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Focus on Youth Work in Contested Spaces

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The National Youth Agency
Getting it right for young people

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The National Youth Agency

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We achieve this by:

- informing, advising and helping those who work with young people in a variety of settings;
- influencing and shaping youth policy and improving youth services nationally and locally; and
- promoting young people's participation, influence and place in society.

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Youth Work in Contested Spaces Special Edition: Introduction

Ken Harland

The backdrop to this special edition of *Youth and Policy* evolved directly from my experience with young people over the past twenty-two years as a youth work practitioner, trainer, researcher and lecturer in the divided and contested spaces of Northern Ireland. During this time I have become more acutely aware that youth work interventions are much more effective and relevant when they are shaped and directed by the context and realities of young people's everyday lives and experiences.

For thirty five years youth work in Northern Ireland occurred in the context of prolonged community and political violence. Throughout this period Youth Services pioneered and delivered a wide and diverse range of local and international initiatives that attempted to engage creatively with young people in response to the daily rituals of extreme sectarian violence. Whilst numerous youth projects were developed at this time, much of the learning was not disseminated widely or articulated effectively.

In recent years the peace process in Northern Ireland has heralded new optimism and hope. One outcome of this is that Northern Ireland is increasingly viewed as a 'beacon of light' by other societies emerging or hoping to emerge from conflict. This process has encouraged critical reflection on the past and more specific attempts to capture the lessons of a transitional society moving from conflict towards peace. This was partly why I became involved in the 'Youth Work in Contested Spaces' initiative which I refer to in my article in this issue. This ambitious programme involved a coalition between the Youth Council for Northern Ireland, the University of Ulster Community Youth Work Department and Public Achievement Northern Ireland. One of the stark realities from this initiative was the fact that despite different global contexts, young people's experiences and stories of personal violence and political conflict were very similar. Another common factor was that for the majority of these young people many aspects of their lives were perceived by them as contested. This made me much more cognisant of the fact that in every society there are spaces that are perceived by all young people as potentially threatening to their health and personal safety. It also enabled me to better appreciate the complex and diverse range of issues that youth workers from every society address in their daily practice with young people.

Youth workers are in a unique and powerful position to engage effectively with young people and build relationships where young people are listened to, valued, and supported to share their stories and explore new possibilities. However, engaging and responding to the needs of young people in contested spaces is a challenging and demanding task which presumes that youth workers possess certain skills, knowledge and self awareness.

The articles in this edition of *Youth and Policy* identify and address some of the key issues

and challenges to those working with young people in contested spaces. They are a combination of practical, theoretical and hopefully inspiring articles that those working with young people can connect and identify with, regardless of where they practice.

My thanks are extended to the authors who have contributed to this special edition. In addition my thanks go to those colleagues who read and commented on draft articles – Maurice Devlin, Liz McArdle, Sam McCready, Micky McIlinden, Martin McMullen, Tony Morgan and Susan Morgan.

Ken Harland

University of Ulster

From Conflict to Peacebuilding: Reflections and Descriptions of Youth Work Practice in the Contested Spaces of Northern Ireland

Ken Harland

Northern Ireland is a transitional society moving from conflict towards peace. While there have been numerous examples of community relations work in Northern Ireland, much of the learning has not been articulated within a youth work context. Drawing upon discussions with twenty youth work practitioners and conversations with young people, this paper identifies and describes some of the key practice issues for those delivering youth work in contested spaces.

Key words: *contested spaces, youth work practice, peacebuilding, community relations*

Northern Ireland is a rapidly changing and transitional society emerging from a period of prolonged conflict commonly known as ‘the troubles.’ For over 30 years from the late 1960s ‘Northern Ireland experienced (apart from the former Yugoslavia) the most sustained violent conflict over national identity in Europe’ (Acheson, et al, 2006:13). With a population of 1.74 million, there are few people whose lives have not been impacted by the conflict. During this time there were some 3,700 deaths. In terms of population size this would be the equivalent of 115,000 fatalities in United Kingdom as a whole or 600,000 in the United States (Hargie et al, 2003). There were also 34,000 shootings, 35,000 injuries, 14000 bombings, over 3000 punishment shootings and over 2500 punishment beatings by paramilitary organizations; 25 per cent of all punishment attacks were on those under 19 year olds, 91 per cent of deaths were male with 32 per cent of deaths young males aged 17 to 24-years (Muldoon, et al, 2008; Smyth and Hamilton, 2003).

The breakthrough towards peace occurred in 1994 when the Irish Republican Army (IRA) announced a cessation of military operations. This was followed by the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 when the Irish and British governments and the political parties in Northern Ireland reached consensus. The agreement included a devolved, inclusive government, prisoner release, troop reductions, targets for paramilitary decommissioning, provisions for polls on Irish reunification, civil rights measures and parity of esteem for the two communities in Northern Ireland. The definitive end of the troubles came in 2007 following the St. Andrew’s Agreement in October 2006. This was followed by elections in March 2007 and the formation of government in May 2007 by the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Féin. In July 2007, the British Army formally ended their mission in Northern Ireland which began 38 years earlier in 1969.

Peacebuilding

The Government states that its vision for the future of Northern Ireland is ‘a peaceful,

inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society firmly grounded on the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance, and mutual trust and the protection and vindication of human rights for all' (A Shared Future, 2005:3). Peacebuilding processes encompass security, demilitarisation, humanitarian assistance, power sharing governance and elections, human rights, minority protection and reconstruction aid (Wallensteen, 2002; Darby and Rae, 1999). In countries such as Bosnia and Kosovo peacebuilding was assumed by external stakeholders whereas in Northern Ireland there was a functioning state and administration to facilitate peacebuilding (Oberschall, 2007). Oberschall identifies six major players in the peace process in Northern Ireland – The UK and Irish Governments, Nationalists and Republicans and opposing sides within Unionism (p161).

Drawing from lessons of peacebuilding throughout the world, Former UN Secretary General and Nobel Peace Prize winner Kofi Annan (2004) cautioned that nearly half of all peace agreements collapse within five years. Kofi Annan suggested that those involved, including the international community, should stay engaged until viable peace has taken root. In 2005 world leaders at the World Summit agreed to establish a Peacebuilding Commission as it was deemed that countries emerging from conflict face a unique set of challenges that unless identified and addressed face a high risk of relapsing into violence. The Commission aims to help lay the foundations for countries emerging from conflict towards sustainable peace and development acknowledging that the transition from conflict towards peace is likely to be a precarious and difficult journey.

A crucial challenge of peacebuilding is confronting the legacy of the past. In Northern Ireland this has necessitated engaging in post conflict transformation work to ensure lasting peace. This process has included addressing complex issues such as reconciliation, reintegration, decommissioning, police reform, prisoner release, security, an end of paramilitarism, economic investment and the administration of a new Local Assembly. It is clear that resolving these issues will not be straightforward. One example of this is the way in which Northern Ireland has established structures to help victims feel that they have obtained justice from atrocities that occurred throughout the troubles. It was fiercely disputed when four Victims Commissioners were appointed in 2008 (instead of one) demonstrating the uneasiness of politicians to appoint only one person to represent the needs of all those who have been victims of the past.

There is also the issue of segregation. Data from the 2001 census revealed that two thirds of the population in Northern Ireland live in areas that are either 90 per cent or more Catholic or 90 per cent or more Protestant. The impact of such polarisation has been most acute in working class areas where Catholics and Protestants have lived in close proximity. These flashpoints became known as 'interface areas' that often witnessed the most brutal instances of sectarian division. Towering peace walls built to keep Catholics and Protestants apart remain in these areas as a cold reminder of the necessary physical barriers in a deeply divided and contested society. Peace walls affect the way in which people move and interact and directly impact upon daily activities such as going to work, meeting friends and relatives, and getting access to health and recreation services (Murtagh, 2003). Over forty of these were erected in Northern Ireland during the troubles. Like in other parts of the world such as China, Israel and Palestine, Mozambique, South Africa and East and West Berlin, these structures were erected to keep people and communities apart. A recent study with

long term residents living in interface areas (*Belfast Telegraph*, 2008) found that 81 per cent of people said they would like to see peace walls demolished (although 60 per cent stated it was not safe enough at present); 17 per cent felt the walls should stay as they feared removal of the walls would lead to 'problems of a serious nature' if removed. This data highlights that despite the optimism of the peace process, old fears and distrust still exist amongst people living in areas most affected during the troubles.

