate it. I think that diversity enriches everybody. It is good if people that come here from other communities can have their day or do whatever it is that they wish in order to celebrate their culture. It allows them to feel a part of things and helps bond them as a community. (SF4, 2013).*

The suggestion that minority communities should receive recognition in the form of 'a day' in which their culture is celebrated through the opportunity to put on a displays is not in itself a form of bigotry, it is intended to be welcoming. However, the statement serves to portray the cultural impact of immigrants in terms of performative activities that add colour or gloss to the society but create limited impact in terms of cultural change. This is far removed from the commitment to intercultural dialogue set out in the policy documents reviewed at the beginning of this chapter. We see similar tendencies in discussions that were held with DUP representatives. For instance, let us examine the statement below made in an interview with a member of the DUP:

*I enjoy going along to the Indian cultural festivals in Belfast, I like to see the dancing and the bright outfits, and I enjoy the food! Round here is a very different area. It is a traditional rural part of Northern Ireland. It would be nice to think that things like that might happen here, but I think that it is quite unlikely in the near future. (DUP3, 2013).*

Again this narrative places near exclusive focus upon the impact of migrants as a form of decoration in Northern Irish society. Once again, there is nothing about the



potential for intercultural dialogue that is aspired to in the later policy frameworks on cultural accommodation in Northern Ireland. The drivers behind this distinction between the large and the small parties are very likely to be driven by two considerations that relate to inter-party positioning. Firstly, the tribune parties have tended to benefit from sectional appeals to their ethnic constituencies. Consequently, there is little incentive for them to embrace wider diversity and the dilution of the 'two traditions' approach to cultural accommodation in Northern Ireland. Secondly, in-keeping with the priorities of the cultural conflict described in a number of existing texts on Northern Irish party politics, the tribunes transfer their concern for the specific forms of ritual and identity that they have fought for on behalf of their constituent communities, to their discussions of immigration generated diversity (McAuley & Tonge, 2009; McDaid et al. 2013; Tonge et al. 2014)

The influence of the tribune parties in setting the agenda for cultural politics becomes more obvious when we turn to consider party positioning on minority language issues. In this area we see the clear dominance of the bi-national politics of communal defence. Both of the tribunes and the smaller ethnically defined parties adopt stances in support of their traditional cultural community. Only the APNI continues to articulate narratives about progressing beyond communal binaries when the issue of minority languages is discussed by the political representatives.

#### **6.4 Language Politics: Parity Stalemate**

Language politics and the accommodation of linguistic pluralism is at the centre of debates on how best to govern a culturally diverse society in an equitable fashion (Kymlicka, 2001; Kymlicka & Patten, 2003) While cultural politics in Northern Ireland covers far more than just debates over language, it is here that we can see most clearly the manner in which ethnic minorities are marginalised in such debates, or utilised in order to support existing ideological positioning. The following section will highlight the discursive manifestations of the deadlock in language politics that is played out amongst politicians. The key stimulus in these debates is internal linguistic diversity, focussing primarily on Gaélic and Ulster-Scots.

#### 6.4.1 Nationalism: Promoting the Irish Language

Nationalists of both parties commonly argue in favour of greater state support for the Irish language, very rarely invoking the wider varieties of language diversity in the territory. The form that these arguments take varies to a reasonable extent between the parties, but there are commonalities between the two. While members of the SDLP tend to focus on the suggestion that Irish language is part of the heritage for the members of all communities on the island, Sinn Féin representatives are split between this type of argument and messages about the colonial mistreatment of the native language. In-line with broader trajectories of ideological convergence between the nationalist parties, there is evidence of Sinn Féin adopting elements of the SDLP's approach on support for the Irish language. However, on some occasions, it is more appropriate to speak of continuity in Sinn Féin's arguments on the Irish language, which revolve around the suggestion that support for Irish culture is a form of resistance against the colonial past of the territory (O'Reilly, 1999). The following quotations exhibit two examples of SDLP members seeking to articulate an inclusive narrative on Irish language, the first of which is taken from a Ministerial question time in the Assembly:

*I thank the Minister for, and support him fully in, what he is saying about the Irish language. It is there for everyone. It belongs to no one, or to no section of the community in particular. It is there for us to gain understanding of our history, background and environment (Hansard, 2014d).*

Similar arguments often occurred during interviews with SDLP representatives when discussing the politics of language:

*Oh I would be supportive of that and my party is supportive of that. We believe that the Irish language should be supported by government in a very proactive way. I'm not an Irish speaker myself, but I see the value of the language as a cultural thing. It is something that enriches all our lives (SDLP1, 2013).*

Sinn Féin are commonly characterised in literature on language politics in Northern Ireland as being far more concerned with utilising a 'decolonising discourse' on language than the SDLP (O'Reilly, 1999). However, there is some evidence that Sinn Féin has begun to use similar linguistic refrains to those of the SDLP when discussing the language. This is suggestive of their annexation of ideological ground traditionally held by the moderate nationalists (Tonge, 2005). This tendency is captured in the following quotation that was taken from the Sinn Féin manifesto for the 2007 Assembly election:

*The Irish language is a central part of our culture, which belongs to all of us irrespective of creed or political outlook. It enriches all our lives. Sinn Féin believes strongly in the need to protect and promote the Irish language and above all other political parties we have acted as its champion (Sinn Féin, 2007).*

However, there are occasions when Sinn Féin representatives draw on traditional ideological refrains about the poor treatment of the Irish language under British Imperial rule. The quotation below provides an example of this tendency and suggests a potentially transitional phase in the manner in which Sinn Féin approach language debates. The next statement was taken from an interview with a Sinn Féin representative and highlights a degree of continuity in the ideological framing used by party members in discussions on language policy:

*For hundreds of years the British government tried to ban the Irish language and tried to keep it down so that people couldn't use it and stopped using it. That's where we're at, that's why the Irish language isn't as strong as it should be. But there is a big revival going on now around the Irish language. (SF3, 2013).*

Another area in which Sinn Féin diverge from SDLP narratives on language policy is in their characterisation of unionists who seek to block Irish language legislation as bigoted, small-minded or racist. In the back and forth of Assembly debate, language is an issue that regularly comes to the fore. The following quotations were taken from

Sinn Féin contributions during Assembly debates on language policy. They serve to exhibit a key feature of the combative exchanges on Gaélic that have dominated political discussion on the protection of minority languages. The first quotation comes from a private member's debate on the Irish language:

*The issue of language rights is not controversial in Wales, Scotland, the South of Ireland or throughout Europe. An expression of human rights has become a political football in the battle for supremacy between the unionist parties. The determination of unionist politicians to block any recognition of the Irish language is a misguided and macho demonstration of anti-Irish bigotry. It is almost as if unionism has decided to define itself by how ferociously anti-Irish it has become. That is nothing short of pathetic. (Hansard, 2007d).*

This type of narrative has been fuelled to some extent by the actions of some unionist politicians that have sought to ridicule the promotion of the Irish language. The most high-profile incident involved DUP representative, Gregory Campbell, during an exchange in the Assembly, in which he parodied an Irish phrase commonly used by Gaélic speakers in the chamber:

*Curry my yogurt can coca coal yer. The Minister has outlined what she is talking about with the Irish language strategy and an Ulster-Scots strategy. Would it not be more inclusive to have a minority languages strategy so that nobody would feel left out? (Hansard, 2014e).*

While this type of incident is far from commonplace in the chamber it has certainly served to fuel Sinn Féin's representation of political unionism as bigoted in its approach to the Irish language. The quotation below was one of many responses from Sinn Féin representatives to Campbell's attempt at humour in the Assembly.

*Unfortunately this is nothing new from the DUP who have blocked the development on an Irish language act, and whose representatives have a long history of insults to the Irish speaking community [...]. While this might be funny in Gregory's little closed world, it is hugely insulting to all of those who*

*promote the huge benefits of endorsing and enhancing bilingualism in our society (McCorley, cited in McGreevy 2014).*

Interestingly, while Sinn Féin are very keen to discuss minority languages internal to Ireland, they have much less to say about other minority languages. In many ways these types of narrative are reminiscent of the multicultural theories that relate to the accommodation of indigenous groups, but offer much less protection to external migrant minorities (Taylor, 1994; Kymlicka, 1995). The interviews in this study were able to put this point directly to the representatives of Sinn Féin. When asked about what level of state support should be provided for external minority languages, they often had very little to say, or would argue that such issues were primarily a matter for the private sphere. The statement below, which was taken from an interview with a Sinn Féin representative, illustrates this type of approach to external minority languages:

*I don't actually know, certainly they should receive help to learn the language here and obviously the working language here is English. So people coming to live and settle here do need some help to integrate. Learning the language is very important and they should be facilitated to do that. Obviously people come with their own culture and they bring their own language, so I don't know what you need to support other languages, because they are coming with their language (SF4, 2013).*

Nationalists generally, and Sinn Féin in particular, have made promotion of the Irish language part of their platform for the promotion of their ethnic group interests. However, as a consequence of this, migrant languages are relegated in these narratives, they are expected to be preserved in the private sphere. Given the effects of cultural swamping, it would seem likely that this approach would effectively amount to a form of neglect that would ultimately lead to assimilatory pressures of the type discussed earlier in the thesis (Glazer, 1997; Modood, 2007). This preoccupation with internal languages has overshadowed the need to engage with linguistic diversity in its totality. In response to nationalist demands for greater support for the Irish language, unionists have constructed defensive narratives in an

attempt to repel these perceived cultural assaults. In order to highlight this, the chapter will now turn to examine some of the unionist arguments that have been employed to block legislative support for the Irish language.

#### *6.4.2 Unionism: Counter Strategies*

As nationalist politicians have attempted to promote further funding for Irish language programmes in Northern Ireland, unionists have adopted a series of blocking measures aimed at countering such claims. The most common of these arguments is evident in the narratives of both unionist parties and is constructed around the suggestion that support for the Irish language is simply a political project of Sinn Féin. The first example of this type of narrative is taken from a UUP representative's contribution to a private members' debate in the Assembly:

*Since 1998, unionists have been subjected to having the Irish language forced down their throats in an uncompromising and adversarial way. How disappointing it is, therefore, in our country [...] to find conflict manufactured by an Irish-speaking minority, as represented in the House by Sinn Féin, which is forcing an obscene aggression of deliberate defiance right smack into our unionist faces (Hansard, 2007d).*

Similar arguments are also made by representatives of the DUP which suggests an ideological overlap between the unionist parties on this issue, and some evidence of outflanking strategies being played out within the pro-union bloc over the issue of minority languages:

*It is true that minority languages are part of the cultural heritage and cultural wealth of every country. The problem in regard to the Irish language is that, back in the early 1980s, at the time of the hunger strikes and soon after, when Sinn Féin started really stepping up its cultural war, we had a Sinn Féin publication that stated clearly that every word spoken in Irish was another bullet in the freedom struggle. That was talking about cultural war. It was not speaking about cultural wealth. (Hansard, 2013a).*

The competitive dynamics that have emerged between the unionist parties over the issue of the Irish language are discernible on some occasions in debates within the Assembly. Having been outflanked by the DUP, the UUP sees an opportunity to recover lost ground through exploiting agreements on language that the DUP entered into as part of the St Andrews negotiations of 2007. This is evident in the statement below made by UUP representative Danny Kennedy:

*The decision at St Andrews by the political parties — including the DUP — to introduce an Irish language Act is profoundly unsettling and potentially has very damaging implications for community relations and for respect for cultural diversity. Any person who claims that an Irish language Act would have only a positive impact on community relations demonstrates a wilful ignorance of the views that a wide range of political and community stakeholders in Northern Ireland hold. (Hansard, 2007d)*

The second line of defence in the unionist struggle to block further support for the Irish language comes in their suggestion that it is too costly a project and should not be considered a spending priority. This type of approach is evident in the quotation below that comes from a press statement made by Michelle McIlveen of the DUP:

*Any Irish Language Bill would need Executive and Assembly approval. It won't get it, therefore it won't be happening. Budgets are stretched as it is without the further expense of an Irish Language Act (Belfast Telegraph, 2011).*

More common still is a tactic of utilising the presence of ethnic minorities as a shield against the claims of Irish nationalists. This is a common device employed by unionists in order to block demands for greater support for the Irish language. The following quotes, which are taken from interviews with members of both unionist parties, serve to highlight this type of argument. The first statement comes from an interview with a representative of the UUP:

*Should we spend money? Well there are more people, speak Mandarin than Irish as their first language. So it is a language, but it is not a language of communication in the same way that French is in France (UUP3, 2013).*

This is a common defensive stratagem that is employed by both unionist parties. The quotation below was taken from an interview with a member of the DUP:

*So if there is funding to go to the Irish language, well then it would be only correct and right that we should be allocating funding for the study of other languages. To be honest with you I would much rather see a large amount of money going in to Cantonese. If we are spending hundreds of millions of pounds on encouraging outside investment from China, India, Russia let's start supporting languages that will help that process, rather than supporting languages purely for the sake of identity (DUP1, 2013).*

The quotation above suggests an argument in favour of supporting wider language diversity, but this is coupled with a rejection of measures to aid internal language diversity. In this sense, immigrant languages are used to prop up arguments against further support for internal linguistic pluralism. This section has highlighted the central issue that divides the parties in discussions on minority language policy. Divisions over the Irish language dominate inter-party debate on language policy. In this case, nationalists demand legislative action: Sinn Féin in particular utilise language as a resource to highlight their strong credentials as representatives of their ethno-national community.

