

Band Development in Northern Ireland: Ethnographic Researcher to Policy Consultant

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the concept of 'band development' taking place within the parading band culture in contemporary Northern Irish society. The parading tradition in Northern Ireland today is associated with two main characteristics; first, the public image of contemporary parading traditions is mainly negative due to its association with parading disputes that particularly developed in the 1990s. Second, that aggressively Protestant Blood and Thunder flute bands have become a dominant feature of these public performances. It is these ensembles that are defining people's notions of what parading bands represent. This article will discuss how ethnographic research with these bands allowed engagement on a policy level to take place, leading to 'band development'.

KEYWORDS: Band development, 'Blood and Thunder' flute bands, Northern Ireland, Protestant, Policy and Community Relations

Introduction

In Northern Ireland music is seen as a powerful marker of religious and political identity within both the Protestant/unionist/loyalist and Catholic/nationalist/republican communities. One of the most visible musical traditions in both urban and rural contexts is street parading music. Historically, marching bands were formed to lead political/religious organisations such as the Protestant Orange Order and the Catholic Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH). There are various types of parading band in Northern Ireland, which include flute, accordion, pipe and silver/brass bands. Parading as a form of cultural identity is particularly important to the Protestant community in Northern Ireland. This is displayed through their annual 'marching season' during the summer months, which can be seen to have reli-

gious, military and carnivalesque elements attached to it.

Parades are seen by many as a problematic factor in Northern Irish society as the annual marching season is believed to perpetuate the conflictual relationship between the Protestant and Catholic communities. Parading events in Northern Ireland are frequently divisive, highlighting cultural, political and religious differences between the two main communities. Segregation in Northern Ireland exists in education, housing and in the workplace, resulting in a society that often views the 'other' community as a threat. The feeling of being threatened by the 'other' is understandable due to such segregation as well as the historical struggles that have existed between the Protestant and Catholic communities. However, the contemporary political situation in the province has gradually moved away from the violent 'trou-

bles' of the last thirty-five years to one of relative peace. If the peace process which culminated in the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 is to progress, then this fear and lack of understanding of the 'other' needs to be addressed in order for both communities to move forward.

There has been significant research undertaken on the loyal orders, particularly the Orange Order (Jarman 1997; Bryan 2000), but there has been relatively little research undertaken on marching bands (Bell 1990; Buckley and Kenny 1995; Jarman 1997; de Rosa 1998; Cairns 2000; Radford 2001). By engaging with such negatively perceived groups through ethnographic research I hope to provide an insight and understanding of these groups. It was during this ethnographic research that I was approached by Diversity Challenges, an NGO who work with 'culturally specific' groups with an aim to improve community relations and promote understanding of each 'other'. The anthropologist was now additionally a consultant engaging the parading bands within the policy framework of 'band development'.

This article will therefore discuss how ethnographic research facilitated access to these difficult groups and enabled policy development with the bands. It will explore the importance of engaging parading bands in the realm of band development, assessing the big picture of working with difficult groups in a postconflict society and in working to develop better sharing of public space (Office of the First and Deputy First Minister 2005). This will lead to a discussion of the band development work carried out by Diversity Challenges that I assessed as part of my remit as consultant to this organisation. I will detail some of the results and problems that arose during the engagement with a number of parading bands. From this analysis I will deliberate over the future for band development in the parading scene and recommend how to move this process forward in order to improve community relations surrounding the parading context in Northern Ireland.