White (2008) warns that while Northern Ireland is officially portrayed as a region at peace, the terrorist violence of the past is being replaced by a new manifestation of violence. For example, the Chief Constable's Annual report for the Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI) reveals that in 2006/07 the number of violent crimes rose by 815, sexual offences increased by 92 and attacks on the elderly increased by 60 per cent. White (2008:8) provides a catalogue of crimes between April 2006 and February 2007 that includes knives being used in six murders, 21 attempted murders, 242 assaults and 315 robberies. There were 1695 sectarian crimes, 1047 racist crimes and 457 rapes – with an increase in recorded rapes of 60 per cent during the past five years.

Youth Work in Contested Spaces

Magnuson (2007:4) argues that for societies in conflict and emerging from conflict, 'youth work is a moral and existential necessity, since youth are both vulnerable to, and contributors to violence.' For over 35 years youth workers in Northern Ireland have been at the coalface of responding to the needs of young people in a deeply divided and contested society. This has included addressing prejudice reduction and conflict transformation. Lederach (2002) has identified the often undervalued role played by local leaders on a day to day basis at grassroots level. Grattan and Morgan (2007: 173) argue that grass root youth workers, whom they term 'organic intellectuals,' were often 'mediators between paramilitary organisations, the wider community authorities and politicians and between the various communities.'

Throughout the troubles youth work practice was inexorably affected by political events and the violence that occurred on a daily basis. As violence escalated in the early 1970s, youth workers became increasingly involved in diversionary activities which attempted to keep young people, particularly young men, out of trouble and off the streets (Smyth, 2001). One key reason for this was the fact that young men were predominantly at the forefront of community violence and were actively recruited by paramilitary organisations (Harland, 2007). As the Youth Service in Northern Ireland evolved, more specific initiatives developed around the themes of cross community work and community relations. This work became more prevalent as programmes aimed at improving community relations between the two main traditions were given higher priority by policy makers and funders. The Department of Education introduced a Cross Community Contact Scheme in 1987 to promote contact events between schools and youth and community groups. Crucially however, much of this work was based on a 'contact' hypothesis (see for example, Amir, 1969, 1976; Pettigrew, 1997; Neins, Cairns and Hewstone, 2003) and avoided the more challenging and controversial issues associated with political education and civic responsibility (Smyth, 2007). Wilson and Tyrrell (1995) described how the first contact projects in Northern Ireland

were primarily concerned with bringing Catholic and Protestant children together whilst avoiding efforts at reconciliation between both communities. Smyth (2001) argues that there has been a tendency amongst those who facilitate community relations programmes to 'attempt a position of neutrality or objectivity which has been underpinned by a fear of exposing oneself and one's core beliefs.' Connolly (1998) argues that much of this contact work may have actually been counter-productive and only served to reinforce existing stereotypes, while Bloomer and Weinreich (2003) found that community relations projects in Northern Ireland only partially achieved their intended outcome. In 1992 Community Relations Guidelines were produced by the Youth Council for Northern Ireland that presented a five-level model of community relations which promoted more intensive approaches to dealing with more controversial issues and conflict resolution (see Hammond, 2008). This more proactive approach to reconciliation was mirrored by formal education initiatives such as Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) aimed at promoting community relations between Catholic and Protestant school children and broadening parental choice for integrated education for children (Gallagher, 1995).

Two major Youth Service initiatives were implemented to further develop community relations work in Northern Ireland. Firstly, the Joint in Equity, Diversity and Interdependence initiative (JEDI) aimed to:

- Develop a coherent strategy for community relations youthwork and education for citizenship
- Embed the inter-principles of equity, diversity and interdependence into the ethos, policies and programmes of organizations which make up the youth sector.¹

This initiative produced a number of products aimed at updating and replacing the 1992 Community Relations Guidelines including, policy change, changes to the youth work curriculum document and practical resources for practitioners. JEDI challenged the Youth Service in Northern Ireland to think more creatively about the purpose of youth work in a contested society and explore delivering practice beyond contact and relationship building.

In 2003 the 'Youth work in Contested Spaces' initiative was established in partnership between The University of Ulster, The Youth Council for Northern Ireland and Public Achievement Northern Ireland. This project, which formed the backdrop to this special edition of *Youth and Policy*, set out to build the capacity of the youth work community in Northern Ireland and to contribute to international best practice, particularly in preparing young people for life in a divided and contested society. A central part of this project was an annual conference that brought together an international group of youth work practitioners, managers, academics and young people to develop collaborative relationships and thinking around theory and practice of conflict and division around the world.

Both of these initiatives significantly influenced youth work practice and policy in Northern Ireland and also identified a need to engage young people in new and more creative ways.

Describing Youth Work Practice in Contested Spaces

Magnuson (2007:10) argues that there is 'a considerable gap between ideas about youth in contested spaces and empirical research' and identifies the need for more description of practice. As part of the preparation for writing this article I carried out a series of focus groups and individual interviews with twenty youth work practitioners. All participants had considerable experience in community relations work. Findings from the empirical data are combined with some of my own experience and wider discussions with young people in order to attempt to describe some of the key aspects of youth work practice in the contested spaces of Northern Ireland. The following list is drawn from issues raised by the interviewees and is not meant to be definitive:

- *Defining Moments*
- *Engagement*
- *Testing Out*
- *New Learning Environments*
- *Dialogue*
- *Personal Safety*
- *Motivation*
- *Common Action*
- *Managing Resistance*
- *Rituals and Symbolism*
- *Peacebuilding*

Defining Moments

Most youth workers spoke of a personal journey that led them into community relations work. They believed that in order to be effective practitioners they needed to have some sort of movement in their own mindsets and gave examples of 'defining moments' that impacted upon their own attitudes. Two participants compared this to a sort of 'religious experience.' One told of how she had become aware of her own blindness to prejudice while participating on an international community relations programme. She was surprised at the extent of her negativity towards individuals from other cultural backgrounds and likened this to a 'Damascus Road' experience in regard to self awareness. Another worker told a story about a group of young people he was working with during a period of ongoing community conflict. On a residential weekend away from their community the group stopped by a stream to drink spring water. The worker believed this had a calming affect upon the young people as they sat talking and reflecting upon their lives. This 'snapshot' demonstrated the potential of youth work to be an effective educational process that is both powerful and symbolic. By 'seizing a moment in time,' the youth worker was able to create a learning environment and connect this directly to the lived experience of young people. He believed the ritual of drinking the spring water helped bring a sense of normality to these young people's lives in the midst of community conflict. It was difficult for the youth worker to measure the impact of this moment, but as they sat together he knew something powerful and valuable had occurred. Undoubtedly many youth workers have similar stories of seemingly small events or 'defining moments' that have had a profound impact upon themselves and the young people they work with.

Engagement

Participants felt well positioned to engage young people in community relations work. In particular they believed that youth workers could build meaningful relationships with young people that forged trust and openness. Youth work curricula enabled them to engage in activities that included the testing of values and beliefs and the promotion of acceptance and understanding within EDI principles. This did not mean however that community relations work was without its challenges. There were many occasions when participants had to re-engage group members because of unfolding political events or unforeseen incidents. I recall on one occasion during a final residential at the end of a community relations programme, one young man, whose brother had been shot dead several years previously, played loud sectarian music during the final night which erupted into a violent clash between members of both communities. This fracas was an unexpected outcome as the group had been together for three months and the young man had willingly discussed his feelings about his brother's death with other group members. The young man later said that because the group was ending he had reverted back to 'old ways of thinking' and acted the way he thought his community expected him to behave – and that included hating Catholics. Crucially however, the incident highlighted the extent of underlying tensions, fears and prejudice as well as the powerful sense of loyalty that young people feel towards their own community. Many practitioners spoke of challenges and opportunities that surface when engaging young people in community relations work. They believed that initial engagement should include clarity of purpose and a realistic sharing of expectations.