Unionists by contrast, raise defences against this onslaught, arguing that Sinn Féin has weaponised the issue. More importantly, we see that unionist parties often use the new minority communities as a shield to buttress their arguments. Not only are the migrant languages ignored by nationalists, they are politicised by unionists. This cultural deadlock is further mirrored in the second part of the parity of esteem based stand-off over languages which revolves around Ulster-Scots. Here again, we see evidence of an impasse between the two primary ethnic-blocs which serves to



marginalise the language needs of ethnic minorities due to an excessive preoccupation with internal forms of linguistic diversity.

## **6.5 Ulster-Scots**

A second arc of inter-party debate associated with local minority languages has opened up around the issue of state support for Ulster-Scots. This is more often associated with the DUP than the UUP, though members of both unionist parties have utilised the issue in language debates on occasion. Support for Ulster-Scots further highlights division between civic and ethnic instincts within unionism. We often see Ulster-Scots invoked by unionists as a marker of a distinctive ethnic identity that requires state protection. Yet support for this approach is not universal across political unionism. Particularly in anonymous interviews, a significant number of unionist representatives argue that Ulster-Scots is actually a device to pursue parity in funding for the two communities, despite a lack of balance in terms of public interest when compared with the Irish language revival. Nationalists of both parties tend to be open to the idea of funding for the Ulster-Scots language. They see Ulster-Scots as non-threatening and generally tend to agree to some degree of state support. However, the issue of parity is often questioned by political representatives of nationalism, who argue that equality is not possible for a number of reasons. We will turn first to consider unionist narratives on supportive measures for Ulster-Scots.

### *6.5.1 Lack of Parity*

A common device utilised by representatives of the DUP is to equate Ulster-Scots with the Irish language and argue that the funding disparities between these two languages highlight the fact that unionist culture has lost out since the Agreement. This type of argument illustrates an example of protectionist themes associated with ethnic incarnations of unionism. The civic and ethnic splits within unionism are demarcated by the fact that a significant minority of unionist respondents did not see Ulster-Scots as a particularly important issue, arguing that it was a buttressing move made in order to block the ethnic demands of Irish nationalism. We will turn first to highlight the manner in which Ulster-Scots is utilised as a discursive resource for the support of ethnic conceptions of unionism. The first statement here is taken from a DUP representative's contribution to an Assembly debate on arts funding:

*Under the previous devolved Government, there was a substantial disparity in funding, support and commitment regarding the two languages, in that vast resources were pushed into the Irish language through Foras na Gaeilge, whereas very limited resources, coupled with many imposed difficulties, went to the Boord o Ulstèr-Scotch. Therefore, the concept of equality was not there (Hansard, 2007d).*

The following quotation is taken from the DUP manifesto for the 2007 Assembly election, highlighting the extent to which the party has made parity for Ulster-Scots a central feature in its ethnic positioning strategy:

*The DUP is committed to the promotion and development of unionist culture and cultural identity. Much good work has already been started in this area and this will continue. Over the last number of years we have witnessed the recognition and growth of the distinct and culturally rich tradition of Ulster-Scots. This area continues to require enhanced funding and support. Irish and Gaelic culture should not be allowed to dominate funding (DUP, 2007).*

These types of arguments suggest an ethnic conception of unionism being pitted against the demands for linguistic support made by Irish nationalists as discussed in the work of McAuley & Tonge (2009). A significant minority of representatives that participated in this study claimed that Ulster-Scots was not on equal par with the Irish language and that this made it difficult to be accorded equal weight. Others suggested that the campaign to support Ulster-Scots was actually a further blocking strategy to prevent funding for the Irish language. Interestingly, these types of statements rarely arose during interviews with nationalist politicians, but did occur in a handful of interviews with unionists or non-aligned politicians. For instance, the first quotation here comes from an interview that was carried out with a representative of the UUP:

*I don't have an issue with funding it, but I don't particularly like the idea that you fund one thing like Gaelic, so you have to then fund something else like Ulster-Scots or something like that. I think we could just end up dividing out*

*along those lines. I see it not in language terms, it is not equal to Gaelic. It is more like a dialect (UUP2, 2013).*

On some occasions, representatives of the DUP would similarly claim that Ulster-Scots was not in fact a language but a dialect, and that funding for Ulster-Scots was an attempt at formulating a balancing act between support for the 'two traditions':

*Well, it's a dialect rather than a language as such, I believe to some extent that the funding that has gone in to it, is to kind of salve the conscience of people who allocate funding to Irish language, so they do the same for Ulster-Scots. (DUP3, 2013).*

Certain members of the APNI argued that Ulster-Scots had been adopted by some within the unionist community to create a blocking tactic in the communal deadlock over the Irish language. This was not a widely held perspective, but occasionally came up during interviews with APNI representatives. One such example is captured in the quotation below.

*I fear that a lot of what is passing off for Ulster-Scots campaigning is almost directed on the basis that 'they have got Irish, so we must have something too. It is often used as a means to stall discussions about the Irish language (APNI3, 2013).*

In interviews with nationalists it became apparent that they were generally supportive of some degree of funding for Ulster-Scots, but this was usually paired with the suggestion that actual parity was not possible.

### *6.5.2 Parity is Unachievable*

Many nationalists argued in favour of state support for the Ulster-Scots language, though these arguments were generally made alongside the suggestion that Irish should receive greater funding, and that parity was not possible due to the lack of public interest. This is outlined in the quotation below that came from an interview with a representative of the SDLP:

*I have no problem with that. I think it is something that is worthy of support. I don't see the language as being that well supported in real terms. In terms of people actually speaking it and so forth, but the culture is there, and in a wider sense the Ulster-Scots culture is something which is of value and it should be cherished, encouraged and supported (SDLP2, 2013).*

Similar types of argument were made during interviews with representatives of Sinn Féin, as we see in the quotation below:

*I have no problem with funding things to do with culture and Ulster-Scots is part of that. The problem that happens is that some unionists have called for equal funding between Irish language and Ulster-Scots. Now, when you think that there are Irish language schools, how can you give the same funding for Ulster-Scots when there are no Ulster-Scots schools? (SF2, 2013).*

The quotation above highlights a key strand in nationalist arguments on Ulster-Scots in which it is stated that parity cannot be achieved because of an imbalance in educational provision between the internal minority languages. This is further illustrated in the exchange below in which the Sinn Féin Education Minister is taking questions from an MLA representing the DUP:

**Mr Humphrey:** *The Minister will be aware of his Department's funding and resource responsibilities for the Ulster-Scots Agency. Given what he has just said, what extra resources will he put into the education system and sectors across Northern Ireland to promote Ulster-Scots education? Indeed, given the ongoing disparity in funding between Irish and Ulster Scots, what more can he make available to help to address that?*

**Mr O'Dowd:** *My Department funds on the basis of need. The Member will be aware, and I have said this in answer to previous questions, that we have a thriving Irish-medium sector. We have over 4,000 children being taught through the medium of Irish, and that number continues to grow. We have over 20 specific Irish-medium units or schools. Unfortunately, we do not have any for Ulster Scots. (Hansard, 2014d)*

The quotation above serves to highlight the reactive dynamics that take place within the ideological posturing of the political parties in relation to language issues. While the DUP member goes on the attack using Ulster-Scots, the Sinn Féin representative defends greater funding for Irish through focussing on the disparity between demands for educational facilities associated with local minority language groups. Arguments made by both unionists and nationalists in these debates are marked by a narrow vision of linguistic diversity in the province. There is little sense of engagement with the realities of an increasingly plural society. It is only the non-aligned APNI that regularly invokes the full spectrum of minority languages in Northern Ireland. We will now move on to discuss the discursive themes that mark APNI narratives on the accommodation of linguistic diversity.

### *6.5.3 External Minority Languages*

The chapter so far has primarily focussed on a stand-off that exists between nationalists and unionists over internal minority languages. There has been little mention of ethnic minority languages. This is due to the fact that external minority language issues are largely absent from the majority of political debates on cultural accommodation in Northern Ireland. The preoccupation with internal language diversity on the part of the ethnically defined parties is further highlighted when we turn now to consider the arguments of the APNI. The APNI tends to argue in favour of wider ranging support for all minority languages spoken in the territory. This argument suggests an approach to the accommodation of linguistic diversity that seldom features in the narratives of the other parties. The first of our illustrative quotations is drawn from the APNI manifesto for the 2007 Assembly election in which the party outlines its perspective on minority languages:

*Alliance recognises the linguistic diversity within our community, and believes that all ethnic minority languages practiced in Northern Ireland deserve as much protection as local languages. Alliance believes that this is best carried out through public bodies producing language schemes rather than a rights-based approach. (APNI, 2007, p. 38)*

These arguments clearly reflect the respect for diversity outlined in approaches to multicultural approaches to the accommodation of pluralism (Parekh, 2006; Modood, 2007). Similar arguments were repeatedly made in the Assembly by APNI representatives. Most commonly, this came in the form of contributions from Anna Lo, who was the first (and only) member of an ethnic minority group elected to the Assembly:

*Much of the European human rights protections regarding languages apply only to minority languages that are indigenous to the area. That is a somewhat narrow view that neglects the much wider diversity and language need in our midst. Since the EU expansion in 2004, we have seen a huge increase in the number of migrants coming to Northern Ireland whose first language is not English. It is estimated that there are up to 80,000 migrants from across the world in Northern Ireland. It is likely that there are more people speaking Polish or Chinese than speaking Irish on a daily basis in our towns and cities. (Hansard, 2010)*

This type of argument correlates at surface level with similar statements made by unionists regarding the importance of recognising external minority languages alongside Gaélic. However, there are different incentives driving the adoption of these narratives. We shall turn in the final section of the chapter to consider the motivational drivers behind the discursive themes that have been reviewed in this chapter.

## **6.6 Discussion and Conclusions**

Through studying the politics of culture in Northern Ireland we can arrive at certain findings that are instructive in our study of how immigration affects ideological positioning in an ethnic party system. We see a number of examples of cultural diversity being used by parties as a resource in ideological positioning, or, deprived of attention when it is not considered helpful to their wider strategies. We have seen that with the exception of the APNI, there is evidence of a distinct gap between the aspirations to intercultural accommodation set out in a number of important policy documents and the exclusive ethnic defence strategies that characterise party conflict on this issue. The main patterns that we have ascertained in inter-party positioning

around culture and language are as follows. Firstly, there is evidence of a fissure between the larger tribune parties and the smaller parties around the cultural impact of immigration. Secondly, when discussing politics of language, the ethnically defined parties conduct their debates around perennial issues in Northern Irish cultural politics. Thirdly, the non-aligned APNI is the only party that provides a significant narrative focus upon the minority language groups in Northern Ireland outside of the 'two traditions' framework.

How are we to make sense of these trajectories of party positioning? Following our assumptions about the incentives that underpin party behaviour, we understand that the parties are likely to adopt strategies that maximise their potential for popular endorsement and electoral support. Further to this, we assume parties to be bound to some degree by their historical record of ideological positioning. This limits the freedom of movement available to party representatives when seeking to engage with new emerging social realities such as increasing cultural diversity. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that parties will adopt narratives on cultural accommodation that will garner electoral support, and fit with the broader ideological structures associated with the party.

Firstly, let us consider the incentives driving the distinction between the ethnic tribunes and the smaller parties. We know that the smaller parties are keen to argue that increasing diversity will change Northern Ireland by diluting traditional communal divisions. These parties, who have largely found themselves marginalised in post-agreement party politics have a vested interest in seeing communal defence narratives decrease in political salience and consequently tend to relate immigration generated diversity to the diminution of binary conceptions of culture. However, for the tribune parties who have profited electorally from being recognised as staunch defenders of their particular ethnic group, there is less incentive to argue that greater diversity had diluted cultural politics in the territory. Furthermore, when the larger parties do enter into discussion on how best to welcome and integrate new communities of citizens they assume that their own ideological priorities based upon recognition for particular forms of cultural ritual will translate into the correct approach for the management of immigrant generated diversity. This is despite the

fact that immigrant communities are likely to face different issues to those of the traditional communal groups in Northern Ireland.