Parading as a Problem

Why are parading bands in Northern Ireland associated with a negative stigma? Parading disputes can be dated back to the mid-nineteenth century with the Dolly's Brae skirmish in 1849 in County Down that resulted in the banning of parades between 1850 and 1872 (Fraser 2000). At nearly every stage of Ireland's recent, turbulent history parades have been the focus of public disorder. Civil-rights marches from 1967 onwards are commonly viewed as the spark for the recent Troubles. Throughout the 1980s parading became more of an important issue, perhaps due to the prevalence and growing awareness of human-rights issues. The 1980s heralded the beginning of a more strategic political approach to the conflict, from republicans particularly, rather than the militaristic approach that had come to dominate in the 1970s. By the mid-1980s there were more parading disputes in urban areas such as Portadown, County Armagh, where, in 1985, the St Patrick's Day parade was banned from marching through the predominantly Protestant Park Road area. During the same year, in reaction to the banning of the St Patrick's Day parade, objections were raised toward an Orange Order parade resulting in the Catholic community protesting when the Orange Order tried to march to Drumcree church. In 1986, during an Easter Monday Orange Order parade, the police decided to ban the parade from proceeding down the nationalist Garvaghy Road.

In terms of contemporary Northern Irish society, the parading disputes came to prominence again during the summer of 1995 when police blocked the return of the Drumcree church Orange parade in Portadown, County Armagh from returning through an area of the town with a high Catholic population. The crux of this dispute lies in the control of public space. There are the conflicting factors of the Protestant Orangemen's right to parade along their 'traditional' route versus the right of local Catholic residents, who as a minority in the

town have experienced routine intimidation, to oppose the procession passing through their area. This parading dispute was so severe that the government established the Parades Commission, an independent government body that assesses whether or not contentious parades can take place in such flashpoint areas.

Dominance of Protestant Parading Culture

Since the beginning of the Troubles in 1969, the number of bands and parades within the Protestant community has grown substantially, so much so that the parading tradition itself has become primarily associated with this community (Bryan and Jarman 1996). To understand the dominance and growth of the Protestant parading tradition and in particular Blood and Thunder flute bands it is necessary to look at the historical context of this cultural display.

The origin of the Protestant parading tradition has been documented back to the eighteenth century. Fraser (2000) notes that the Orange Order was established in 1795 after the Battle of the Diamond, near Portadown. The name of the Order derives from the Protestant Prince William of Orange in commemoration of his victory over Catholic King James II in 1690 at the Battle of the Boyne. A key part of these parades has been the use of musical bands to accompany the Orange lodges. The diversity of bands has set the tone for different types of parade, from 'respectable' bands playing hymns to 'rough' bands indulging in loud, sectarian performances. While the bands often have a close relationship with the Orange Order and various loyalist organisations they are fundamentally independent. As such, both at their own band parades and through their behaviour and the flags they carry in the Orange parades, they have their own particular space in the Protestant parading tradition.

Since the 1960s Blood and Thunder flute bands have eclipsed the other band types (part-

music flute bands, accordion, pipe and silver/brass bands). The general public's opinion of Blood and Thunder flute bands is mainly negative. Bands are held to be threatening, triumphalist, aggressive males who consume too much alcohol and play their 'rough' music loudly in an attempt to aggravate local Catholic communities. Consequently, the behaviour of a number of bands has brought the Blood and Thunder band type under public scrutiny. Darby (1986), one of the earliest writers on the conflict and parading bands in Northern Ireland, discusses the diverse types of parading bands, from the religious to the Blood and Thunder, showing how 'innocent airs' can have 'a party character' which can intimidate the other community. Jarman (1997) similarly documents how a popular Protestant tune such as 'The Sash', which is often performed by Blood and Thunder bands, has provoked incidents involving the Catholic community. He remarks how the use of this loud ('discordant sound') and aggressive music ('rough music') has been the catalyst in provoking violent incidents.

These hardline flute bands are the most visible display of masculinity within the Protestant community and are viewed by some working-class people as a way to fulfil social, cultural and political needs of young men, particularly in urban areas. Bell (1990: 98) remarks on the role and rise of parading bands in working-class areas when he states, 'each is a representative of its local areas and a focal point of local solidarities. Each of the Protestant estates in the Derry area has thrown up a marching band over the last decade or so'.