Testing out

Several youth workers spoke of a 'testing out' phase in community relations work where young people make certain assumptions about youth workers. This included young people initially thinking that youth workers 'are just like us' and therefore hold the same values and beliefs. They expected youth workers to 'be on their side' and therefore supportive of their attitudes and beliefs. One youth worker told of how a group of young people he was working with in a Catholic school had made the assumption he was also a Catholic. Several weeks into the programme they began to ask him questions such as 'where do you live?' and 'what football team do you support?' They began to question the worker's identity to discover if he was actually a Protestant. The young people had made this assumption because of the way he dressed and his pronunciation of certain words. The youth worker used this as an opportunity to explore stereotypes and tease out why they believed the religious background of the worker was so important.

New Learning Environments

Participants believed that creating safe spaces for staff and young people to meet and learn together was a fundamental aspect of community relations work. Several participants mentioned the importance of creating learning environments that were safe from threat and the fear of reprisal, particularly if young people were disclosing personal values or beliefs. Residential centres were typically deemed as ideal 'neutral' settings that afforded young people exciting opportunities to function outside their normal living environment. Participants believed that residential processes accelerated learning and promoted a spirit of team building, problem solving and structured risk taking. This process also enabled friendships and trust to be developed whereby young people could share their deepest

hopes and fears. Participants believed that the onus for creating safe and stimulating learning environments rested firmly with youth workers.

Dialogue

Participants believed that because youth workers were often indigenous and working at a grass roots level, they had a more realistic appreciation of young peoples' lives and actual lived experiences. Their local knowledge and young person centred approach were considered crucial foundations in involving young people in activities that were connected to the realities of their perceived world. Intervention did not necessarily have to be the result of a prescribed curriculum. Rather, relationships evolved through a mutual process of dialogue, conversation and trust – something which the youth worker and young person negotiated together. It was this dynamic that made youth workers well placed to respond positively and creatively to the needs of young people in a contested society.

Freire (1968) posited that the oppressed need to avoid seeing their predicament as irresolvable, but as a limiting situation that they can transform. He argues that when the oppressed reflect upon the extent of their oppression, they commit themselves to the action of transforming their world. Freire further adds that dialogue is a 'horizontal relationship of mutual trust that cannot exist without hope' (p64) and is 'the essence of revolutionary action' (p128). Most participants spoke of the importance of dialogue. One worker told of how young people from different countries were able to tell their stories of violence during a residential weekend. She said that dialogue brought group members closer together and enabled them to have greater empathy for other young people. Crucially, dialogue helped break the 'norm of silence' that is so often a feature when attempting to address contentious and controversial issues with young people.

Radford (2007) speaks of how young people from minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland showed willingness, if not a need, to share difficult experiences with each other. She adds 'this was particularly evident when past images of brutality, loss and conflict emerged as powerful and deeply embedded memories that resonated with their current experiences in Northern Ireland' (p146). Morrow and Wilson (1996) have written about the importance of dialogue through story telling and how it is a powerful way to find hope and help individuals move beyond preoccupations with fear and violence. Myths and legends have been an important part of the cultural history of Northern Ireland. Importantly however, the oral tradition of storytelling is always retrospective and subsequently there is a danger that individuals remain 'stuck' in the past rather than helping to build the future. Church and Shouldice (2003) purport that sharing stories, experiences, attitudes and feelings offer a spectrum of possibilities in conflict transformation beyond the direct programme participants. They add, however, that evaluation and measurement of such initiatives can be difficult and confusing, and whilst there is an assumption that any change transferred is positive, this may be not always the case.

Personal safety

Participants generally felt safer delivering youth work now than before the peace process. They acknowledged however that despite a changing political context youth workers and young people still take huge personal risks by participating in community relations work. One worker told of how she frequently felt intimidated by carrying out community

relations work in a community where sectarianism was still very apparent. She spoke of how paramilitary murals depicting men with balaclavas and guns were very frightening and offensive to young people from other traditions. This worker was always conscious of the need to consider the personal safety of the young people she worked with and her staff team. Consequently whilst single identity work² could occur in the community in which she practiced, cross community work was always delivered in a neutral setting. Several workers gave examples of times during the troubles when the work could not continue because of the conflict that had occurred that particular week such as a shooting or bombing in one of the areas. They believed that despite setbacks and personal fears, when young people feel safe they are more prepared to take risks and participate on programmes with young people from other traditions and cultures.

Motivation

Youth workers spoke of the importance of motivating young people to participate in community relations programmes that were potentially threatening and offensive to members of their community. Participants believed a key motivational factor was young peoples' desire for a better future – one without violence, hatred and fear. For others community relations programmes provided hope that life in the future could be different. Research carried out by *Young Citizens in Action* (2007) found that 78 per cent of their volunteers were interested in participating in programmes aimed at improving community relations. Other research by *The Northern Ireland Young Life and Times Survey* (2007) revealed that 61 per cent of 16 year olds believed that community relations were better now than five years ago; 27 per cent believed they were the same and 8 per cent believed they were worse. 81 per cent believed that religion would always make a difference to the way people feel about each other in Northern Ireland. Seventy per cent of this sample was not involved in any kind of cross community programme.

Participants acknowledged that motivating young people to participate in community relations programmes was extremely difficult during the troubles. They firmly believed however that young people are highly motivated by issues they considered important to them or that impact upon the world in which they live. One participant shared how young lesbian women she worked with were motivated to action by their shared experience and feelings of isolation and discrimination. A similar example was given of work with young people around the theme of drug education where young people were motivated because they were concerned about drug abuse amongst their peers. These examples demonstrate the extent to which youth work occurs in different contexts and addresses a wide range of contested social and political issues. Participants believed however that it was the responsibility of the worker to offer programmes that young people find appealing and connected to their daily experiences.

One particular programme I worked in during the troubles embraced the motto 'it is better to light a candle than complain of the darkness' – something I found personally motivational as a youth worker.

Common Action

Participants identified group processes and collective action as important dynamics of community relations work. They believed that having common goals was a powerful way

to build interpersonal relationships through developing a culture of teamwork and shared experience. Several participants gave examples of community relations programmes ranging from localised activities to international exchanges. These initiatives were identified as models of good practice that helped young people to connect with others from different cultural traditions and to work towards common action. Youth workers believed that having common goals and purpose provided young people with a greater sense of belonging as part of a group and more connected to the global community.

Managing Resistance

Participants believed youth workers and young people displayed courage and determination to become involved in community relations programmes. They acknowledged that for many young people participation on programmes was contrary to the opinions of their parents. One practitioner told of how she was recently stopped from taking a minibus into a community because of parental opposition to community relations work. She believed that despite there being more hope and optimism, in some areas 'old barriers of sectarianism still remained'. She thought that it was too early to determine if the peacebuilding process would change old mindsets. This practitioner was more optimistic that young people could change, but was less convinced that adults in the community where she worked were 'prepared to embrace a new and diverse society'.

Resistance to community relations work manifests itself in many forms. Parents, politicians, paramilitaries and at times youth workers and even young people themselves were identified as potential blocks. Baizerman (2007: 2) reminds us that youth work in contested spaces is not just about young people. It involves 'educating broader society about young people and the rights, opportunities and channels of participation they deserve'. This viewpoint affirms the importance of youth work strategies that also engage with parents, members of local communities and other organisations working with young people. Finding more creative ways of engaging parents and other significant adults from both communities was considered a necessary, yet often challenging component of community relations work. The ability to manage resistance and remain optimistic despite setbacks were identified as important personal qualities for youth workers.

Rituals and Symbolism

Northern Ireland is a society soaked in ritual, insignia and symbolism. Contentious marching parades, flags, murals and bonfires are loaded with emotion and reflective of deeper political and cultural traditions and beliefs. There were many examples of how rituals and symbolism impacted upon practice. Several workers spoke of difficulties they had delivering community relations programmes around the traditional 'marching season.'¹³ This was particularly acute during summer months when there was often widespread rioting in protest of 'triumphalist' marches permitted to parade in fiercely contested interface areas. Workers found that young people, who were off school for summer holidays and frequently bored, were particularly drawn to these cultural events. At these times young people were more inclined to revert back to old sectarian attitudes and willingly engage in overt expressions of community tribalism.