Additionally, if we consider trends in public opinion it becomes even more apparent why Sinn Féin and the DUP should wish to maintain their strong stance on communal defence. In the NILT survey (2010c), when asked whether they agreed with the following statement 'It is the job of our politicians to fight the corner for the community that they come from', 46% of Catholics either agreed or strongly agreed, and 53% of Protestants either agreed or strongly agreed. This contrasts with only 28% of Catholics who disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 23% of Protestants who either disagreed or strongly disagreed (NILT, 2010c). Given the ascendancy of the tribune parties in electoral terms, this type of attitude has clearly found expression at the ballot box. The parties that have benefitted most from this situation have least incentive to see it change. While the smaller ethnically defined parties may wish to court these opinions in the same fashion that the tribune parties have, they are hamstrung by their historical ideological positioning.

Neither the SDLP, nor the UUP can suddenly switch to a strong message about their credentials as ethnic defenders without appearing to repudiate longer-standing aspects of their ideological platform as the moderates within their electoral bloc. Consequently, these parties overlap with the APNI on their suggestion that increasing diversity will help to undermine binary calculations in the cultural politics of Northern Ireland. For the APNI, increasing cultural diversity fits easily with the party's non-ethnic counterbidding strategies. In particular, demographic changes support the party's narrative about moving beyond the 'two traditions' in order to recognise the wider diversity in Northern Irish society. Consequently, the party has not had to change to any great extent in reaction to the increasingly diverse character of cultural pluralism in Northern Ireland.

The ethnically defined parties — both hard-line and moderate — fall back onto more traditional ideological refrains when faced with the issue of minority languages. We see the nationalist parties seeking to strongly advocate greater support for the Irish language, and both unionist parties building barricades against such measures. The



dynamics behind this can be explained through reference to the cultural stand-off that has emerged in Northern Irish politics since the Agreement. While support for Irish language programmes have actually been rather lukewarm in the Catholic community, data suggests that a significant number of Protestants consider the promotion of Gaélic to be a significant political issue. If we refer once more to public opinion, the staunch defensive posturing of political unionism is more understandable.

In the 2007 NILT survey when asked whether receiving a letter from the hospital that was in both English and Irish would annoy them, 55% of Protestants stated that they would feel annoyed or very annoyed, 24% of these respondents selected the 'very annoyed' option (NILT, 2007). Clearly, for a significant number of Protestants, further support for the Irish language represents something that should be resisted. Furthermore, when we consider that findings from the 2008 NILT survey suggested that 50% of Protestants felt that Catholics had benefitted disproportionately in the post agreement period, the extent of unionist intransigence over cultural issues begins to make more sense. The manner in which Irish language funding is resisted, varies in a fragmented manner across unionism, reflecting the underlying civic and ethnic splits within the movement. The civic tendency within unionism utilises themes based upon the costs of language programmes. Ethnic elements invoke Ulster-Scots and parity of esteem as a defensive strategy.

Neither unionist party can be seen to cede to the cultural claims of nationalism, but nationalists can accommodate Ulster-Scots to some extent within their platform on support for minority languages. While Sinn Féin have undoubtedly politicised the issue of the Irish language for political gain, unionists have also contributed to this through their resistance measures. The consequence of this stand-off is that minority languages, other than Gaélic and Ulster-Scots, seldom feature in political debates over language, unless they are raised as part of defensive strategem by unionists; or in the attempts of the APNI to highlight the restrictive nature the of 'two traditions' framework.

## **Chapter 7: Racism**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides an in-depth view into party political debates on racism in Northern Ireland. It has been established earlier in the thesis that politicians in Northern Ireland have historically been slow to respond to the realities of racism, due to excessive preoccupation with constitutional issues in the province and a perception that there were no significant ethnic groups outside the primary communities (Hainsworth, 1998). However, in the period under consideration in this thesis, racism has given rise to a number of high profile incidents and has increasingly become a driver of hate crime in the territory (Knox, 2011).

The question that we have asked is how the parties have approached this issue and what impact racism has had in the operations of inter-party debate? Drawing on interview data, and other qualitative sources, the chapter highlights the discursive contours that have emerged as the parties have been faced with evidence of the increasing prominence of racism in Northern Ireland. In the first section, it will be shown that there is a cross-party condemnation of racist attacks in the province, and a general agreement that there is a connection between racism and sectarianism in Northern Ireland. This relationship between racism and sectarianism is the subject of some controversy amongst academics that have studied the Northern Irish context,

and these findings will be considered in the light of such debates throughout (Geoghegan, 2010; McVeigh, 2014; Gilligan, 2017).

The chapter highlights the fact that narratives on racism have become enmeshed with the politics of bi-nationalism in the territory. There is evidence of issues related to immigration and increasing diversity becoming employed as a sword and shield in the melee of inter-party conflict. This is to say that there are signs of traditional ideological structures absorbing the politics of racism in Northern Ireland. It will be shown that Irish nationalists, particularly Sinn Féin, feel some degree of issue ownership when discussing racism; though this is contested by the APNI who have utilised racism in a different fashion in order to critique the lack of progress made by the tribune parties in tackling discrimination (Petrocik, 1996; Riker, 1996). Both nationalist parties and APNI representatives are keen to emphasise the widespread nature of racism and to highlight it as a significant social problem. In this sense, we see evidence of a crossover in nationalist and non-aligned narratives on racism. However, Sinn Féin differs from the APNI and the SDLP in that the party often utilises racial discrimination and hate crime as a means to prosecute attacks on political unionism.

Firstly, this arises in narratives that explicitly relate the racist incidents perpetrated on immigrants with the suggestion that the Northern Irish sub-state is an innately racist entity. Secondly, Sinn Féin representatives will often draw connections between loyalists and racially motivated incidents. Thirdly, we see the party explicitly argue that unionist politicians are failing to provide leadership in tackling racism within their community. Finally, Sinn Féin politicians will often tend to argue that their party is leading in the fight against racism, thereby juxtaposing their own efforts with the characterisation of passivity amongst the other parties. It will be argued that by adopting this aggressive strategy, republicans have weaponised racism as a tool for the prosecution of ideological warfare. The effect of this is to push unionists into a defensive posture, thereby hampering the possibility of a balanced and reasonable discussion on how best to tackle the racism that has afflicted Northern Irish society.

The second section of the chapter argues that when faced with this ideological onslaught from republicans, unionists adopt a number of linguistic shields to limit debates on racism. On occasion, this takes the form of the type of straight-out denials of the existence of racism that were originally discussed in the work of Hainsworth (1998) and McVeigh (1998). More often, unionists use the traditional argument that racism is not prevalent in Northern Ireland because of the deeply ingrained sectarianism that has afflicted the society. When forced to engage with racism, unionists are strongly condemnatory. However, there is evidence to suggest that due to the dominance of nationalism in engaging with racism, unionists would rather avoid the issue if possible. This type of strategy highlights the other side of the 'issue ownership' dynamic whereby if one party is perceived to own an issue, other groups will tend to avoid it. Within the unionist/nationalist axes of party competition, Sinn Féin exhibit a significant degree of ownership over racism issues and unionist parties seek to limit its discussion (Petrocik, 1996; Riker, 1996).

The data gathered in this research serves to paint a picture of political unionism as uncomfortable with addressing the issues of racism and racial discrimination. It will be argued that the robust verbal assaults mounted by Sinn Féin representatives, combined with the counter measures taken by unionists, have created a form of discursive deadlock between the two primary ideological groupings. Given the consociational institutional framework within which these parties operate, this has unsurprisingly led to areas of stalemate and slow progress in formulating a joined-up approach to tackling racism during the period of our study. Frustration with this deadlock is evident when we examine the narratives of the non-aligned APNI, and to some extent, those of the smaller ethnic parties.

The final section of this chapter will be used to outline the sense of frustration that is stressed by members of the non-aligned APNI when discussing racism in Northern Ireland. While Sinn Féin can be characterised as owning racism within unionist/nationalist dimensions of inter-party positioning, the APNI has sought to liberate the issue for a counterbidding critique of the ethnic tribunes within the small/large axes of party competition. What will be highlighted here is the fact that there are distinct differences in the approach of the APNI to racism that are not

evident when discussing racism with members of the other political parties. Firstly, there is evidence of a tendency to focus not just upon the high profile racist incidents that have made headlines in Northern Ireland through recent years, but to discuss the widespread, low-level racism that they perceive to be common place in Northern Irish society. Secondly, in the period studied, there was a palpable sense of frustration with the inability of the OFMDFM parties to find commonality on tackling racism.

It must be noted that these frustration-based narratives were not exclusive to the APNI, but were also manifested in certain contributions made by members of the SDLP and the UUP. It will be argued that this provides further evidence of the manner in which the smaller parties are increasingly overlapping in some areas of inter-party debate due to shared strategic calculations. Furthermore, it serves to highlight the incredibly tight ideological space that is occupied by the smaller ethnic parties who are squeezed between the tribunes and the cross-communal APNI. These arguments will be developed further as the chapter progresses, but in the first instance we will turn to examine an element of cross party unity that is centred upon a shared condemnation of racism.

## **7.2 Cross-party Condemnation of Racism**

One of the first things that should be highlighted when discussing the manner in which political representatives have engaged with racism in Northern Ireland, is the cross-party unity on condemning racially motivated hate crimes. Representatives of all parties were strong and unified in affirming their contempt for racist behaviour. This arose on a number of occasions in Assembly debates on issues related to racism. The following quotations serve to highlight the extent of this cross-party consensus. The first statement comes from a representative of the DUP during a contribution to an Assembly debate on racist attacks:

*Racism should have no place in our society. I am unequivocal in my condemnation of attacks that have happened in recent days, as are all of my colleagues. It is deeply concerning when we look at recent figures released by the PSNI and see that there has been a 30.9% increase in racist incidents in the last 12 months. (Hansard, 2014c)*

Similar statements were made by representatives of the UUP during debates within the Assembly on racially motivated attacks in 2009, following the eviction of members of the Roma community from South Belfast by elements operating within loyalist paramilitary organisations:

*No right-thinking person could fail to be appalled by the racist attacks in Belfast in recent weeks, and like all other parties, the Ulster Unionist Party roundly condemns them. On behalf of my party, I express to the Roma people our profound sympathy and horror at what took place. (Hansard, 2009a)*

The quotation below serves to highlight further consensus in an Assembly contribution made by an APNI representative:

*The Alliance Party will, of course, support the motion. I welcome the opportunity that it gives to all MLAs to take a clear, united and unequivocal stand against racism and to consider how we work together to eradicate prejudice from our community. It is right that we condemn racism, stand united against it and show leadership, but it is also vital that we see real action. (Hansard, 2014c)*

Moderate nationalists shared in this cross-party condemnation of racism, as we see in the quotation below taken from a statement made by a member of the SDLP:

*I welcome the junior Minister's news. Does he agree that minority ethnic communities unfortunately remain the target of vile racism from certain sections? Will he join me in condemning the distribution of a racist leaflet in south Belfast over the weekend by the National Front? (Hansard, 2012b)*

Finally, Sinn Féin were also strong in their censure of racist behaviour. This is evident in the quotation below taken from an Assembly discussion on an incident that witnessed members of the Roma community in Northern Ireland being evicted from their homes by racists in South Belfast:

*In the past number of weeks, there is no doubt that our society has once again been disgraced and scandalised, and it is unfortunate that that is with good reason. There is no question or doubt in our minds that the images of families having to gather their belongings, be bussed into church halls, spread mattresses and makeshift mattresses in community halls in order to get a roof over their heads and some type of protection are nothing short of an absolute disgrace (Hansard, 2009a)*

Given this wide-ranging consensus over the rejection of racist behaviour in Northern Ireland, we might tend to assume that measures to deal with racism may be politically uncontroversial. However, in reality, this does not tend to be the case. This is largely because of an unhelpful tendency amongst the ethnically defined parties to connect the issues of racism and sectarianism which serves to provide a contested dimension to such discussions. This evidence has clear impact on debate between scholars as to whether sectarianism should be considered as a variety of racism (Brewer, 1992; McVeigh, 2014). It illustrates a tendency for sectarianism to dominate discussion of prejudice and violence aimed at immigrant communities. This discursive relationship between racism and sectarianism is evident in the quotations below in which representatives of the ethnically defined parties tend to equate the two issues as a pair.