Bell also believes that to understand why working-class Protestants have resorted to such visual and audible displays, we as social scientists need to examine the social and economic marginalisation of these groups:

the 'nationalism of the neighbourhood', as Phil Cohen (1998) calls it, is not reducible to a structure of personal prejudice but must be understood as a form of regressive ethnicity which arises as a youth-cultural response in specific



material situations. We need to more clearly identify the political, economic and cultural conditions under which youthful ethnic representations and practices degenerate into racist outcomes. (Bell 1990: 169)

The impact of the conflict and the economic ramifications of de-industrialisation have greatly affected working-class, urban areas. 'The conflict since the late 1960s has proved particularly lethal for the residents of working class districts of Northern Ireland' (Coulter 1999: 72).

Blood and Thunder flute bands in these areas are a musical response of working-class, Protestant men, to voice their feelings of economic exclusion and political alienation resulting from the threat of an all-Ireland state. Dunn and Morgan (1993) suggest that the term 'Protestant alienation' is used, 'to account for feelings of uncertainty and insecurity experienced by the Protestant community, and to describe a mood that reflects a sense of political isolation and relative powerlessness'.

I believe it is necessary to look at how the social, economic and political grievances of working-class Protestants may be a resultant

factor in the rise of parading bands in these communities. However, it is also important to note that there are over 630 active, unionist parading bands in Northern Ireland (Table 1). The parading tradition, in other words, appears very vibrant. Indeed, it could be hypothesised that it is precisely because of the feelings of powerlessness that there are so many flute bands in Protestant, working-class communities. As such, any process of conflict transformation requires the involvement of working-class, Protestant communities and engagement with the band-parading tradition must be an important element of that.

Engagement

It is the popularity of the parading tradition within the Protestant community, the ongoing conflict over parade routes, and the need to develop peace-building strategies that have led organisations such as the Community Relations Council (CRC) and Diversity Challenges to focus on a process of engaging with groups

Table 1: Denominational Breakdown of Marching bands in Northern Ireland, last updated January 2006

	<i>Unionist</i>	<i>Nationalist</i>	<i>No Affiliation</i>	<i>Total</i>
Flute	327	20	0	347
Pipe	144	9	3	156
Accordion	117	22	0	139
Silver/Brass	45	3	10	58
Total	633	54	13	700

Source: Witherow, J. forthcoming. *Parading Bands in Northern Ireland*, Belfast: Diversity Challenges and Institute of Irish Studies, Queen’s University Belfast.

linked to parading. Examples of the groups in question include the Orange Order, AOH and parading bands from both communities. The rationale behind targeting such groups is to facilitate work that can help develop a society that understands and respects cultural diversity. An example of such engagement is the CRC’s work with the Apprentice Boys of Derry, who organise the annual, contentious, 12 August parade in commemoration of the Siege of Derry. This work began in 1997 at a time when the Drumcree parading dispute was a daily topic within the media and the peace process was moving forward due to negotiations that led to the Good Friday Agreement.

The CRC and Apprentice Boys worked together and through funding, the Maiden City Festival was established. The objective of creating this festival was to help provide understanding within the local community of what the parade was about through cultural events leading up to the main, 12 August parade. The success of the Maiden City Festival was evident through the reduction of policing costs by an estimated £800,000 for the annual parade and this has led the way for other groups and organisations to look at this option for organising their events.

Ethnographic Research of Protestant Flute Bands

There has been a striking lack of research on marching bands in Northern Ireland given their

prevalence. Bell (1990) inspired my interest with his work on youth culture in L’derry that incorporated the parading band scene. I wanted to take the ethnographic approach a step further than Bell by immersing myself into the flute-band world. I achieved this by becoming a participant observer of five Protestant flute bands over a period of eighteen months, exploring their preparation and participation in their annual marching season.

When Diversity Challenges, a local NGO and charity, became aware of my research they approached me with a project that had close linkage with some of the areas I would be investigating. The project they proposed had two main components to it. The first and largest part of the project involved an audit of all parading bands in existence in Northern Ireland in order to determine the scale of this cultural activity for future development work in Northern Ireland. This exercise confirmed my belief that the flute-band tradition was dominating the parading culture in the province. The second part of the Diversity Challenges project involved the analysis of case studies of parading bands that participated in a number of band-development schemes, funded by Diversity Challenges. Could the process of band development offer parading bands an opportunity to be actively involved in altering the negative public perception of this cultural activity? To what extent would my involvement in this process alter the nature of my own ethnographic research in relation to how these bands are constructing their identity; and how would this affect my role as an anthropologist?