One youth worker told of how young people from four different traditions (Catholic, Protestant, Indian and Chinese) shared insignia representative of their own culture with

other group members at a residential event. Whilst the young people made comments such as 'I never thought I would ever wear that' and 'I can't believe I actually held a flag from a different tradition,' the youth worker was challenged by several local parents after the residential. Parents protested that they did not want their children 'brainwashed by engaging in cross cultural activities that encouraged the exchange of insignia and singing songs from other traditions.' This example reveals how youth workers often feel vulnerable and exposed because they make a stand or go 'against the grain' of community traditions or beliefs.

From Conflict to Peacebuilding

Emerging from the interviews was a strong sense that Northern Ireland is a more peaceful society now than during the troubles. Several practitioners spoke of the fact that many young people aged twelve and under had little recollection of the troubles. These young people were the first generation to grow up in a society where the focus was on peace rather than conflict and subsequently they were less likely to display prejudice against people from other traditions. Practitioners in one focus group believed that young people aged twelve and over were more inclined to associate negatively with the legacy of the troubles and were more likely to be influenced by their peers and traditional community beliefs. The recent deaths in March 2009 of two soldiers and a police officer by dissident IRA members brutally demonstrated that not everyone is committed to peacebuilding in Northern Ireland. This was the first time British troops had been killed in Northern Ireland by terrorists since 1997. While this has been a major setback, there has been united condemnation of the murders by all political parties.

One of the most common issues identified by practitioners was the influx of foreign immigrants into Northern Ireland since the peace process. Practitioners believed that youth work practice in a peacebuilding society demanded that they had much more knowledge and appreciation of other cultures. While the Chinese and Indian communities have been part of Northern Ireland culture for many years, recent immigrants and their children from countries such as Poland, Romania, Croatia, Lithuania, and South Africa necessitated that approaches to community relations work were now much broader.

Participants believed that hatred and prejudice was now being directed at young foreign immigrants. This perception is supported by the *Northern Ireland Young Life and Times Survey* (2007) which revealed that 42 per cent of young people aged 16 agreed, and 27 per cent strongly agreed, that sectarian hatred is now being directed towards minority ethnic communities, especially foreign workers coming into Northern Ireland. Participants believed that while the influx of foreign immigrants had brought a new focus to community relations work, this did not mask the fact that sectarian attitudes still prevailed and the two main communities remained polarised.

Some final thoughts

Contested spaces in which young people live are not solely political. They include schools, streets, local transport, parks, families, city centres, youth clubs, bars, parades and social events. Also contested are broader issues such as faith, religion, sexuality, race, ethnicity,

gender, personal beliefs and values, morals, drugs, alcohol consumption, education, behaviour, law and order, employment / unemployment. These are issues that many if not all young people wrestle with no matter where they may live. From this perspective youth workers in every society have much in common. What has been more particular to Northern Ireland is that the focus of youth work over the past 35 years has been dominated by the realities of living in a dysfunctional and divided society. It has been this protracted political context that has distinguished youth work in Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK, Ireland and Europe.

Lederach (2008) argues that after violent conflict has receded, peacebuilding creates a platform from which it is possible to respond creatively to evolving situations. Yet despite significant political and cultural developments in Northern Ireland there is little evidence of creative thinking or an agreed theoretical framework for the delivery of youth work in a peacebuilding context. As with early community relations work, the response to peacebuilding by Youth Service in Northern Ireland would appear more organic than strategic. *The Strategy for the Delivery of Youth Work in Northern Ireland*, (Department of Education, 2005) has as part of its vision for young people to 'participate as active citizens in a secure and peaceful society' (p4). This rather woolly vision has no pragmatic application other than reference that the values of youth work in peacebuilding should be based on principles of equity, diversity and interdependence. If youth work is to make a meaningful contribution to peacebuilding in Northern Ireland, it is crucial that the lessons from community relations work during the past 35 years of conflict inform the peace process. Unfortunately to date, there remains little evaluatory evidence that community relations work is more effective now than during the early days of the troubles.

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Notes

- 1 For more information on JEDI principles see Morrow, Eyben and Wilson (2003).
- 2 Single identity work is carried out with members from one tradition.
- 3 The 'marching season' is the period between Easter Monday and the end of September, when more than 3,500 parades, many of which are seriously disputed, are held throughout Northern Ireland.

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The Need for the Study of Everyday Life about Youth Work Practice in Divided Societies

Doug Magnuson

Although there is a large literature of theory about conflict reduction and also a good literature about the practice of youth work in divided societies, there is still a large gap between ideas about the work and ground-level practice. Because good youth work is not usually exotic, the most effective practices are often unnoticed. It is too soon to enfold this kind of youth work within other practices and traditions, because we do not yet know enough about the everyday life of youth and of workers in these settings. Greater immersion in settings, using ethnography and other research strategies, may help accumulate experience and practice wisdom rather than lists of activities and values that are then interpreted from the point of view of theory from outside the practice. Examples of practice issues about which we need to know more include an orientation to 'radical hope', a challenging ethical context, overt and covert ideologies, unknown outcomes of the work, unique worker biographies, and the dangers of misplaced sincerity and ignoring the harm that is done.

Keywords: *youth work, divided and contested societies, evaluation*

Smith and Robinson (2001) argue that the goals of objectivity are not appropriate in violent societies and that there is no neutral position – for researchers or practitioners. They are correct about this, but most social science research assumes some sort of value-laden goal, in divided societies or not. In the context of evaluation of youth work in divided societies, the goal does not have to be a kind of objectivity from nowhere; instead, we strive for something broader than our own, singular, and local point of view. We aim for understanding from some perspective: most importantly, the perspective of others, including those doing this work and the young people with whom the work is done.

In the last several decades important lines of theory, evaluation, and research have emerged about human development work and youth work, and specifically in divided and contested societies. A good recent example of the former is Jones' (2004) review of the study of 'contact work', finding that Allport's (1954) description of the necessary conditions for this work have been fruitful. Similarly, Deutsch's (1973) work on the constructive and destructive approaches to the resolution of conflict has proven to be prescient, as projects on mediation, conflict resolution, negotiation, and bargaining have proliferated. There is also a large literature on the reduction of prejudice, conflict, and stereotypes that originated during and after World War II (for summaries, see Brewer and Brown, 1998; Crocker, Major, and Steele, 1998; Fiske, 1998; Pruitt, 1998).

In addition to these applied theories of human development work that can be often used in youth work, there is a more specific literature on youth work in divided and

contested societies that resembles common youth work frameworks for thinking about practice, including, a) creating space and opportunity for youth to participate as citizens in democratic processes and structures (Smyth, 2007); b) practising group work in a social pedagogical and psycho-educational milieu for the purposes of healing, the development of community, and the promotion of health and development (Ognjenovic, Skiorc, and Ivackovic, 2007), and; c) *conscientization* (Freire, 1990) and active resistance to a political and social culture of hatred, coercive power, and violence. All of these are time-honoured approaches to work with youth.

As fruitful as these ideas are, much of this work and these theories are still a step removed from the practice of this particular kind of youth work, and it is not yet clear whose point of view is being represented. Much more study and thought is needed to understand the daily lives of young people and youth work practitioners across the wide variety of these settings and from it, to carefully construct a practice theory or theories. Magnuson (2007) described briefly some similarities between work with youth in divided societies and some types of youth work, but it is too soon to enfold this work within other traditions and practices. We simply do not know enough about work with youth in contested spaces either in particular places or across geography and culture. There are reasons to think that youth work in divided societies may make an independent contribution as a distinct kind of work.

It would be helpful to begin, then, with the daily life of youth work in divided societies with the experience of workers and youth, not with theory. We might first want to work independently, from stories and data drawn from everyday life. In evaluation and research, when we do so, we travel in unusual and unexpected directions. I discuss here some issues in youth work in divided societies drawn from daily life, albeit described in the frame of reference of an outsider, that illustrate how much more we need to know about the conditions of the work. These issues include one interpretation of the work as an orientation to 'radical hope', strategic ethical challenges, the presence of overt and covert ideologies, unknown and unpredictable outcomes, the difficulties of capitalising on practice wisdom, and the dangers of misplaced sincerity and ignoring the potential harm that can be done. Further, I briefly discuss examples of evaluation and research that may help us improve our understanding of the heart of the work.