### **7.3 Racism Linked with Sectarianism**

A recurring theme in the narratives of the parties studied, is a trend of presenting racism and sectarianism as being closely linked. This was occasionally present in the narratives of APNI members, but featured more often in discussions with representatives of the ethnically defined parties. In order to highlight this common practice, the section below provides examples taken from statements made by members of the tribune parties and the smaller ethnic parties. The first example was taken from a Sinn Féin representative's contribution to an Assembly debate on racism and sectarianism in 2009:

*As Members said, we are debating the twin evils of sectarianism and racism. The recent sectarian murder of Kevin McDaid, the attempted murder of Damian*

*Fleming and the sight of the Roma families being forced from their homes indicate that we need to do more to tackle sectarianism and racist bigots (Hansard, 2009a).*

The pattern of equating racism closely with sectarianism is also mirrored in the following statement, which is taken from an Assembly contribution made by a representative of the SDLP:

*Sectarianism and racism are simply two sides of the one coin and the one evil, which is intolerance and bigotry. It is incumbent on all of us, particularly those in high office, to show leadership. If we do not show leadership, then we are letting down the whole community and letting down those from an ethnic background who come to live here as our guests and our citizens. (Hansard, 2014c).*

In the example below, we see a representative of the UUP utilise a similar connection between racism and sectarianism during a debate about tackling anti-social behaviour at sporting events:

*The Ulster Unionists welcome the opportunity to debate sectarianism, racism and violence in sport [...]. Such incidents have no place in sport or society, and must be stopped. Although I support the introduction of legislation to stop the ugliness of sectarianism and racist abuse, I suspect that enforcing such laws will not be an easy task (Hansard, 2007c).*

Here, we see the coupling of the two issues in a statement made by the former First Minister and Leader of the DUP, Peter Robinson, when discussing racism:

*Specifically, tackling the twin blights of sectarianism and racism, in addition to other forms of intolerance, is essential in shaping a shared and cohesive community equipped to face the challenges of an ever-changing world. (Hansard, 2013b).*



While the coupling of the two issues of racism and sectarianism may seem to make sense, given their shared characteristics, this approach has been condemned by anti-racist campaigners in Northern Ireland. For instance, in the following statement Patrick Yu the former executive director of NICEM, stated that this type of approach would create problems for ethnic minority communities:

*Separate provision exists in law, and police practices, to cover issues of sectarianism, and that is welcome, but using race relations legislation would in our view distract from the very real needs and concerns of the minority ethnic community in NI (Yu, cited in Devenport, 2011).*

It has been argued earlier in the thesis that the close equation of racism and sectarianism should be avoided. Despite the fact that racism and sectarianism exhibit similar traits, the exceptional position of sectarianism in Northern Ireland, means that to classify it as a form of racism has the potential to obscure policy measures aimed at the protection of ethnic minority communities. It is likely to embroil such matters in long-standing, historical controversies. Furthermore, as we will see in the following sections, racism has the potential to become a resource in the prosecution of traditional ideological competition if it is not explicitly demarcated as a distinctive issue. In order to highlight the potential for racism to become intertwined with existing patterns of ideological conflict in an ethnically defined party system, it is useful for us to begin by examining the narratives of the nationalist parties on racism, and analysing the manner in which the issue is weaponised by republicans in attacks on political unionism.

## **7.4 Nationalism**

### *7.4.1 Racism is a Big Issue*

Irish nationalists of both parties were keen to suggest that racism was a significant issue facing Northern Ireland. In some instances, they focussed on specific high profile incidents in order to make their case. Generally speaking, the representatives of both nationalist parties were keen to discuss racism: confident in their assertion that it was a widespread problem in the territory. The research clearly suggests that nationalists, particularly Sinn Féin, own the issue of racism in a manner described in

the work of Petrocik (1996). The first statement that highlights this theme was made in an interview carried out with a representative of the SDLP:

*Racism is a significant issue yes, it has manifested itself by people being pulled out of their homes. There have been cases of that in a number of different places. There was an incident that I remember about three or four years ago when the Roma community were targeted by racists and removed from their homes. (SDLP2, 2013).*

If we turn to review evidence taken from interviews taken with Sinn Féin representatives, it is apparent that they tend to agree with the suggestion that racism has become an important political issue facing contemporary Northern Ireland. For instance, consider the quotation below taken from an interview with a representative of Sinn Féin:

*Oh it's a massive problem. We have seen that some people have a serious problem with immigrants and this has raised its head in terms of violence in some cases. I think that there is a need for greater leadership, both from the police and from the political institutions to try and help to tackle racism (SF3, 2013)*

Representatives of both nationalist parties clearly felt comfortable discussing racism in a manner that was not shared by the majority of unionist politicians interviewed in this study. Members of the nationalist parties tended to agree that racism was a big problem in Northern Ireland, and they often chose to invoke evidence of high profile racist attacks in order to support their arguments. However, in many instances, responses to racism seemed to suggest that the topic had been fashioned by Sinn Féin as a linguistic weapon to attack unionists. One of the first areas in which they moved away from the narratives shared by members of the SDLP was the equation of recent racist attacks with anti-Irish racism in the province.

#### *7.4.2 Anti-Irish Racism*

When discussing racism with representatives of Sinn Féin, a common linguistic device was evident in their attempts to connect recent evidence of racist attacks with their

broader narrative about the discriminatory nature of the Northern Irish sub-state. Through equating racist attacks carried out upon ethnic minorities with traditional forms of anti-Irish discrimination in Northern Ireland, they laid the groundwork for a more concerted attack on political unionism. The quotation below comes from a Sinn Féin representative's contribution to an Assembly discussion on race relations, it makes the argument that the Northern Irish sub-state is itself a racist entity:

*Racism has its own history in the North. The Six-County statelet has been subordinated to British rule. Britain has notable race problems, which the British state was obliged to recognise after the death of Stephen Lawrence, and the Macpherson inquiry identified institutional racism. We in Ireland have been part of Britain's colonial history, and partition established an institutional sectarian and racist state. (Hansard, 2009c)*

By using these types of arguments, Sinn Féin representatives are shifting discussions of racist attacks aimed at the new ethnic minorities onto their preferred ideological terrain. A tendency that commonly arose in the interviews was for Sinn Féin representatives to intertwine the racist attacks carried out on immigrants with anti-Irish racism:

*I think there is racism against ethnic minorities, and there is racism against people who consider themselves Irish. It is dangerous. There have been a lot of racist attacks, and I know some people who are very scared by it. I do believe that Sinn Féin is leading from the front on this in relation to anti-racism. There is too much tolerance of it (SF1, 2013).*

This association of the racism experienced by migrant minorities, and that of the local Irish/Catholic/nationalist community, was a recurring pattern in discussions with Sinn Féin and is used to form the foundations of an attack focussed upon loyalism and political unionism. We can begin to see this groundwork being laid when we consider the quotation below:

*We feel as republicans that the loyalist reaction to our Irishness is a form of racism. This fear of people being different, naturally then extends to other minorities who choose to settle here (SF4, 2013).*

With this argument outlined, Sinn Féin representatives then move on to articulate their suggestion that loyalism is the home of racist attitudes in Northern Ireland. It is at this point that we begin to see the issue of racism become weaponised in order to prosecute overt attacks on ideological rivals.

#### *7.4.3 Racism and Loyalism*

One of the recurring refrains employed by Sinn Féin representatives when discussing racism is to argue that racial prejudice is particularly acute amongst members of the loyalist community. They are aided in this endeavour by the fact that the majority of racist incidents have occurred in areas traditionally understood to be loyalist territories (McVeigh & Rolston, 2007). Their strategy is to paint a picture of loyalists as narrow-minded bigots, and of their political representatives engaging in a passive acceptance of racist attitudes. When discussing racism, there is a definite inclination on the part of republicans to use the issue to support political offensives. This type of pattern becomes obvious when we consider the statements below:

*Unfortunately some people in the loyalist community don't like anybody who isn't the same as them. They don't like different cultures, whether that is the Irish culture, or that of the immigrant communities (SF3, 2013).*

In the Assembly, former Deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness, brought this argument to the fore in his suggestion that loyalist groups were directly responsible for racist attacks occurring in Belfast during the sharp spike in such incidents that occurred in 2013-2014:

*It is about time that leading spokespersons from the unionist benches who say that they condemn attacks on isolated eastern Europeans or attacks on Alliance Party offices, be those attacks because of racism or sectarianism, stood up and told the public whom they believe are responsible [...]. I have made it crystal clear in the course of recent times that a lot of the violence*

*that has occurred on the streets of Belfast has been orchestrated by elements in the UVF, with some assistance from elements in the Orange Order (Hansard, 2014f).*

This representation of the loyalist community ties in with the Sinn Féin's broader party narratives upon the discriminatory nature of unionism and the persecution experienced by the Irish community in the Northern sub-state. The suggestion that loyalist communities have a propensity towards the adoption of racist attitudes also extends into an attack on political unionism for a suggested failure to engage with discriminatory attitudes and actions emanating from their support base. This is evident in the quotation below that was taken from an interview with a representative of Sinn Féin:

*I'm not sure how much unionists are willing to challenge some of their own policy base, or some of their more conservative elements of their electorate on the issue of racism. I think that the representatives of political unionism do reject racism, but that doesn't always translate in to an outright rejection of racist attitudes (SF4, 2013).*

These types of political attacks were made nearly exclusively by representatives of Sinn Féin and should be understood as a distinctive party narrative that was not shared by members of The SDLP. Representatives of The SDLP were strong in their condemnation of racism and their recognition of its widespread nature, but did not engage in the same type of anti-loyalist rhetoric that characterised the arguments of Sinn Féin representatives. A further feature of Sinn Féin narratives was to characterise their own party as a staunch proponent of anti-racism in Northern Ireland.

#### *7.4.4 Tackling Racism*

Sinn Féin, as a party, clearly relish the opportunity to discuss racism, it offers them the opportunity to employ powerful linguistic attacks on unionism and to present themselves as the ardent champions of anti-racism. The following statement provides an example of the manner in which Sinn Féin have sought to position the party as the self-proclaimed agent of anti-racism in Northern Ireland:

*The past few weeks and, indeed, months have been difficult for many in our communities, those who have come to live in the North to make a better life for themselves and their families. Those people deserve a future in our country in the same way as Irish people who have travelled and worked abroad in every continent also deserved a future. Sinn Féin brings this motion to the Assembly because we understand the importance of sending out a clear, unambiguous, strong message that there is zero tolerance of racism in all its forms in our society. Where it surfaces, it needs to be challenged and action taken, whether it is on social media, on our streets, in the workplace or in our communities (Hansard, 2014c).*

These types of statement were echoed in a number of interviews with Sinn Féin representatives. One such example is captured in the quotation below:

*I hear varying forms of racism, which I challenge. In the same way I challenge sexism or homophobia. Our party is very strong, on tackling discrimination. We are leading the way on same-sex marriage, we are progressive. In terms of racism for instance, we recently had a situation in Belfast where some Filipino nurses experienced racist jibes in their local street. We immediately approached the racists, we isolated them and said 'this is not on'. We challenged it, and I think that's what is different with Sinn Féin. Is there racism? Yes. How do we tackle it? Head on. (SF2, 2013)*

Sinn Féin clearly feel that when discussing the issue of racism, they have political unionism on the ropes. Their argument is supported by the fact that evidence does tend to suggest that the majority of racist incidents take place in loyalist areas (Rolston, 2004; Macdonald, 2006). The effect of this type of linguistic attack is to push unionists onto the back foot when discussing racism, preventing the possibility for a reasoned, balanced discussion. While republicans tend to land blows on unionism through employing these narratives, unionists adopt blocking strategies that serve to stifle or redirect conversations about racism. This is something that we will turn to explore in the next section of the chapter.

## 7.5 Unionism

### 7.5.1 Avoidance Strategies

When surveying the data drawn from representatives of political unionism, a pattern emerges that suggests their collective discomfort in discussing racism. While unionists are often strong in their condemnation of high-profile racist incidents it is not one of their favoured areas of discussion. Again, this seems to follow the pattern of issue ownership as described by Petrocik (1996). In this instance, because nationalists are dominant in this area, with Sinn Féin in particular using the issue as a means to make political capital, unionists prefer to avoid this area of discussion where possible.

Particularly during interviews, it was apparent that avoidance strategies were employed to try and shut the conversation down, or to twist the discussion in other directions away from racism. This tended to take the form of a complete closing-down approach in which the participant would say virtually nothing, or the adoption of conversational shifting measures that would move the discussion in other directions. Furthermore, there were a number of instances in which racism was compared to sectarianism and allocated a lesser order of priority for political action.