In terms of organisations that work specifically with parading bands, Diversity Challenges are seen as progressive as they are willing to take risks by working with parading bands that have negative reputations across the province. Will Glendinning, chief consultant of the organisation, believes this work is necessary and that there is more of a risk by not engaging with these groups. Diversity Challenges recognise the importance of the parading traditions in Northern Ireland:

1. Bands form a significant part of the culture of sections of loyalist and republican communities.
2. Band parades are a feature of the 'marching season'.
3. Bands perceive themselves to be marginalised and demonised even by those from the Loyal Orders.
4. Band parades and the behaviour of bands at other parades are seen as key components in the problems and poor perception of parading, particularly by those from other communities and traditions.
5. Bands, in particular Blood and Thunder and 'republican' bands, are often seen as having connections with paramilitaries through the carrying of flags or the display of emblems on drums or dress.
6. Bands are an important part of youth culture in communities.

It is important to clarify what is meant by *band development*. Band development schemes incorporate initiatives such as training in community development, good relations, and the teaching of essential skills such as literacy and numeracy as well as musical skills. Diversity Challenges have provided set-up costs for new bands and have carried out community audits to gauge local opinion on band parades. Such development initiatives have a twofold effect within local communities across Northern Ireland. First, they are contributing to the development of community relations by improving

bands on many levels. Secondly, many of the bands Diversity Challenges are targeting have young men from socioeconomically deprived areas in the province as members. Diversity Challenges recognise the importance of engaging with sections of communities that have become politically alienated through the peace process. Many of these areas (especially urban ones) have not been regenerated, therefore they are still lacking in facilities such as community centres and parks where young people could participate in activities.

Why would parading bands wish to engage in a process of band development? Ninety percent of parading bands today are independent from the Orange Order and essentially exist as independent, neighbourhood associations. Within their local communities some bands recognise that the excessive drinking and male bravado characterisation is losing them support. A small number of Protestant parading bands realise that their public image needs to be addressed and have opted to adopt this development strategy in re-creating themselves in a new era—striving to become 'respectable' as a means of regenerating community support.

Diversity Challenges recognised that to develop some sort of policy intervention it was necessary to construct a database to calculate the number of parading bands existing in Northern Ireland, from both the Protestant and Catholic communities, for future development work. The first objective of my role as consultant to Diversity Challenges began with the construction of this audit. The task of compiling this audit was difficult, as both the Catholic and Protestant banding communities do not have an overarching, representative body that would be able to provide such information. Instead I had to rely on the contacts I had made through the ethnographic research. Whilst I had gained considerable trust from bands through previous work, particularly in the Protestant community, many were still suspicious of why a database was being constructed. Consequently, in order to compile this data many hours of desk

research were required due to the lack of cooperation from the banding communities.

The database revealed that of the 700 bands recorded in Northern Ireland, the vast majority of 633 or 90 percent are unionist, in contrast to 54 or 8 percent that are nationalist (Table 1).

Secondly, it is evident that flute bands are the dominant band type, particularly within the unionist community—of the 700 bands recorded, 347 or 50% is in fact flute bands (Table 2). In terms of sheer numbers this audit identifies the importance of the flute-band tradition. From a consultancy position I was able to provide Diversity Challenges with the evidence they require from a policy viewpoint in demonstrating the importance of their work in targeting the dominant and negatively perceived Blood and Thunder flute bands for ‘reform’.