Radical Hope

Lear writes about 'how one should live in relation to a peculiar human possibility' and of 'a shared vulnerability that we cannot quite name' (2006:7) that results from the possibility of the collapse of cultural meaning. He offers as an exemplar the 19th century Crow Indian Chief, Plenty Coups. The Crow was a warrior culture, and actual battles and memories of battles governed their social structure and ethical life, including personal and family life. How to live and what to aspire to was clear. With the encroachment of the U.S. government into traditional Crow territory, it became impossible to sustain warrior culture because of the constriction of their traditional territory, and trying to do so became dangerous. For example, stealing a horse from the Blackfeet was in Crow culture a meritorious and courageous act. Yet in the view of the U.S. government, this act was theft and was to

be punished. Thus to continue living as a Crow meant risking not only being culturally destroyed but physically destroyed.

Lear writes that the loss of this culture was the loss of the narrative that sustained life. Warrior acts no longer made sense, and therefore to the Crow there was no more sense to be made of life, including the loss of meaning embedded in established social roles, the standards of excellence associated with these roles, and 'the possibility of constituting oneself as a certain sort of person – namely, one who embodies those ideals' (Lear, 2006:42). Formerly, to be Crow meant making these ideals a life commitment and task. When the context and horizon for these ideals disappears, in some sense so does the possibility of being Crow, and the loss of this possibility typically precedes the option for any other kind of realistic possibility.

Lear is describing in part what citizens of and in divided societies experience. Some recognise that a former horizon against which meaning is encountered has disappeared, is no longer viable, and may be self-destructive, and so they strike out in a new direction, while for others there is a choice between a more or less well defined identity, even if it is propped up by hostility to an out-group, and a way of life that does not yet specify a clear ethic, social roles, standards of excellence and, most importantly, an identity to which one aspires. A Crow medicine woman said, 'I am trying to live a life I do not understand' (Lear, 2006:56). Similarly, in divided societies, some youth work operates at the margin between the old way of life and anticipation – 'radical anticipation', in Lear's words, of a new way of life. It is radical in the sense that one is tentatively living out and through a new future in which old meanings and identity no longer make sense and a new way of life is not entirely certain or clearly seen. Youth work is attempting to point a way toward a new way of life. This is a difficult, risky, and error-prone task. As Lear says:

This inability to conceive of its own devastation will tend to be the blind spot of any culture. By and large a culture will not teach its young: 'These are the ways in which you can succeed, and these are the ways in which you will fail; these are dangers you might face, and here are opportunities; these acts are shameful, and these are worthy of honour – and, oh yes, one more thing, this entire structure of evaluating the world might cease to make sense'. This is not an impossible thought to teach, but it is a relatively new idea in the history of cultures (2006:83).

Lear believes that Plenty Coup 'experienced himself as receiving a divine call to tolerate the collapse of ethical life' (2006:92). In some form this is what some kinds of social change demand – the collapse or gradual abandonment of one way of conceiving ethical life in favour of another.

Unlike the Crow, in many divided societies an old way of life is still readily available to young people. That way of life offers an ideal for young people that, even while participating in youth groups advocating peace-making, may not be abandoned, and it is well understood that many young people return to these ways after they finish peace-making programmes. They go back to their tribes and subcultures. Second, the radical subjective terror of giving up one's way of life may not be adequately addressed by interventions that do not offer alternative aspirations and ideals.

The genius of Plenty Coups was in imagining a new way of life that created the possibility that the Crow would survive negotiations with the often duplicitous US government and that imagined a new cultural ideal, a new way of being and becoming Crow. In work with youth in divided and contested societies and in some youth work in other contexts, adults and young people are engaged in a similar re-imagining and re-visioning. To participate in this young people may need extraordinary acts of courage and ingenuity. They may be choosing a way of life that sharply contrasts with the local norms and they do so while living with the great uncertainty about where it will lead. Safety cannot usually be guaranteed, economic gains are a gamble, and familial ties can be weakened, not strengthened. The local system of 'ways to get along' and its subculture may need to be resisted and they may be resisted against, such as Harland's (2007) example of young men lining up to throw things at him and young people travelling to youth programmes, and the reality that in most societies there is considerable social pressure to maintain the status quo. In many cases young people are asked to make a 'leap of faith' that a viable life will emerge. Plenty Coups hoped for the possibility of a viable cultural and ethical life after the conflict was over; in divided societies, the activities of reducing violence and peace-keeping do not always include this vision, yet it may be necessary as an alternative and in contrast to the intoxicating and seductive allure of conflict.

There are grand and powerful examples in recent world history, such as Nelson Mandela in South Africa and Martin Luther King in the United States, people who became a moral force with the articulation of a new, hopeful vision. On an everyday basis, though, it is likely that youth workers in divided societies embody this moral force and vision for young people in ways that we do not yet know much about, but we could, if we attended to them. This is one area where researcher and evaluator descriptions written by outsiders, such as researchers, do not illumine very much, reading much like descriptions of the neighbourhood youth club in Dublin or Vancouver. Youth work activities may look similar across setting and culture, from the outside, but in each setting activities become experience – for both young people and adults on the inside – and that experience, presumably, is shaped into a vision of a viable life that can only be understood by others through careful study. These experiences will be situated in local details of culture, geography, human development and politics, and the richer the local description the more likely that lessons can be extracted for other contexts.

Everyday Ethics of Practice

Until these rich descriptions of the work are available, in any language, the numerous ethical issues suggested by this work will remain just below the surface, even as thorough analysis is urgently needed by those doing this work. Also, those of us who do not live in divided societies are poorer as well, because the compelling nature of that experience may help everyone grapple with our ethical and moral responsibilities.

For example, many who feel called by youth work in contested societies have personal histories of violence and criminality and ongoing association with those who continue to participate in violence – an association that on occasion is difficult to avoid (see, for an example, Milliken, 2007). How workers account for these experiences surely varies and

is worth study. In most Western industrial societies there are rituals, albeit imperfect, of 'conversion and repentance', treatment, and 'paying one's debt to society' that are usually accepted as adequate accounts of one's qualifications. Thus having been an alcoholic may be valued as a contribution to effectiveness in addictions work. Analogously, what are the comparable rituals for persons who have been members of paramilitaries and soldiers or who have otherwise committed acts of violence?

Related to this, marginal work may involve access to youth in situations requiring a complex yet firm judgment, in places and under conditions where it is difficult to check workers' backgrounds. Under conditions where there are clear laws and good information systems it is possible to screen out those who have already been convicted or suspected of using children, but it is still not possible to stop all abuse. In divided societies these background checks are not usually possible, and the consequences are, on occasion, tragic, as the abuses of children by United Nations' personnel in Haiti and Africa illustrate. Especially for initiatives supported by NGOs, more consideration, discussion, and evaluation is needed to clarify what is to be done about this.

Unlike much work with youth around the world, aiming to 'rescue' or to preserve or establish safety, in divided societies participation in a youth group may involve more rather than less risk. Youth movements have been an important and maybe the important driving force for political change all over the world, and organised youth programmes often implicitly idealise these movements. Small initiatives, such as Hammad and Albakri's (2007) description of a group of girls asking the imam to make domestic violence a higher priority, may challenge someone's authority, even if it is in the name of a psychological construct such as 'youth voice' and not an explicitly political stance. Stronger challenges to unjust laws and to restrictive authorities may on occasion threaten young peoples' physical and emotional safety or jeopardise their economic future. In divided societies the boundaries between a political movement and a youth programme are thin, if possible at all, and although individual organizations and workers think about these issues, there is not yet an organized collective effort to evaluate the ethical legitimacy of asking young people to take such risks. We have yet to consider whether one sort of obligation as a youth programme precludes participation in some aspects of political life.

On the other hand, this very way of thinking may be a luxury – or cultural bias – of life in countries where there is more segregation of youth from adult life and more of a sense of the 'innocence of youth'.

Ideology: A Further Ethical Obligation

Most youth work organisations have an ideological point of view, often implicit. Although opposition to violence and advocacy of peace-keeping or peace-making is admirable, it may not be an adequate – or entirely honest – account of the implicit ideological and political norms of the organisation and its practices with youth. As Kane says, 'Even though [organisers] may be open-minded, if they have strong, well substantiated views, what they might really want, ideally, is that learners become independent, critical thinkers and then, of their own volition, arrive at the same conclusion as themselves' (2001:162). The ideological beliefs of workers inevitably influence the work and the participants. Workers have particular views about what peace means, and those views become implicitly understood and

accepted by participants even when – and sometimes especially when – the explicit claim is made that all are invited and all is negotiable. Smyth (cited in Harland, 2007) suggests an additional motivation for the appearance of neutrality, ‘a fear of having one’s core beliefs exposed’ (2001:182).