### 7.5.2 Racism Diminution

Members of both unionist parties generally coalesced around arguments that suggested racism is not particularly widespread, and is the preserve of a tiny minority of people. The evidence here suggests a significant degree of continuity with the politics of racism described in the work of Hainsworth (1998) and McVeigh (1998). This tendency is highlighted through an examination of the following statements, the first of which was made during an interview with a member of the UUP:

*Well clearly we have had problems in parts of Belfast, also in the Portadown area, and more recently in Coleraine, where someone from a Chinese background was attacked. There have been a few isolated incidents, there are certain pockets, where it would occur, but it certainly isn't something I'm aware of from my own constituency. I don't know if we are less racist here or if there are just so few people from other countries that there is less*

*opportunity for that sort of behaviour. Or, are we so busy fighting each other in political battles that there is no time to worry about someone from another place? (UUP4, 2013).*

We see similar emphases brought in to play in this statement that was made by a member of the DUP. Again the focus here is placed on a particular case and accompanied with a broader suggestion that racism is not particularly common or widespread in the territory:

*Well, because we are such a homogenous society it doesn't really raise its head. We have had some problems with attacks on Roma, in South Belfast a few years ago. It may happen, but I suppose to some extent if you are in a situation where the native, Northern Irish population is so dominant, racism hasn't really affected us so far. It would be wrong to say that there is no racism, all I will say is that where I'm from in Northern Ireland it is very down at the bottom of concerns. (DUP3, 2013).*

An unusual line of argument that was utilised by some members of both of the unionist parties was the suggestion that violence and abuse towards ethnic minorities may not be fuelled by racism but a general dislike of difference. The logic of this is confusing, it would seem to suggest that these political representatives are saying that the perpetrators of such crimes are not inspired by racism, but a rejection of anyone different, which is hardly more justifiable than racism. This is akin to saying, that the individuals who carry out racist actions are somehow exonerated because they have a similar level of disdain for everyone, thereby achieving a kind of equality in their rejection of difference. These types of argument were articulated by a small minority of representatives from both of the unionist parties. This is evident when we turn to consider the quotations below, the first of which came from an interview with a member of the DUP:

*I think at times some people may choose to dislike anyone from outside their own community. I don't think that is necessarily the same thing as racism. Also, you do sometimes hear about things like people in Chinese restaurants*



*being insulted by customers, though it may be with drink, they would probably slag off anyone who was serving them at that moment (DUP3, 2013).*

Similar sentiments were also expressed in a number of interviews with UUP representatives. One such example is located in the statement below in which the respondent also invokes a narrative based on territorial ownership of specific areas as discussed in the work of Shirlow and Murtagh (2006):

*With the arrival of immigrants from abroad, some are accepted, and some aren't. Generally this has nothing to do with the colour of their skin, but because if local people wish to remain in an area near their family and their community, they can't always understand why a Polish person's need may be greater than theirs. It is not because the person is Polish, it is the fact they are not from this neighbourhood (UUP3, 2013).*

This pool of evidence seems to suggest two things. Firstly, that despite evidence of obvious, high-profile racist incidents in Northern Ireland throughout the last decade, and a general upward trend in the reporting of hate crimes based on racial distinctions, a significant number of unionist representatives are still keen to downplay the extent of racism. This may come through suggestions that racism is not widespread, or arguments that such incidents should not be classified as racism, but that they should be understood as a broader rejection of difference and hostility to outsiders. Secondly, we see evidence of territorial conceptions of particular areas invoked in order to explain racist actions in loyalist areas. When pressed to engage with racism in public debate, unionists will often discuss the troubles as an example of anti-Protestant/British racism in Northern Ireland, further highlighting the connection between debates over racism and the sense of territorial decline in loyalist communities.

### *7.5.3 Anti-Protestant Racism*

A further line of defence adopted by some unionists when in direct debate with nationalists, is the suggestion that Protestants have been the victim of racist attacks and discriminatory treatment by republicans. This particular argument did not feature during the interviews carried out with unionist politicians, but has surfaced on a

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number of occasions during Assembly debates on racism. The first example of this type of strategy was utilised in a debate on racist attacks in 2014. In this instance, a DUP representative articulates this argument as a blocking measure when confronted by a Sinn Féin member over the extent of unionist political leadership in the fight against racism:

*I will take no comments at all from Sinn Féin Members in here about anything to do with racism, after 30 years of a terrorist campaign that thrived on a racist attack on anybody who was British and not Irish (Hansard, 2014g).*

Another argument that was invoked by unionists during debates on racism was the suggestion that the Protestant community had endured ethnic cleansing by nationalists in certain parts of Northern Ireland. The quotations below illustrate this type of argument being made by representatives of both unionist parties. The first quotation comes from a UUP member during an Assembly debate on race relations:

*The Protestant community is only too aware that people throughout the Province, particularly those who live in border areas, have suffered ethnic cleansing. For many years, members of the Province's Protestant community have been targeted, murdered, bombed and put out of their homes (Hansard, 2009c).*

Similar arguments were used by DUP representatives over the contentious issue of flags in Northern Ireland. The contribution below came from one such debate in the Assembly that followed on from the civil unrest after the decision to restrict the flying of the Union Flag on Belfast City Hall to designated days:

*Given that we are talking about the flying of flags, the identity that people have and how they show affinity to their national identity, it is a bit rich if people lecture people about how magnanimous they are, whether it is in Londonderry or anywhere else, when an entire population has been systematically ethnically cleansed from one side of that city. (Hansard, 2014h).*

Collectively, this evidence from debates between nationalists and unionists over the issue of racism, highlights the manner in which such discussions become entangled with long-standing communal divisions. We have seen that Sinn Féin will frequently utilise high-profile racist incidents in order to support their condemnation of the partition of Ireland, elements in the loyalist community, and political unionism. We have also seen evidence of unionist counter strategies whereby the significance of racism is diminished or debates are shifted onto a discussion of republican violence in the territory. These arguments clearly reflect some sense of the perceptions of territorial decline and anxiety amongst certain sections of the unionist community (Shirlow & Murtagh, 2006). However, when we turn to review the arguments of the APNI, we see a different emphasis placed on tackling racism. In some cases these non-aligned arguments are supported by sections of the SDLP and the UUP. This evidence seems to be suggestive of a degree of cross-party overlap in this area. The last section of findings will discuss the narratives on racism articulated by APNI representatives and highlight a degree of correlation across the smaller parties.

## **7.6 APNI**

### *7.6.1 Low-Level Racism*

An interesting line of discussion often emerged in conversations with APNI representatives that did not come up in interviews with other party representatives. This was a focus on the prevalence of background racism. There is a degree of crossover with nationalist narratives in terms of a shared consensus on the widespread nature of racism in Northern Ireland; yet there are distinct differences evident when we delve further into the specific arguments made by APNI representatives. When discussing racism with the majority of respondents from the ethnic parties, their narratives would either focus on some of the large scale, high profile racist incidents that have taken place in Northern Ireland, or they would seek to portray Northern Ireland as relatively racism-free. Members of the APNI would contrast from these positions, often placing a distinct emphasis on their perception of widespread, low level, background forms of racism. This type of distinctive narrative is evident when we turn to consider the quotations below, which provide examples of common conversational refrains located in interviews with members of the APNI:

*Certainly it is still out there, people's experiences in schools and in the workplace are often quite negative. People experience the thoughtless casual racist language too often. Most racism is low-key, but there are those groups who would attack people on the street. Such attacks are rare, but the fear of them, that people live with would be significant (APNI4, 2013).*

The emphasis on background racism is also present in the quotation below, which again was taken from an interview with a representative of the APNI:

*There is a kind of low-level harassment, not always the out and out, breaking down the doors, breaking windows and spraying graffiti all round incidents that you hear about in the news. It's mostly young lads about eleven or twelve years old, daring each other. They see it as a game, like there are no consequences from calling people names or throwing stones or whatever (APNI1, 2013).*

This type of narrative was a commonplace feature of interviews carried out with members of the APNI: similar themes were seldom repeated in interviews carried out with the representatives of the ethnically defined political parties. This highlights a divergence in the approach of APNI members from the other parties. The APNI has made progress on tackling racism, in all of its forms, a central part of their condemnation of the political deadlock that has characterised Northern Irish politics since the peace agreement. As such, it can be identified as an example of the manner in which narratives on racism have become a feature of the positioning strategy adopted by the APNI. This type of argument finds a more full-bodied expression when we turn to examine another element of APNI narratives on the politics of racism. This time the focus is upon the party's sense of frustration with the tribune parties that have occupied the OFMDFM since 2007.

### *7.6.2 Frustration Narratives*

Another key feature of APNI arguments in the period under study, was a sense of frustration at the lack of legislative action aimed at tackling racism. The data collected for this thesis were mostly drawn from the period in between the scrapping of *The* 203

*Shared Future* framework and the accompanying *Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland: 2005-2010* (OFMDFM, 2005a: OFMDFM 2005b), and the introduction of *The Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025* in the province (OFMDFM, 2015). A recurring feature of the party's discussions of racism was to argue that the focus on racial equality had become lost in the continuing executive stand-off between Sinn Féin and the DUP. This is evident when we turn to examine the statements below, the first of which was taken from a press release made by an APNI representative:

*Following the recent rise in hate crimes across Northern Ireland, with two or three incidents being reported to the police on a daily basis, there is an urgent need for the First and deputy First Ministers to publish the long awaited Racial Equality Strategy. The lack of a well-resourced Government policy to tackle racism has created a vacuum where there is neither political leadership nor departmental actions to address prejudice, promote community relations and protect ethnic minorities (APNI Website, 2014a).*

To a large extent, Chris Lyttle and Anna Lo formed something of a duo on pushing issues of racism and racial equality in the period under consideration. The following quotation was taken from a press statement made by Anna Lo of the APNI in the aftermath of high profile racist incidents in Belfast, again highlighting dissatisfaction with the activities of the OFMDFM:

*The Assembly just recently passed an Alliance amendment calling for the urgent publication of the Racial Equality Strategy which we have been waiting on for seven years. The First and deputy First Ministers cannot delay this important strategy any longer. Thousands of people attended two rallies in Belfast and gave a clear message that they wanted this strategy published now (APNI Website, 2014b).*

It must be noted that while these types of argument were articulated most commonly by APNI representatives, there is some evidence of the smaller, ethnically defined parties adopting similar strategies in order to attack the dominant tribunes for their

lack of leadership on tackling racism. For instance, consider the following statements made by an SDLP member and a UUP representative during an Assembly debate. There are clear areas of overlap between the smaller parties in relation to these issues. The first statement comes from a contribution made a member of the SDLP:

*I would accept the emotion that the junior Minister demonstrated on the radio this morning if mountains of work had been progressed by the DUP on racial discrimination and attacks. We do not need emotion on our airwaves; we need leadership, vision and ambition for all living and visiting here. However, the stagnation around the racial equality strategy not only highlights one of the fundamental problems of the two-party stranglehold but how a lack of appropriate Executive urgency around fundamental matters can act to the detriment of people here and those who visit (Hansard, 2014c).*

There are similar elements of discursive correlation in the quotation below that was taken from a contribution made a UUP representative:

*I have not been proud of the fact that we cannot achieve half the things we want to achieve because we are not getting it back down from OFMDFM. We need that racial equality strategy today and everything coming back down to us so that we can actually get on with making Northern Ireland a better place (Hansard, 2014c).*

What these quotations collectively highlight is the tendency of the smaller parties to overlap in their condemnation of the OFMDFM parties' inability to make progress on tackling racism. Once again, this serves to suggest the foundations of a shared position on issues related to immigration, cultural difference and racism. The final part of this chapter will now turn to provide concluding remarks and discuss the motivations that have helped to shape the contours of inter-party debate on racism as they have emerged in Northern Ireland.

## **7.7 Conclusion and Discussion**

This chapter has provided an overview of key trends in the politics of racism in Northern Ireland and used illustrative examples in order to highlight the central

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narratives of the political parties on these issues. In the first instance, we have noted that all of the parties are strong in their condemnation of racism when it arises in the form of high-profile incidents in the territory. At first sight, we may assume that this cross-party consensus on the rejection of racism might provide a basis from which all of the major parties could work towards anti-racism policies in an uncontroversial fashion. However, during the period of our study, racism became enmeshed and intertwined into the conflicting narratives that marked inter-party debate. This situation led to a long stand-off in which the racial equality strategy for the territory was replaced by a policy vacuum for a period that lasted eight years.