Whilst these figures clearly illustrate the importance of the flute-band tradition across Northern Ireland, they also illustrate the need to conserve and develop other banding traditions in the province. If flute bands are becoming the dominant trend for new bands starting up then there is a risk that accordion, pipe and especially silver/brass bands might diminish if they are not promoted to the younger generations. If other band types such as accordion,

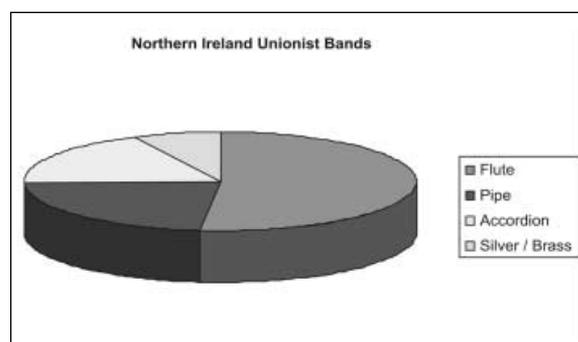
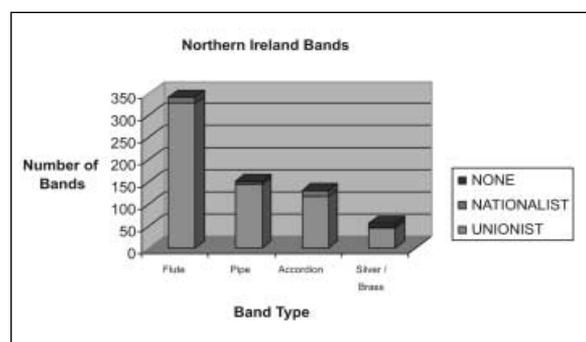
pipe and silver/brass (which are viewed as more cross-community in their membership) are not developed, then there will be a social, musical and cultural loss. Especially as these band types participate in events that are less threatening than the Blood and Thunder parades that dominate the parading season. Geographically, the audit revealed a trend of urban/rural difference, with flute bands densely distributed in urban areas such as Belfast, L’derry and Coleraine. In contrast, rural areas have managed to conserve the musical diversity of this cultural activity with a mixture of flute (Blood and Thunder and part-music), accordion, pipe, silver and brass bands.

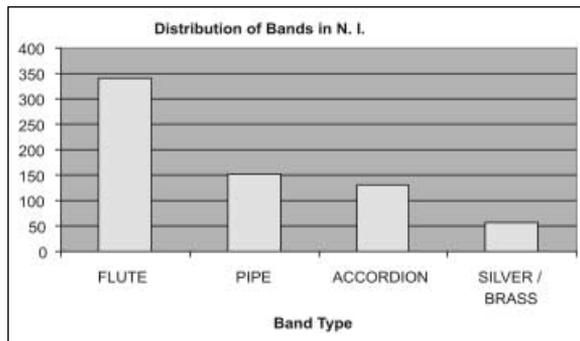
This data clearly illustrates that the number of Catholic bands is small in comparison with the Protestant community. Today, the parading band tradition within the Catholic community is not an important element of their cultural identity. Yet the annual Lady’s Day parade (15 August) from the 1890s to the First World War ‘was treated by the *Irish Times* as comparable to the Twelfth, the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) rivalled the Orange Order, and Derry nationalists paraded the city walls each St. Patrick’s Day’ (Jarman and Bryan 2000: 95). However, after the formation of the Northern Ireland

Table 2: Marching Band Types in Northern Ireland, January 2006

ALL BANDS	FLUTE	PIPE	ACCORDION	SILVER/BRASS	Total
N.I.	347	156	139	58	700

Source: Witherow, J. forthcoming. *Parading Bands in Northern Ireland*, Belfast: Diversity Challenges and Institute of Irish Studies, Queen’s University Belfast.





state in 1921 an 'expansion of the Orange parading "tradition" and the lack of a comparable Green "tradition" were closely linked to the differentials of power within the northern state as the new political entity aimed to consolidate its identity as both Protestant and British' (Jarman and Bryan 2000: 96). This diminishing of the Catholic parading band, especially the AOH bands, was primarily caused by an internal battle between nationalism (AOH) and republicanism. Republicanism became the dominant force for Catholic representation after the 1916 Easter Rising, and the AOH became politically marginalised. This led to republican commemorations, such those for the Easter Rising, becoming the dominant feature of the Catholic parading tradition (Jarman and Bryan 2000). In order to improve community relations regarding the parading culture in Northern Ireland, it is equally important to develop the nationalist parading tradition and to discuss how both communities can develop shared space through negotiation.