Facing the Unknown and the Educational Possibilities of Experience

Lear describes how Plenty Coups anticipated ‘a future goodness that transcends the current ability to understand what it is’. Much of youth work in divided societies operates in a similar manner, inviting young people to participate in a process without immediate payoff and requiring some faith and courage. In the emerging literature on this work, in reports and in Western research literatures, there is little discussion of this dynamic, with the exception of some writing about ‘popular education’, originating in Latin and South America, where uncertainty of outcome is considered to be an ethical and methodological necessity. For example, ‘the starting point of any educational endeavour should be to understand the social reality’ (Kane, 2001:17), and Brandão says it ‘is neither based exclusively on (explicitly) educational events nor gives priority to any particular educational mode’ and ‘turns both reality and the process of transformation themselves into educational events’ (cited in Kane, 2001:172). In terms of evaluation, participants learn to think about their own experience as data, and workers help individuals find others who share those experiences, from which collective action, usually political, can be organised.

In North American de-politicised terms, it is ‘experiential learning’ or ‘developmental education’ where the context for the work is the participant’s experience of daily life. Ognjenovic, Skorc, and Ivackovic (2007) describe a Vygotskyan developmental approach to work with children in war zones, in which ‘relational activities’ are introduced in order to elicit the possibilities of creative play, mutual exchange, and open-ended engagement of everyday life so that participants become ‘active creators of their own lives’ (2007:196).

Kane (2001) reports that despite the immense amount of creative activity in the field of popular education, there is still little rigorous study of what happens and how it works, and Schell-Faucon (2002) says that this is true of youth work in divided societies as well: ‘...the approaches tried and tested in conflict areas in order to educate people have... not been subject to a systematic observation and evaluation procedure’ (2002:8). There are plenty of programme descriptions, and more are published every month. These are useful but also usually written from an outsider’s point of view and with language that makes it difficult to grasp the concrete experience of youth and adults. What is needed is careful description and exploration of participant experience of the social reality that is claimed to be educational as well as how individuals come to act collectively.

One good example of how to approach this is the work of de Oliveira (2000) who describes the life of Brazilian street children as well as the life of those who work with them. He describes how some workers approached street young people living in a *cortiço*, helping them organise themselves into a group with the goal of participating in a music festival. It is a story of how street workers practice the liberation theology principle of the ‘pedagogy of presence’.

Assembling the musical group was not easy, as had been expected. Some youth were

more motivated to create a group identity, feeling that this could improve their life conditions, both immediately (by giving them a better sense of living in a shared home) and in the long run (since they were learning a trade). Others were very negative and sabotaged the work in various ways. Personal rivalries surfaced and jeopardized emerging relationships.

One day some small percussion instruments disappeared. It was suspected that some of the youth had stolen them and sold them for cash that would be converted into drugs. A few of the instruments were brought back later, but the youth who brought them back would not explain where they had been found.

As the date of the show approached, excitement and nervousness took over the cortiço, which at this point had become a hot spot, attracting youth from other cortiços. These 'outsiders' were viewed with distrust and watched carefully by the youth in 'our' cortiço, who were afraid of having their instruments stolen again. As rehearsals continued, several problems that had been latent in the cortiço unfolded before our eyes. There was clearly some drug business going on, and this would sometimes get in the way of the work. For example, some youth would not show up for rehearsal when called to go elsewhere by those who, we thought, were running the drug business. This jeopardised preparations for the show. It had been anticipated that the process would bring out these and other problems, which were then supposed to be discussed. However, the nature of the issue involved serious, life-threatening questions. The youth, knowing the seriousness of dealing with the drug universe, would not comment on the absence of the ones involved with drugs or discuss the issue any further. The other problem preventing the discussion of surfacing problems was that now the group was involved in a time-consuming, serious preparation of a professional show, which became the focus, not leaving much room for other activities.

A major factor influencing the group's dynamics was the sensitivity of the youth to criticism. Reactions to any kind of criticism tended to be very strong and were usually reason enough to induce some to abandon rehearsals. This sometimes made the process painful and frustrating, seriously affecting group motivation and cohesion. Another problem was the participation of the girls. In the beginning, the girls seemed to be more motivated than the boys but, as rehearsals continued, they became more difficult to deal with. They would rarely show up on time for rehearsals or other meetings. Sometimes they would not show up at all, and a few of them abandoned the project altogether. Apparently, one of the reasons for their behavior was pressure from their companions, who would ask them not to participate because the meetings interfered with their domestic schedules (2000:147-148).

This example illustrates, for de Oliveira, both the ordinary nature of the work, being a recreational activity, but also the extraordinary conditions of the work, with uneducated and unsupervised street youth. It illustrates, in the minds of the workers, a step in the process of allying youth with each other with the ultimate goal of political action.

This account, and many others, contributes to De Oliveira's description of the 'pedagogy of presence', a:

...dialectic between proximity and distance. On the one hand, the educator seeks to get closer to the youth, identifying him or herself with the young person's problems in an effusive, empathic, and significant way, constructing a quality bond. On the other hand, the educator seeks a certain distance that allows for a critical observation in the sense of being able to perceive his or her own actions in the context of the educational process. To make oneself constructively present in the life of a youth who is going through difficult life circumstances is, therefore, the first and most important task of an educator who aspires to assume a truly libertarian role (de Oliveira, 2000:90).

The ideas of 'a quality bond' and being 'constructively present' can be seen in the previous example. From accounts like these we get a sense of the daily struggles of the practical work as well as a theory drawn from the description of everyday life about how practice is done in that setting.

What Harm is Done?

Hammack (2006) studied a camp programme for Palestinians and Israelis based on contact theory, interpreting it using theories of identity development. He found that rather than reducing the potential for conflict, for some young people the camp contributed to 'identity polarisation':

The ideological content of life stories examined in this study suggests a firm commitment to the master narrative of identity promulgated by the discourse of their respective cultures. The context of conflict...creates a distinctive setting for the formation of personal identities. Whereas there is perhaps significant variability in the ideological settings of life stories of youth from cultures at peace, the context of conflict demands higher ideological conformity to the master narrative of identity, creating a greater frequency of...identity polarisation. Polarised identities are...reproduced in adolescence as individuals engage thoroughly with ideology. By allowing for the continued construction of disparate selves, identity polarisation as a feature of human development serves to reproduce the identity conditions by which conflicts endure across generations (2006:346).

This is one example of the potential harm of youth work. The kind of attention to possible harm evident in Hammack's (2006) article is not present anywhere in van Woerkam's (2004) article about the same programme.

One reason for this is that most youth work is vulnerable to the temptation to substitute the worthiness of the goal for the justification for the attempt. Here in North America, we now express revulsion about removing native children from their homes and villages and forcing them to attend residential schools, including forcing them to abandon their native language, as was done for 100 years. What is often lost in accounts of these practices is the sincerity and good will of many of those involved in carrying it out. They believed they were doing the right thing. Our indignation about it obscures the important lesson that we need to be skeptical about whether our own sincerity clouds our judgment.

There are numerous examples in the past 100 years of how apparent beneficence harms recipients (eg. Epstein, 2007), even when the recipient reports to be satisfied (McCord, 1992; 2003). As Thoreau (1854) said, 'There is no odour so bad as that which arises from goodness tainted....If I knew for a certainty that a man was coming to my home with the conscious design of doing me good, I should run for my life'. We are obligated to pay attention to the harm we do. Fine (1993) says:

Master sociologist Everett Hughes often trenchantly noted to his apprentices that there is an 'underside' associated with all work. Each job has techniques of doing things – standard operating procedures – of which it would be impolitic for those outside of the guild to know. Illusions are essential to maintain an occupational reputation. Such actions are typically hidden in the backstage regions from which outsiders are excluded. ...Illusions are necessary for occupational survival. ...Yet illusions have a way of growing, of laying down roots, of becoming taken for granted. This begins to be problematic when practitioners take illusions for real. It is not that practitioners operate out of cynical knowledge but, rather, they should operate with the recognition that they must make choices, which impel them to behave in ways that differ from how they would like 'the general public' to assume that they behave (1993:267-268).