We have seen that nationalists feel comfortable discussing racism and highlighting it as a significant social issue in Northern Ireland. However, Sinn Féin take this problem and utilise it to support longer-standing party narratives about the discriminatory nature of the Northern sub-state, the loyalist community, and unionist politicians. Unionists react to this by seeking to stifle debates over racism through discursive blocking strategies, or to redirect discussions of racism into a portrayal of the Protestant community as victims of territorial displacement during the troubles. Again, this strategy twists the issue of racism to fit within well-established processes of ideological positioning in the melee of inter-party conflict in Northern Ireland.

The APNI stand apart from the ethnically defined parties through widening the discussion to take low-level racism into account. They also express a narrative of frustration with the OFMDFM stalemate on racial equality that is partially supported by elements within the smaller ethnic parties. How might we interpret these trends in light of party competition theories? We understand that parties seek to recruit popular support in order to gain access to the levers of office, yet they are bound to some degree by their previous trends in ideological positioning. Hence, we should expect parties to court public opinion using linguistic refrains that fit within their existing ideological frameworks.

Existing research into the extent of racial prejudice in Northern Ireland provides a degree of insight into why the parties may have chosen to adopt the strategies discussed earlier in the chapter. Data taken from the NILT survey into prejudicial

attitudes suggests that Protestants are far more likely than Catholics to self-report as being prejudiced. Details derived from the 2005 NILT, suggested that 33% of Protestants self-reported as being either 'very prejudiced' or a 'little prejudiced' against people from ethnic minority communities (Gilligan & Lloyd, 2006, p. 1). This research also highlighted a tendency amongst voters for unionist parties to be prejudiced against ethnic minorities. For instance, 46% of DUP supporters and 31% of UUP surveyed admitted to being prejudiced to some extent, this contrasts with 21% of SDLP voters and 19% of Sinn Féin and APNI voters (Gilligan & Lloyd, 2006, p. 2). Statistics such as these would undoubtedly impact on the ideological positioning strategies of parties that wish to compete for the support of the unionist electorate. While this does not translate into openly hostile narratives towards ethnic minority communities, it limits the potential for unionist politicians to pursue anti-racism as a central plank in their ideological platform. Consequently, unionist politicians would rather limit discussions of racism than to lead the debate.

Nationalists and centrists, by contrast, have less concerns about racial prejudice amongst their core electorate. Furthermore, given that nationalists have traditionally drawn on the depiction of the Northern sub-state as a discriminatory entity, in which the Catholic minority has been persecuted by the Protestant majority, it is not a huge leap for Sinn Féin to connect historic injustice with contemporary hate-crimes. When pushed, unionists respond to these allegations invoking their own narratives of communal victimisation that occurred during the troubles. Ultimately, this clash has created a discursive stand-off that has proven unhelpful in supporting the needs of ethnic minority communities. For the APNI, racism serves to support their long-standing narratives about a lack of tolerance for difference in certain sections of the community in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, the lack of progress on the racial equality strategy provides an evidential basis for their claims that post-agreement politics has led to deadlock in Northern Ireland. Finally, the party has enjoyed a degree of comparative advantage in this area due to the election of minority community spokesperson, Anna Lo, as an APNI MLA. This has proven a benefit to the APNI when discussing such issues and at least partially explains why the party is keen to push this area of debate.



Finally, there is evidence to suggest a degree of correlation between the smaller parties around the frustration narratives that are most commonly expressed by the APNI. Interestingly, this suggests another example of strategic overlap between the parties that have performed less successfully in the electoral politics of post-agreement Northern Ireland. The stand-off over racial equality legislation has clearly served to provide an impetus for these parties to share in a joined condemnation of the two party dominance of the executive. This type of crossover, on an issue that stands outside of the traditional ethnically defined politics of the territory, represents the manner in which the smaller parties are seeking to gain competitive advantage through an attack on the tribunes for lack of progress. This is similar to the type of crossover that was evident when we discussed attitudes to immigration earlier in the thesis. As such, it is possible to tentatively point out at least partial ideological de-contestation between the smaller parties when discussing immigration and the related issue of racism in the territory. We will turn now to the concluding chapter in order to tie together the various evidential strands that have been discussed in the findings sections, and relate them explicitly to the core questions that have inspired this piece of research.

# Chapter Eight: Conclusions

## 8.1 Introduction

This thesis has utilised the case study of Northern Ireland between 2004 and 2014 to consider the effects of immigration on ideological positioning in both a sub-state level of governance and an ethnically divided party system. Through this process we have captured fresh, original data that contributes knowledge to the study of the party politics of immigration in Northern Ireland. The particular methodological approach utilised in this endeavour has highlighted the competitive dynamics of party competition related to immigration as they have emerged in the specific linguistic formulations of politicians operating in the Northern Irish context. This serves to offer a new case study that is useful both to scholars studying the relationship between diversity and politics in Northern Ireland and those who study immigration in sub-state settings more generally.

The key data has highlighted the manner in which issues related to immigration have been utilised as swords and shields in the prosecution of inter-party conflict in this context. We have seen existing ideological structures, stemming from established axes of party competition, absorb immigration issues as parties position themselves relative to democratic rivals. This is apparent across two axes of party competition: nationalist/unionist divisions; and, along the fissures that separate the smaller parties from the larger ones. This suggests that the competitive dynamics between the sub-state, ethnically defined parties are the key driver behind political responses to immigration in such settings.

The project has made contributions to existing research by highlighting the process of linguistic absorption of immigration issues within wider party narratives. By capturing this phenomenon as it emerged in Northern Ireland during the period of the study this has built upon existing findings in the work of Gilligan et al. (2011). Through providing a richly detailed thematic analysis the thesis corroborates their quantitative outline of divisions between broadly restrictive positions adopted by unionists and more expansive approaches to immigration adopted by nationalists and non-aligned politicians. The thesis expands upon their original study through

providing layers of valuable linguistic content that highlight the details of how this process occurs as a feature of inter-party positioning strategies. Secondly, we have seen the manner in which language debates have absorbed immigration generated diversity as a means to prosecute inter-party conflict. Again, this builds upon broad existing arguments outlined in the work of McMonagle (2010) who suggests that unionists in particular have hijacked the issue of immigrant languages to prevent the adoption of greater support measures for the Irish language. The thesis supports this conclusion whilst capturing the linguistic dynamics of this process as it emerges in the discursive themes utilised by Northern Irish politicians. By conducting an audit of party approaches to racism and utilising wider theories on party competition we have built upon the work of McVeigh and Rolston (2007) through highlighting the complex manner in which nationalists and non-aligned political parties have fought for ownership over this issue and unionists have sought to avoid this area of debate or to obfuscate it through reference to wider sectarian issues in Northern Irish society.

Furthermore, through carrying out this detailed investigation into the relationship between ethnically defined political parties and immigration, the thesis offers a useful case study that could form a basis for comparison with similar dynamics as they emerge in other sub-state settings marked by multiple strains of diversity. Given the limited nature of this area of research, additional case studies are necessary in order to work towards a position where we can extract generalizable theories on the dynamics of diversity politics in such locations. Consequently, the case study could be utilised as a pillar in the emerging bodies of research driven by the work of Hepburn and Zapata-Barrero (2014). Future studies into the politics of immigration in sub-state settings could benefit from utilising a similarly detailed methodological approach in order to capture the linguistic nuances of such processes as we have seen evidenced in this thesis.

The latter section of the thesis has now showcased the findings of this project across three chapters. We have looked at the discursive themes that mark three key areas of inter-party positioning: immigration; language and cultural accommodation; and racism during the period of our study. The findings chapters have reviewed the central areas of consensus and conflict between the major parties and considered the

motivational factors that have driven the selection and omission of certain discursive themes within these debates. The final chapter will now bring the thesis to a conclusion by returning to the original questions that arose from our review of literature on diversity, immigration and political parties. The concluding chapter will be broken down into three sections each of which engages with one of our core questions. These sections will be utilised to make calls for political action with regards to some of the issues under consideration, as well as making some important observations for related areas of academic debate. The final section will then point to the need for on-going research into these dynamics in Northern Ireland, and for further comparison with other cases.

## **8.2 What can Northern Ireland tell us about the manner in which immigration debates impact on ideological positioning in an ethnically defined party system?**

The data derived from this process of research tells us that expansive and restrictive approaches to immigration have clearly made an impression on party narratives as they appear in the Northern Irish context. Furthermore, we see economic factors, and issues related to welfare, invoked as discursive themes in party narratives on immigration. This development is, as we might expect, following the patterns of academic argument established in our earlier literature review section (Freeman, 2002; Miller, 2005; Banting, 2005). While there is no policy control for the local elites in terms of setting limits on migrant numbers, or indeed opening borders to allow more expansive measures, there are clear trajectories in patterns of inter-party positioning around immigration debates. The discursive themes adopted by the political groupings clearly relate to existing axes of party conflict. The manifestations of this process correlate with theories of party competition in which political elites adopt vote-maximising strategies within the confines of pre-established processes of ideological positioning (Downs, 1957; Petrocik, 1996; Riker, 1996, Finlayson, 2012).

One the key things that we see here are broad areas of crossover between nationalist and non-aligned narratives on immigration. Both are in favour of expansive approaches to encourage further immigration. This contrasts with unionists who tend to endorse inward migration with modest restrictions, or, to outline the need for

significant tightening of territorial borders. The motivation behind the adoption of these strategies is firstly defined by differences in perceptions of public opinion within their target electorate; and secondly, by the confines of the wider ideological platforms associated with these parties. While there is some evidence of anti-immigration sentiment among sections of the Catholic population, it is clearly more pronounced amongst Protestant voters. This makes it easier for nationalists to present themselves as inclusive and welcoming to migrant communities, unionists, by contrast, are forced to approach this issue more carefully, offering limited endorsements of immigration based on economic merits, and coupling this with suggestions that restriction is necessary to prevent negative impacts upon the local population.

In addition to the motivational incentives related to courting public opinion, there are signs of long established ideological trends becoming intertwined with immigration issues. The APNI as a non-ethnic party finds that immigration and widening diversity fit neatly with its long-standing narratives on the limitations of the 'two traditions' paradigm. Consequently, immigration offers the party a useful prop to well-established discursive themes. Similarly, we see that Sinn Féin utilise immigration to bolster their narrative on the historical injustices perpetrated upon the Irish people at the hands of British imperialism.

Discursive schisms within unionism on this issue, illustrate splits that traverse both unionist parties on the issue of immigration. This is highlighted by civic arguments being invoked in order to support immigration and ethnic defence narratives being employed to argue in favour of greater restrictions. Civic arguments are usually constructed around the economic benefits associated with migration. Ethnic narratives argue in favour of greater restriction in order to protect the local population from unfavourable economic competition associated with immigration. On balance, this evidence suggests that in the Northern Irish context, during the period of our study, stances on immigration have been driven by long-standing strategic calculations underpinning inter-party conflict. Rather than immigration disrupting established patterns of party positioning, it has been used as a resource by parties to support existing political fault-lines.

This type of ideological positioning on immigration clearly reflects the manner in which the parties seek to tailor narratives in order to accrue and to maintain popular support. This evidence seems to counter Freeman's argument that elites are not guided by the usual vote-maximising strategies when discussing immigration (Freeman, 1995; 2002). However, this could also be argued to highlight one of the key differences associated with immigration politics at sub-state-level (Hepburn & Zapata-Barrero, 2014). We know that in the case of Northern Ireland, immigration policy is not formed by local institutions but at Westminster, and has traditionally been heavily influenced through participation in the E.U. Hence, if the 'organised public' described by Freeman were seeking to influence policy-makers, it would make no sense to lobby at the devolved level. Furthermore, explicitly anti-immigration parties have made no real impact upon party politics in Northern Ireland. While both the DUP and the UUP have argued in favour of tightening restrictions on immigration, there has been very little electoral impact made by parties such as UKIP or the BNP in promoting an overtly anti-immigration platform in the territory. This means that in the Northern Irish context there are less obvious incentives to adopt either pro-or anti immigration postures than we might see at state-level politics in the U.K. (Bale, 2003; 2008) Consequently, the local parties are more likely to court their core electorate through formulating narratives that fit with the overarching trends of public opinion in their support base.

### **8.3 What impact has immigration had upon cultural politics in the ethnically defined party system in Northern Ireland?**

In a sub-state party system that is defined principally by an ethnic cleavage, cultural issues contribute the bread and butter of inter-party debate. Immigration changes the cultural landscape through contributing further strands of diversity into the society. We understand from our review of literature on multiculturalism that there are likely to be tensions between approaches to the accommodation of multi-nationalism and that of immigrant-generated diversity in such settings (Kymlicka, 1995; Parekh, 2006). What does our study into the Northern Irish experience of this type of cultural crossover tell us about the party political ramifications of changes in societal diversity?