The second part of my remit as consultant to Diversity Challenges involved an analysis of the band-development schemes carried out by a number of parading bands. Diversity Challenges required an evaluation of these initial projects in order to plan future policy work with these groups. The case studies revealed that a number of parading bands completed their development schemes and received supportive responses from the banding world and local communities. An example of successful engagement was with a Blood and Thunder flute band that participated in an event outside its tradi-

tional pattern. The band in question travelled to the Republic of Ireland and paraded in a festival leading up to the St Patrick's Day parade. Initially, the band received mixed reactions from their Protestant banding community. However, after the event these reactions did alter into generally more positive attitudes. The positive responses were only gained because the band made it clear that they did not compromise any aspect of their ensemble. In practical terms, their uniforms, flags and tunes remained the same. After the event, the band received positive responses on their band website and from the local media. Such engagement offers the possibility of improved community relations across Ireland.

An equally successful development scheme involved another Protestant Blood and Thunder flute band that engaged in survey work in order to gauge and improve local community relations. This development scheme is of particular interest as the band in question requested this work to be initiated, as they were shocked to learn that local opinion of them was mainly negative. Projects include the development of a music centre in a socio-economically deprived village, which will provide local residents, both young and old, the opportunity to learn and develop a variety of musical skills with a view to making their local band parades more family-orientated events.

However, there were a number of bands involved in this initial work that responded negatively to their band development projects. Within the Protestant parading tradition a siege mentality exists among many band members. McGovern (1994) refers to this siege mentality prevailing in the Ulster Protestant community, drawing symbolically on the events surrounding the Siege of Derry (1688/89), as a means of identifying ways in which the Protestant community in Northern Ireland is attempting to protect its cultural identity. Suspicion and fear exists among band members, as they believe that if they engage in such development activities then their band ethos will be altered. Some

bands are simply afraid of trying something new, especially if a band has been functioning in a certain pattern and performing the same tunes for decades.

It is clear that this fear existing within the Protestant banding community needs to be tackled if trust is to be built. Diversity Challenges agreed that to help develop trust with bands it would be useful to present the findings to the bands themselves, first to let them see that Diversity Challenges is actively involved in developing such work and secondly to illustrate that the process does not compromise the cultural ethos of these ensembles. Another objective in delivering these findings was to engage with these groups individually in order to gauge how they wish to move forward and to answer any queries they had concerning the process of band development. Being open and transparent about my role in researching the bands and giving them the opportunity to ask any questions provided them with the reassurance they needed in order to build trust with the researcher.

In relation to those in Protestant bands, the delivery of my findings illustrated to them the importance and strength of the parading tradition. Several bands admitted that the siege mentality existing within their community was preventing them from 'moving forward'. The consensus of the Protestant banding community in attendance at the report-findings presentation was that the process of band development is the way forward in improving community relations, providing understanding to the general public of what parading bands mean to the bandsmen, as well as developing and improving musical abilities, giving the participants much pride. However, several of those band representatives in attendance voiced concerns that it would take time for the rest of the Protestant banding community to agree to engage in the process of band development due to the fear and mistrust that currently exists.

The delivery of my findings on the Diversity Challenges project was especially positive in

engaging the Catholic banding community for possible future band-development work. Whilst the schemes I examined only involved Protestant bands it was important to engage with the Catholic banding community at this time. Initial contact with the Catholic banding world was particularly arduous. Within the Protestant banding community I was able to initiate contact for my consultancy work from the contacts I had already established through my ethnographic research. Therefore, I had to go to greater lengths in order to engage with the Catholic banding community. After an initial premeeting, and change of venue to a location perceived as more acceptable, the Catholic band members came together, probably for the first time ever, to be presented with the findings of the Diversity Challenges band-development report.