Becoming aware of 'the dark side' and the actual or potential harm is an important everyday practice. With vulnerable young people, we risk their well-being if we are not willing to notice.

The Recalcitrance of Practice Wisdom

Good practice wisdom is often ignored or not recognised, especially by outsiders to a culture. This is taken up by Helen Epstein (2007), who describes how major international interventions for AIDS prevention have erred by missing or misinterpreting key data. For example:

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, officials from the World Health Organization (WHO), USAID, and other development agencies largely dismissed Uganda's AIDS programmes. 'It seemed like chaos', Gary Slutkin [said].... 'The problem was there was no "theory" behind Uganda's approach....What WHO officials did not understand at the time was that there was a theory. It just wasn't their theory' (2007:167).

Also, Epstein says, '...small community-based groups...were often overlooked in favour of overly ambitious mega-projects...' (2007:139). This is an old story in human services and education and community development. One reason is that the actual work is hard and not glamorous. Epstein summarises the key characteristics of effective AIDS prevention as a '...sense of solidarity, compassion, and mutual aid...' (2007:xiv), as collective social energy (2007:160). She highlights the 'intimate, personalised nature' (2007:167) of the work, open discussion, courage and strength, and the 'ordinary, but frank, conversation people had with family, friends, and neighbors...' (2007:134). Further, she asserts that '...the most successful AIDS projects tend to be conceived and run by Africans themselves or by missionaries and aid workers with long experience in Africa – in other words, by people who

really know the culture' (2007:xiv).

Epstein is describing local practices in Uganda and elsewhere in Africa, and the ideas, if not the particular examples, exemplify old-fashioned group work, a tradition with a long history (Carson, Fritz, Lewis, Ramey, and Sugiuchi, 2004; Konopka, 1954; Ross, 1955) of success in North America and Europe but also a history of not being widely used. And the practice wisdom in work with youth in divided and contested societies is often this kind of work. It is, unfortunately, not very exotic, and it tends to blend into the background, especially when outsiders look in. Even insiders to the culture do not always see it as 'cutting edge', progressive, or marketable to funding agencies.

In public health, Epstein suggests that flashier, politically savvy initiatives divert attention away from what works, and the same is probably true in youth work.

From Stories to Data: Toward a Point of View

To explore more rigorously the conditions of this work, we aim toward the goal of accumulating experience and acquiring a more dynamic, independent point of view. A good example of how these goals are practised in evaluation is in Denov and Maclure (2007). They note that there is a:

...paucity of research on the effects of militarisation among child soldiers following the end of sustained military conflicts and how such children negotiate transitions from a world of systemic violence and prescribed roles to one that requires a rejection of their erstwhile personas and an adaptation to fundamentally new demands and new identities (2007:245).

This may be a surprise or simply seem wrong, because there is certainly a lot of writing about the impact of war on young people and the experience of being a child soldier. Also, those who have worked with present and past child soldiers know a great deal about the consequences of having been a child soldier and the difficult choices afterward. What Denov and Maclure do is elevate personal experience and anecdote to the level of data by carefully constructing the life histories of two young people to represent the experience of young people in Sierra Leone. These life histories are both close description and theory, and they also allow for theorising by others: theorising about how to represent the experience of present and former child soldiers and theorising about what can be done. Denov and Maclure (2007) chose to mix a first-person narrative with a third-person narrative, as in this excerpt about a young boy:

'I was a special boy in the bush. My commander loved me and I loved him. I would do anything because of my love for him'. Increasingly, therefore, he came to regard the RUF as a surrogate family and to see himself as essentially an RUF fighter. Eventually he became a commander himself with his own 'small boys unit' over which he exercised absolute authority. To become a commander was deemed to be the pinnacle of RUF success—a source of power, privilege, and pride (2007:253).

In contrast, Isata's experience turned sour:

When she and several other former combatants did not receive their financial rewards on time [for participation in demobilization, demilitarisation, and reintegration activities (DDR)], they organised a violent attack against the DDR programmers ... We were very angry about not getting our money ... [To build up courage] we took drugs and went as a group to physically attack the DDR programmers for not giving us our money.

After leaving the programme, Isata was abandoned to the streets by workers and by the programme.

Denov and Maclure used these life histories to represent what they call 'epiphanies, turnings, and adaptations', the crucial moments of involuntary and voluntary change that occur with child soldiers in these cases, especially the changes in identity. Thus we can take from these stories theories about the experience, and we may come to see the experience through the eyes of the young people. Again, these are not merely anecdote; they are life histories built upon a stock of the study of numerous child soldiers.

Denov and Maclure provide a point of view, a description of the social and cultural situation, and a sequence of past experiences and situations, three contributions of a good 'life history' that results from careful study, according to Shaw (1930:3).

The 'own story' affords the only means of acquiring knowledge of many facts concerning outside situations as well as factors in the mental life which may be active elements in producing that which we are studying...And this is not material of theoretical or academic interest; it is most useful in its practical bearing upon which what ought to be done in this case (1930:4).

Further, these kinds of studies 'can give meaning to the overworked notion of process. Sociologists like to speak of "ongoing processes" and the like, but their methods usually prevent them from seeing the processes they talk about so glibly' (Becker, 1966:xiii). These kinds of studies require 'an intimate understanding of the lives of others' (Becker, 1966:xiii).

Although interviews are often used in these arenas of the work, interviews are not contributing enough of the kind of rich description and the 'intimate understanding of the lives of others' that make possible:

... accounts that emphasize the legitimacy or authenticity of the account presented. These accounts assume the experiential authority of the author, a documentary text, asserting transparency, claims about the "native's point of view," and the validity of the author's interpretations (Fine, 2003:42).

This kind of authority may require more ethnography and less interviewing.

Fine (2003) described three different kinds of ethnography: postulated, personal, and peopled. Postulated ethnographies emphasise theory and use a small amount of data to support the theory. Lederach's (1998, 2005) writing is an excellent example of this kind

of ethnography, based in his lifetime of work and experience; another example is Wessells (2004). Personal ethnographies emphasise the personal relationship between the observed and the observer. In some form, many case studies written by observers and employees fall in this category, such as Jones (2005), Bigirindavyi (2004), Bretherton, Weston, and Zbar (2005), and Hill (2005). Much of the writing in the arena of divided and contested societies falls into one of these two categories.

Fine describes the third, a peopled ethnography, as one in which 'theories are grounded in the empirical data of group life' (2003:44); '...theoretical claims are grounded in detailed observations, rather than being illustrated by them: in the words of Katz, we move from how to why: from close observation to theory' (2001:46). In this view, close observation goes hand-in-hand with theorising and, over time, both data and theory accumulate and are used to comment and critique each other as well as other data and theory.

All three are useful, and we probably need more of the third. It involves a rich and detailed account of the world. The accumulation of data is driven by theoretical concerns and interests; it builds on other studies; it examines interacting small groups, and multiple sites. According to Fine (2003), it is 'richly ethnographic', in that detailed data is collected, eg. in field notes. Such work 'distances the researcher and the researched' in the sense that it allows the research to transcend individual cases. Individual actors and scenes are downplayed in comparison to multiple actors and multiple scenes. The researcher is there to make a case. Again, story becomes data.

Conclusion

Epstein (2007) says that '...if you look hard enough at a problem, you may find surprising truths that no one else could have predicted. But you have to look very hard. You must enter a different world, follow its logic, and forget your own'. This idea suggests that our theorising, to date, about youth work in divided societies may yet still be described in a point of view derived from outside these practices, and that we have yet to truly 'enter a different world'.

Work in divided and contested societies is rich in stories, practice wisdom, and experience that, with careful study, has an important contribution to make to broader arenas of youth work. The collection of these might best be driven by questions arising from practice and from the practical challenges of the work such as, 'Is my experience with this issue unique or common?' 'What other ways are there to respond to this problem, this or these young people, or this threat?' 'What are the consequences of this kind of work for young people?' 'What positive or negative contribution does our work make to the quality of life for these young people, this community, and this society?' 'Where and how do we see these effects?' 'What harm might we be overlooking?' With rigorous theorising and data collection about the similarities and differences of this specific kind of work to other youth work, we may have an opportunity to truly serve young people and fulfill our ethical commitment.