One of the first things that became apparent in the Northern Irish context was the importance of the large/small axis of party competition. It was evident that the larger tribune parties which had benefitted most from exploiting the politics of bi-nationalism had very little to say about the cultural impact of immigration. However, the smaller parties, who had fared less successfully in the cultural stand-off that characterised Northern Irish party politics, were keen to stress the importance of immigration in breaking down barriers and diluting ethnic division in the territory. Once again, this is best understood by reference to strategic considerations driving party competition in the territory. In this instance, the relevant axis of party competition is not the nationalist/unionist spectrum but the large/small division between the parties. A schism between those who have benefitted from the exploitation of cultural fissures, and those who have been marginalised by this type of politics, defines the direction of ideological positioning in this area of debate. This split between the larger and smaller parties is further reinforced by the logic of the tribune strategy employed by Sinn Féin and the DUP. These parties have prospered through the use of ethnic defence strategies which focus upon the protection of their respective communities' varieties of cultural celebration. As a result of this, the larger parties extend the same logic when discussing measures to accommodate migrant groups.

When we utilise the specific example of language politics, the large/small axis of party competition becomes less relevant. What we see here is evidence of the nationalist/unionist tribalism dominating the agenda. Despite the fact that Northern Ireland witnessed significant changes in its linguistic diversity during the period of the study, the discussion is nearly entirely dominated by claims related to the accommodation of the 'two traditions' and parity of esteem. When Sinn Féin discuss minority languages they clearly relegate migrant issues to a lower strata of importance than internal linguistic pluralism. In this sense, they adopt a variety of multiculturalism that favours internal minorities and subjects immigrants to assimilatory pressures (Parekh, 2006; Modood, 2007).

Conversely, when unionists discuss migrant languages it is part of a blocking tactic to prevent progress on further support for Gaélic programmes. In this sense, the

ethnically defined parties are falling back onto comfortable ideological terrain; with wider diversity mainly invoked by unionists as part of a counter stratagem to the cultural politics of nationalism. It is only within the non-aligned pillar that broader language diversity is seriously discussed as part of the counterbidding strategy employed by the APNI.

The drivers behind these strategies are the desire to gain popular support and the need to accommodate immigration issues within long-standing ideological positioning processes. Unionist and nationalist competition in the arena of language politics are marked by outbidding strategies. Trends in public opinion captured by the NILT survey data suggest that, particularly for unionists, compromise is unlikely to be rewarded by their electorate (NILT, 2007). Furthermore, the tendency of voters to seek strong advocates for their particular community highlights the utility of strong communal defence strategies for the ethnically defined parties (NILT, 2010). Hence, the overall picture suggests that immigration has had a relatively small impact on cultural politics in Northern Ireland. This further highlights the extent to which ethnic parties will adopt issues related to immigration within their wider platform if they are perceived to be of strategic value, but will ignore them if they do not fit within the parameters of established party competition (Petrocik, 1996; Riker, 1996).

The manner in which the 'two traditions' stand-off in Northern Ireland has absorbed wider cultural issues suggests the effect of 'swamping' as described in the literature on multiculturalism (Modood, 2007). In this case, the needs of minorities are not only swept up by a singular societal culture, but they are caught in a conflict between two distinctive traditions. In an ideal world, it would be helpful if debates related to the Irish language and Ulster-Scots could become features in an overarching multicultural framework for the accommodation of linguistic diversity. However, in practice, the stakes in the cultural stand-off between Sinn Féin and the DUP are so high that this type of compromise is very unlikely.

Finding a way through this deadlock is likely to take concerted political will over a significant period. In the meantime, there is very little support for migrant minority languages in the territory. While the children of immigrants are helped to integrate



in an assimilatory sense through learning English in schools, there is less help available for maintaining and widening language diversity in Northern Ireland. This highlights the need to provide clear separation between forms of cultural accommodation related to parity of esteem, and measures taken to promote the type of multicultural/intercultural integration that is alluded to in policy frameworks in Northern Ireland.

#### **8.4 Has immigration-generated diversity had a significant impact on inter-party debates related to racism and sectarianism in Northern Ireland?**

Existing literature suggests that discussions of racism in Northern Ireland have traditionally been relegated to a second tier status due to sectarianism dominating the political agenda (Hainsworth, 1998; McVeigh, 1998). However, with increasing immigration in the territory, there has been significant evidence of high-profile racist attacks taking place in areas marked by the presence of migrant communities. How then have politicians reacted to the undeniable evidence of racism in Northern Irish society?

The findings from our case study suggest that some parties are keen to discuss racism and to highlight its presence as a major social issue facing the society. Other parties are less keen to discuss racism suggesting that it is a small problem and that it is a secondary issue to that of sectarianism. Within the unionist/nationalist spectrum of party competition, Sinn Féin have gained some degree of dominance over discussions of racism. The party has successfully taken the issue and fashioned it into a useful weapon with which to prosecute attacks on unionism.

The fact that the majority of racist incidents have taken place in areas traditionally understood to be loyalist territories within the urban centres of Northern Ireland have clearly helped republicans to make this case (McVeigh & Rolston, 2007). Sinn Féin's discursive themes tie in with established party narratives on the discriminatory nature of the Northern sub-state, the small-mindedness of loyalists, and the failure of political unionism to tackle prejudice in their community. Through adopting this approach, Sinn Féin have politicised the issue in an unhelpful fashion, negating the

possibility of consensual action on tackling racism during the period of our study. Unionist politicians take defensive measures against these attacks that serve to close down the debate, or to move discussions onto the theme of republican violence and the 'ethnic cleansing' of Protestants in certain parts of Northern Ireland. This type of strategy ties racism in with some of the communal defence strategies that are a common feature of unionist political narratives (Shirlow & Murtagh, 2006).

The drivers for this type of positioning are located in the party perceptions of public opinion. Whilst prejudice against immigrants is not the sole preserve of the Protestant community, survey data suggests that unionist voters are far more likely to be prejudiced than the nationalist electorate (Gilligan & Lloyd, 2006). The outcome of this means that whilst all parties share in condemnation of racist incidents, nationalists have far more freedom to engage with these issues than unionists. Consequently, we see Sinn Féin adapting racism to support political offensives, and unionists creating discursive barricades to repel such narratives. The effect of this has hampered the possibility for cross-party consensus on the rejection of racism, to transform into a united front in tackling it.

However, whilst Sinn Féin enjoy a degree of issue ownership in the nationalist/unionist axis of ideological competition, this has been challenged by the APNI within the large/small party spectrum. The APNI crossover with nationalists on the suggestion that racism is a significant social problem in Northern Ireland, though they utilise this discursive theme in a different way. Firstly, APNI representatives tend to focus on the totality of racism including its low-level manifestations as well as high-profile, violent incidents. Secondly, APNI representatives utilise the issue to support attacks on the ethnic tribune parties for failing to overcome their differences in order to make progress in tackling racism. In this sense, blame is shifted from the unionist community as discussed in the narratives of Sinn Féin and placed equally upon both of the largest parties for their inability to negotiate successfully. Representatives of the SDLP and the UUP also utilised similar discursive themes to launch assaults on the Sinn Féin/DUP diarchy over the issue of racism. This development suggests some degree of strategic commonality between the smaller parties on the issue of racism.

A further feature that marked all of the parties' discussions of racism to some extent, was a tendency to equate racism and sectarianism as 'twin' problems that should be addressed together. There is a significant body of literature that argues in favour of classifying sectarianism in Northern Ireland as a variety of racism (McVeigh, 2014; Gilligan, 2017). There is good reasoning behind this move, classifying sectarianism as an exceptional feature of Northern Irish society suggests some degree of acceptance about its inevitability. Furthermore, there are powerful arguments that separating sectarianism from racism removes the former from the standards of international human rights legislation. There are many good reasons why racism and sectarianism should be addressed as a singular issue. However, the evidence from this thesis highlights one of the key impracticalities associated with this approach.

Sectarian issues come with a weight of history that add to the communicative deadlock in the arena of political debate. Racism serves to unite the parties in joined condemnation. In theory, it would seem that this consensus should make progress in tackling racism easier to achieve. However, because racism is utilised as an offensive resource by Sinn Féin, and twisted to form a defensive structure for unionists, racism has become swamped by longer standing sectarian rivalries in the realm of inter-party conflict. Consequently, while it may insult the desire for theoretical clarity expressed in the work of McVeigh (2014) and of Gilligan (2017) to split sectarianism from racism, it is a practical necessity if political elites are to offer joined-up leadership in tackling the problems faced by members of ethnic minority communities. In the political arena, decoupling racism and sectarianism is likely to diminish the extent to which racism becomes a resource in political antagonism.

## **8.5 Conclusion**

This thesis contributes to knowledge in more than one area of scholarly debate. Through utilising a form of in-depth, thematic analysis to study the politics of immigration as they emerge in the context of an ethnically divided, sub-state, party system; the project captures the dynamic relationship between migration issues and ideological positioning in this context. Through combining this analytic method with an interpretive framework based broadly on Downsian theories of party competition, the thesis has employed a distinctive approach to the study of immigration politics in

Northern Ireland. This framework could be used as a basis for comparison with future projects carried out in similar settings. The thesis has highlighted the importance of inter-party positioning in determining the extent to which issues related to immigration-generated diversity will be addressed by political parties operating in ethnically defined party systems. We have illustrated the manner in which immigration issues become swords and shields in the arena of inter-party conflict. This has been highlighted through a dissection of two axes of party competition: unionist/nationalist; and, divisions between the smaller and larger parties.

Furthermore, in addition to contributing a new case study to the emerging canon of comparative scholarship on immigration politics in sub-state settings, the thesis has carried out a detailed process of investigation that builds on existing literature on political parties in the specifically Northern Irish context. While the politics of immigration, cultural diversity and racism in Northern Ireland have been explored to some extent in established scholarship, there is no single body of work that studies all of these issues, in such depth, across the entire party system. In this sense, the thesis adds a distinctive perspective on the party politics of Northern Ireland during this period of widening diversity. This information will be of use to academics, policy-makers, civil society organisations and students interested in developments in the recent history of Northern Irish party politics.

In summary, the evidence collated in this thesis suggests that the impact of immigration on diversity politics in a sub-state, ethnically defined party system is likely to be somewhat limited. In the Northern Irish context between 2004 and 2014, there was evidence of changing cultural demography in the territory brought about by an increased tendency towards immigration. However, this was not mirrored by significant changes in inter-party positioning processes. While immigration has changed the cultural composition of the territory, political debates are largely dominated by long-standing divisions related to bi-national concerns in the territory. Furthermore, racist incidents have proven to be a recurring problem in Northern Ireland as immigration has become more commonplace. However, racism has also become enmeshed within traditional debates between the ethnically defined parties.

The primary impact of immigration has been to provide new weapons and novel defensive measures that the ethnically defined parties, in particular, have seized upon in order to gain competitive advantage in existing areas of inter-party conflict. Ultimately, there needs to be greater separation between issues that pertain specifically to the needs of immigrant minorities and historic inter-communal disputes. It is understood that this approach is problematic. To separate racism from sectarianism could well be argued to provide tacit acceptance of the latter. This is to suggest that because sectarianism is so ingrained, it should be left to one side and efforts focussed upon tackling racism against immigrant groups. Furthermore, to separate immigrant minority languages from the current quandary that marks political debates on Gaélic and Ulster-Scots could be argued to further preserve the glacial stand-off between political elites representing the two primary communities.

These arguments are relevant and cannot be dismissed, but in the current climate, immigrant minorities are subjected to racism and to certain degrees of cultural swamping that cannot be addressed at the political level due to a prevailing discursive stalemate in the devolved institutions. If political leadership is to be forthcoming in these areas, it is necessary, at least in the short to medium term, to consciously seek separation between the politics of the 'two traditions' and matters related to wider cultural diversity.

However, despite these useful contributions, it must be acknowledged that this study is limited in the sense that it has only provided a snapshot of a particular time-period. There is still potential for Northern Ireland to transform in ways that may change the manner in which political elites approach immigration-generated diversity, or perhaps to further entrench the bi-national nature of cultural politics in the territory. The following section will review a number of changes that have occurred since the period of this study and make calls for further research into the impact of these developments. The thesis is further bound by its focus on a singular territory. In order to establish whether the findings have relevance for other locations, they must be utilised as a component in comparative studies into the dynamics of immigration politics as they emerge in other sub-state, ethnically defined party systems. We will

turn first to examine certain developments in the Northern Irish context that merit further research.