The Catholic banding community in attendance were reminded of the dwindling numbers of parading bands in existence in their community, especially within the AOH community. Several attendees stated the importance of developing and promoting the Catholic banding tradition, as there is a risk of extinction of this parading culture. This initial engagement highlighted the continued and prolonged struggle between AOH and republican bands. AOH members at the presentation blamed republicans for not supporting and promoting their ensembles to the younger generation, especially during the Troubles when republican flute bands became increasingly popular in Catholic working-class areas. This band type was particularly in vogue during the conflict as they supported political speeches and rallies organised by Sinn Féin. The style of musical performance and military regalia of republican flute bands is similar to Protestant Blood and Thunder flute bands. From the band audit, it seems probable that republican flute bands may soon outnumber the dwindling AOH bands (which are accordion and pipe), just as within the Protestant community flute bands have become increasingly dominant since beginning of the Troubles in the late 1960s.

Conclusion

This article has illustrated how ethnographic research has helped facilitate consultancy work within a policy framework with parading bands in Northern Ireland. It is evident from the data collected that a large number of parading bands are in existence today, especially within the Protestant community. This large volume of bands indicates the importance of the parading bands to many Protestant people, especially in working-class communities, as this cultural display is a vehicle in which perceived grievances can be voiced. Successful engagement with these groups should have a significant impact upon community relations and in reconciliation. For example, if a leading Blood and Thunder band is prepared to perform publicly in the 'other' space (Republic of Ireland) and this is deemed acceptable, then such openings might aid in building trust and understanding in a divided society. The government policy document *A Shared Future* (Office of the First and Deputy First Minister 2005) supports such action in moving communities forward in a postconflict society.

Some may argue against developing bands when the parades have the ability to cause disputes, exacerbating sectarian tension and often violence, which further segregates Protestant and Catholic communities. This negative reputation that the parading tradition holds today in Northern Ireland must be viewed in context. The number of disputes and/or incidents is limited in comparison to the number of bands in existence today and the thousands of band parades that occur annually. Pessimists may argue that these sectarian ensembles should be sidelined in hope of their demise and extinction in a modern, postconflict society. I argue that to ignore the existence of the parading traditions in Northern Ireland is perilous. This is especially pertinent as the statistical evidence reveals parading as a vibrant phenomenon within the Protestant community. A wider view of the parading tradition is therefore necessary

in order to develop the positive roles bands can play within Northern Irish society. For example, bands are often a positive outlet for many young, working-class, Protestant men who otherwise may get involved in destructive paramilitary activity. Bell (1990: 115) supports this role of bands within communities when he states, 'the bands went from strength to strength providing for young people an alternative for paramilitary activity'. Therefore, bands in both communities may provide positive influences in relation to musical development, behaviour and confidence for many young people. However, it must be noted that some bands have been a platform for the recruitment for paramilitaries, especially at the height of the Troubles during the 1970s (Jarman 1997; Radford 2001; Witherow 2006).

The siege mentality that exists in many parading bands offers a very real obstacle. This affects their relationship with outsiders and those wishing to access their bands for engagement purposes. Elements of this attitude permeate through the band-development process. This fuels suspicions of anyone questioning them about their cultural practices. Further research on the processes at work is essential in order to gain a better understanding of the activities of band members.

It is only through participant observation and ethnography that this research could have been undertaken. Diversity Challenges' development work served to build a closer relationship with the bands involved which obviously aided my ethnographic approach. Additionally, this deeper relationship allowed me to gain another insight into the operation of the bands. On the other hand, if it were not for my initial ethnographic research, the Diversity Challenges project would have been very difficult. The nature of the groups being dealt with demanded the use of ethnography, particularly with the need to build trust. The policy outcomes became possible because of the existing relationships with the bands but also provided a mechanism of feedback and empowerment

for band members. The information supplied by the audit, for example, allows them to push for greater funding. Whilst projects of band development remain at an early stage they have started an engagement process with an important but alienated group in Northern Ireland.

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