## **8.6 Developments and Opportunities for further research**

At time of writing the institutions and practice of devolution in Northern Ireland are suspended, with language one of the key stumbling blocks in talks aimed at forming a new executive. However, regardless of how negotiations progress, some of the issues discussed in this thesis should continue to form the basis for future pieces of research. This section highlights a handful of key factors that are likely to shape the future context of diversity and immigration politics in the territory:

- **Brexit:**

The outcome of the U.K. wide Brexit referendum has the potential to change the nature of border controls in the territory. Currently, there is no clear plan for how this is to be managed emerging in the negotiation process between the British government and the E.U. (Roberts et al. 2017). The fact that a majority in Northern Ireland voted to maintain membership of the E.U., and that there was a clear partisan split with nationalists favouring remain and unionists tending towards leave means that the issue is ripe for exploitation by ethnic entrepreneurs as a device in inter-party positioning processes (Garry, 2016). It remains to be seen what the outcome of this will be for the future of immigration into the territory. However, the issue of the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic will form a key factor in negotiations related to the British exit from the E.U.

Obviously, the most pressing issue facing Northern Ireland with respect to Brexit is the issue of a potential hard-border and its impact on the provisions set out in the Agreement (McHugh, 2017). However, there are also implications for the future of diversity in Northern Ireland. Throughout the U.K., immigration has shown signs of slowing since the Brexit referendum (Hope & McCann, 2017). Similar dynamics are likely to impact on Northern Ireland reducing its desirability as a place for migrants to work and live. On the other hand, should a solution be found that keeps Northern Ireland within regulatory alignment with the E.U. it may become an increasingly attractive

place for immigrants seeking to enter the U.K. Studies focussing on the ramifications of Brexit in Northern Ireland should take into account the social, political and economic factors related to immigration in the territory.

- Racism:

While a racial equality strategy was eventually brought into effect in Northern Ireland, legislative progress has not been matched by developments in the wider society (OFMDFM, 2015). Racially motivated crimes have reduced slightly in the interim period but there are disproportionate numbers of incidents considering the relatively small numbers of ethnic minorities resident in Northern Ireland (PSNI, 2016). Debate on racism in Northern Ireland still seems to be dominated by the tendency to equate it as a twin problem with that of sectarianism. Further work in this area should seek to investigate the views of the members of ethnic minority communities in order to establish what measures they would like to see taken in order to tackle racism. This would help to separate racism from sectarianism and to tease out the challenges that are specifically faced by members of minority communities.

- Language Diversity:

The executive stand-off over minority languages in the territory has evolved to the point where it has undermined the possibility for power-sharing between Sinn Féin and the DUP (Emerson, 2017). At the time of writing, the deadlock between the two largest parties is preventing devolved governance in the territory. This situation has the potential to destabilise the limited truce that has been established in the territory. Furthermore, it offers no protection for linguistic diversity associated with migrant groups. Further research into the accommodation of linguistic diversity in the territory, should specifically consider what actions members of minority communities would like to see, in order to support language diversity in its widest sense. This information would provide a useful component in strategies to widen the debate over cultural accommodation in Northern Ireland.

- Oppositional Politics:

One of the recurring factors that emerged in the findings was evidence of crossover between the smaller parties in their assessment of the cultural impact of immigration, and in their approaches to tackling racism. In several places, these party narratives unite in condemnation of their shared perception of an ethnic deadlock at the heart of government. Widening diversity clearly provides some form of discursive leverage for these parties to mount opposition to the ascendant position of the ethnic tribunes. In the current climate it seems unlikely that these elements of partial consensus, on the part of the smaller parties, will amount to an effective challenge on the dominance of Sinn Féin and the DUP. However, where such patterns are emerging they are built upon a shared recognition of wider diversity in Northern Irish society. The relationship between these areas of limited agreement and wider cultural diversity, may prove instrumental in affecting political change in Northern Irish society. Such areas are likely to continue to merit further research in the future.

- Widening Comparison:

So far the suggestions for further research have pertained specifically to the Northern Irish context. However, to support the overall body of scholarship on the effects of immigration on sub-state, ethnically defined party systems, we need to carry out similar in-depth studies of specific cases and to promote comparison between different contexts. It would be useful to carry out this type of qualitative research in similar party systems and to compare the results with the Northern Irish experience. This would enable us to examine the similarities and differences that emerge in these case studies. The particularities of the Northern Irish case make straight-forward comparative studies difficult to achieve. However, where there are ethnically divided party systems, constructed around bi-national fault-lines, accompanied by some degree of immigration, useful comparisons can be made. Similar studies have already been carried out in places such as Belgium and Canada, but so far there has been a relatively limited number of direct comparisons between these texts (Banting & Soroka, 2012; Dandoy, 2014). This is a gap that needs



to be filled in order to improve our understanding of immigration politics as it emerges in sub-state, ethnically defined party systems.

## **8.7 Final Thoughts**

This thesis has painted a somewhat bleak picture of the potential for political change in Northern Ireland. We have detailed the power of ideological structures based on binary ethnic strategies to withstand demographic change, and indeed, to incorporate new issues into the linguistic arsenal available to the political parties as they mobilise exclusive communal appeals. This has implications for immigration into other territories marked by cultural fissures in the arena of party politics. Ethnically defined political parties tend to be well versed in arguments related to the accommodation of diversity and tackling discrimination; though their appeals are usually made on behalf of their particular community. Immigrant-generated diversity in this context is not so much a 'drop in the ocean' as a 'drop between opposing waves'.

The particular contours that demarcate the majority communities in Northern Ireland have been formed through a long historical process of interaction and conflict. Understandably, the idea of well-established cultural fault-lines being eroded by new forms of diversity is appealing, yet it is unrealistic in the near future. While the presence of immigrants is unlikely to seriously impact upon the binary nature of political conflict in the territory, migrant communities continue to form a distinctive part of the cultural tapestry of Northern Irish society. Furthermore, a significant minority of recent migrants have chosen to settle in the territory, meaning that wider diversity is likely to be a continuous feature of Northern Irish society in the future. Rather than using migrant groups as pawns in inter-party strategies, it would be welcome to see more political leadership devoted to formulating innovative, novel approaches to cultural accommodation that reflect the full scope of societal diversity.

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UUP4, (2013) - Telephone Interview: February 2013

UUP5, (2013) - Telephone Interview: June 2013

# Appendix 1: Participant Consent Form



## CONSENT FORM

### Title of Research Project:

It is important that you read, understand and sign the consent form. Your contribution to this research is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged in any way to participate, if you require any further details please contact your researcher.

I have been fully informed of the nature and aims of this research

I consent to taking part in it

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without giving any reason

I give permission for my words to be quoted

I understand that the information collected will be kept in secure conditions for a period of no more than five years at the University of Huddersfield

I understand that no person other than the researcher and facilitator/s will have access to the information provided.

I understand that if I choose anonymity for the purposes of this study, my identity will be protected by the use of pseudonym in the report and that no written information that could lead to my being identified will be included in any report.

I wish to remain anonymous Yes:  No:

(You will be given further opportunities to opt for anonymity later in the study)

If you are satisfied that you understand the information and are happy to take part in this project

please put a tick in the box aligned to each sentence and print and sign below.

Signature of Participant: <hr/>	Signature of Researcher: <hr/>
Print: <hr/>	Print: <hr/>
Date: <hr/>	Date: <hr/>

(one copy to be retained by Participant / one copy to be retained by Researcher)

# Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet



## The Politics of Diversity in Northern Ireland

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### INFORMATION SHEET

You are being invited to take part in this study. Before you decide to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with me if you wish. Please do not hesitate to ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

#### **What is the study about?**

The purpose of this study is to consider whether immigration into Northern Ireland has had an impact on the way political representatives discuss issues associated with new forms of diversity. The study will compare the differing styles and views across the party spectrum in Northern Ireland.

#### **Why have I been approached?**

You have been asked to participate because you are a democratically elected representative and a member of a political party. This means that your views on the subjects discussed provide a valuable insight into this area of contemporary political debate in Northern Ireland.

#### **Do I have to take part?**

It is your decision whether or not you take part. If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form. You will be free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

#### **What will I need to do?**

If you agree to take part in the research you will be asked to participate in a short interview either face to face or over the telephone. The interview will ask you to discuss your background and your journey into politics before bringing in questions on language policy, cultural celebration, immigration and racism in Northern Ireland. Interviews will typically take around 30 minutes and will be arranged to minimise any inconvenience to yourself. Interviews will be recorded with your consent.

**Will my identity be disclosed?**

All personal information disclosed within the interview will be kept confidential. Anonymity can be assured, except where legal obligations would necessitate disclosure by the researcher to appropriate personnel. In practice this would only be in the case that this research uncovers evidence of illegal activity, or plans to engage in criminal actions in the future. This would require me to report any such findings to the police.

**What will happen to the information?**

It is anticipated that aspects of the research will, at some point, be published in an academic journal. However, should this happen, your anonymity can be ensured, although it may be necessary to use your words in the presentation of the findings and your permission for this is included in the consent form.

**Who can I contact for further information?**

If you require any further information about the research, please contact me and I will be happy to discuss any concerns you may have. Please find my contact details enclosed below

**Gavin Hart**

Post-Graduate Reseacher  
University of Huddersfield  
Human and Health Sciences Research Building  
HD1 3DH

E-mail: u0052672@hud.ac.uk

Mobile: 07412 992 305



# Appendix 3: Interview Template

## General

How long have you been involved with the party?

How did you become involved with politics/your party?

## Culture

How would you describe your cultural heritage/background?

Is your culture recognised and respected in the current political settlement?

## Language

Should the state support minority languages?

Should state funding be allocated to promote the Gaelic language?

Should state funding be allocated to promote Ulster-Scots?

What about Mandarin/Cantonese? Or Polish?/other languages

## Immigration

In what ways has immigration changed Northern Ireland?

Negative/positive factors?

Has your constituency been affected?

Do your constituents consider immigration an important issue?

What are the effects on the local economy?

## Welfare

Should economic migrants have access to welfare rights?

What responsibilities do economic migrants have to the rest of the community?

## Racism

Is racism a major issue in Northern Ireland?

Is racism becoming more or less common?

Do you see a connection between racism and sectarianism?

What are your views on the racial equality strategy?

# Appendix 4: Data Matrix Example

Due to the sheer size of the spreadsheets employed in order to analyse the data it is impossible to adequately capture the full scope of detail. The tables below are designed to provide an impression of some of the analytical procedures that took place in order to arrive at the themes that were discussed throughout the thesis. The following images provide snippets of the manner in which Sinn Féin and the DUP discussed the work ethic of immigrants in Northern Ireland. The tables highlight the manner in which the parties agreed about the strong work ethic of immigrants, though Sinn Féin representatives coupled this up with discussions of the Irish diaspora. Similar forms of tabular comparison were used throughout the analytic process in order to establish themes from the coded fragments.

Party/Member	Work Ethic General	Work Ethic Irishness
(DUP2)	Often they make a very good contribution to the economy. They tend to be very hard working people. I've been very impressed by the Polish community.	
(DUP3)	The Poles tend to be very family orientated, church going and very hard working, they always tend to be the guy who does the last shift, or will work the overtime. They always tend to be the people who will do the extra piece of work so they can send money back home	
(DUP3)	the vast majority of folk from places like Bulgaria come here, work hard, get a bit of money together and go back, build a home, look after their families. It's a very transient work force.	
(DUP4)		
(DUP5)	People in general see immigrants working hard and making a positive contribution. I think there are a small group of people who have grave resentment against economic migrants but it is a tiny minority.	

Party/Member	Work Ethic General	Work Ethic Irishness
Sinn Féin		
(SF1)		Well first of all, a lot of the immigrants, like the Irish, when we have worked abroad, bring with them, a very strong work ethic.
(SF2)	A large number of the Eastern Europeans seem to be concentrated in areas such as the poultry industry and agriculture generally. They play an important role, they are extremely good workers, the ones I know from my local community.	
(SF3)		For generations the Irish people have travelled around the world and received a very strong welcome wherever they went, and I think that we should be equally welcoming to those who make Ireland their home and have done in recent years.
(SF3)		If you go to where these people work, they are often noted as being some of the hardest working people there. That was also one of the comments that was often made about Irish people that worked abroad. So you can see we have an awful lot in common with these people. We are really not that different.
(SF3)		Irish emigrants have usually been given a very good welcome and we haven't passed that same welcome on to those who have come and made Ireland their home. I think that is a serious problem.