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Segregated Britain: A Society in Conflict with its 'Radicalised' Youth?

Alan Grattan

Much recent government and media focus has drawn attention to the 'problem' of youth and their association with acts of violence in modern Britain. The perceived problem of youth violence has served to create a new 'moral panic' and 'social threat'. This has encouraged some commentators to portray British society to be 'under siege' by 'out of control' young people. This paper explores the 'dialectic' relationship between global and local structures and how recent developments at each level have contributed to an increased sense of alienation and radicalisation of young people in an increasingly segregated and 'conflict' Britain. Building on experiences and practices gained through thirty years of conflict in Northern Ireland this paper also argues that youth work must enter into the community 'struggle' for the 'hearts and minds' of young people.

Keywords: *conflict, globalisation, radicalisation, segregation, young people.*

Al-Qaida recruiting teenagers to attack Britain (Guardian, 6/11/2007).

Children are being taught to become terrorists (Independent, 6/11/2007).

Britons have started stabbing each other...drunken gangs of 'feckless' youths are to blame (The Week, 25/8/2007).

Gangs offer boys what they need: not just protection from bigger boys but an outlet for their aggression and a focus of authority (The Week, 25/8/2007).

Youth work is a moral and existential necessity since youth are both vulnerable to and contributors to violence and trouble (Magnuson, 2007:4).

Following a recent statement by the director general of MI5, Jonathan Evans, media headlines in the British press have served to bring to public attention the relationship between young people and politically motivated violence and conflict. The warnings that teenagers, as young as fifteen are being 'groomed' to carry out terrorist attacks in Britain, 'coincided' with the Queen's Speech (2007) in which the government outlined its plans for a new Counter Terrorism Bill. Sceptics and those politicians opposed to increased draconian measures being proposed have suggested that the new Counter Terrorism Bill can be added to the ever growing list of 'anti-youth' legislation introduced by the New Labour government since 1997. Nevertheless the inference to be drawn is clear; Britain has a 'youth problem' of a new dimension, that of young disillusioned and alienated Muslims who are vulnerable to 'radicalisation' processes from those who want to wage a 'war' on Britain.

A report in *The Times* (6/5/2007) highlighted the 'vulnerability' of Muslim young people. Under the headline 'From bored youths to bombers', *The Times* reported:

The path from bored British teenager to terrorist traitor was carefully laid down for the ordinary young men seduced into hatching the spectacular bomb plot...The humdrum lives ...were transformed...the most vainglorious took to calling himself 'Superstar'.

Continuing:

Their aimless existence and vague Muslim identities made them easy prey for wily extremists.

Following on closely from such stories of the 'radicalisation' of young bored Muslims was that of the killing of 11 year old Rhys Jones in Liverpool in August 2007. The murder served to fuel both the media frenzy and society's growing 'moral panic' as well as prompting real and difficult questions to be asked about the state of contemporary Britain. Showing the pictures of eight young people who had been victims of violent deaths between March and August 2007, the *Independent* raised the question, 'Why are our children prepared to kill one another?' Camila Batmanghelidjh (2007) argued that the death of Rhys Jones had served to bring home the 'unseen and sinister infrastructure for young people to use firearms.' This heightened media attention regarding the rise in inner city youth gang culture, involving the increased use of guns and knives, suggest that Britain is a 'society under siege' by 'out of control' young people.

That there has historically been a direct link between young people, their involvement in gangs and violent action, as well as politically motivated violence, is hardly new or surprising. Media amplification and instant accessibility of news, as well as research from 'contested societies' serve to reinforce the fact that young people are both 'perpetrators and victims' of violence. (Hanson, 2005; Magnusson and Baizerman, 2007; Hamilton, Radford and Jarman, 2004; Gallagher, 2004; Reilly, Muldoon and Byrne, 2004; Harland, 2001; Bullock and Tilley, 2002). What seems to be new is the realisation and shock within the British media and therefore, in turn, the British public consciousness that young British- born people are prepared to engage in acts of violence against both each other and the perceived 'other' within their own community and country. However, it is important to go beyond, albeit well informed, journalistic pontificating, public moral panic and government reactive policies, to explore some of the possible deeper macro and micro dynamics that underpin and promote such violent developments in contemporary Britain.

Citing Cairns and Darby (1998), Muldoon (2004:454) argues that 'In order to create and maintain peaceful societies we need to understand the causes of conflict and prevent the 'recreation' of conflict.' Muldoon continues to assert that such understanding will inform services, service provision and policymakers. It is therefore important to understand those at the heart of much violence and conflict ie. young people. Furthermore, it is imperative to understand the contemporary context and influencing factors that help shape the 'cultural' environment inhabited by today's young people; a context that sees a 'dialectic' relationship and interplay between the 'global' and local' structures.

From Global to Local Context; Growing Segregation and Division: A Theoretical Consideration

The 'Global': A Challenge to Certainty?

The recent expansion of the European Union and increased movement of labour, together with Britain's central position within the EU has seen it become an attractive destination for a mobile migrant workforce. This factor coupled with its colonial past means that Britain has a chequered experience of issues associated with immigration and cultural diversity. Unfortunately, in a recent part of this history Britain (and especially England) has witnessed a range of 'public conflicts' and racial attacks 'emanating from the increasingly "sensitive" development of cultural and ethnic diversity and the resultant prejudice and discrimination' (Grattan, 2007a: 50).

At the same time, the escalation of regional conflict throughout the world, the declared 'war on terrorism', the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as rendition flights and detentions at Guantanamo Bay may all be seen as contributing factors that led to the attack on London in July 2005 and in Glasgow in 2007. The heightening of the terrorist alert accompanied by increased security and surveillance throughout the UK, has precipitated the heightening of tension and the deterioration of trust between the various ethnic and cultural groups; one consequence of such global developments has been a growing physical and 'psychological' communal segregation at a local level.

In this situation "in a fast changing world increasingly individuals and communities search for a sense of security in an insecure world' (Grattan, 2007b:61). In such a climate, local changes brought about by global processes have a tendency to produce a combination of fear, anxiety and a degree of uncertainty. Beck (1997) suggests that the challenge to basic societal, communal and thereby individual certainties carries a potentially negative response with possible dangerous side effects. This has certainly been the case in Britain for both the migrant and indigenous communities and especially their young people. For both groups of young people their 'certainties' are rapidly disintegrating in a fast changing world. Often this brings a reactive and negative response against society for allowing it to happen and against the 'other' for causing it to happen. For one group these processes stimulate a sense of uncertainty of an economic, communal and cultural nature, while for the other, the source of uncertainty relates mainly to that of faith and religion, with community, culture and identity also being common components.

Within contemporary Britain these responses may include the rise of nationalism, ethno-centrism, xenophobia, hatred and violence 'tinged with an element of fundamentalism' and directed against the perceived 'threat' or 'other' in their midst (McGhee, 2005:5). At a localised, day to day lived reality, responses tend to be 'personalised, internalised and, at times, directed negatively towards...the migrant worker, the asylum seeker, the "non-believer", the non-indigenous or ethnic minority group; the "other"' (Grattan, 2007b :65). In this context the 'other' is a relative, fluid and floating concept ie. the identified 'other' is constantly modified according to changing events, incidents and, indeed, perceptions of threat at both a global and local level.

A Search for 'Security': The 'Local' and the Community

A further dimension of the search for security is to revert to history, tradition and one's faith, in this sense the community and the local is deemed to be increasingly important. According to Sennett (1974) the 'holding on' to community as a 'protective shell' is based upon the increased existential anxiety at both the individual and communal level and reaffirmation of one's sense of identity is crucial: 'the sense that one's long standing perceived identity and traditions are being questioned and/or changed in the modern era adds to the heightened sense of existential anxiety and the attraction of looking to one's past for security' (Grattan, 2007b: 66).

Sennett (1974: 309) goes on to suggest that 'emotion is a crucial ingredient in relation to the defence and maintenance of identity and community. Such emotional responses are often initiated as a counter to processes of 'detraditionalisation' and/or unprecedented diversity. Depending on how one's communal position is perceived either of these can and often is used to 'legitimise' any resultant 'social defence' action. Such 'emotional' responses may take various forms including intolerance, prejudice, discrimination, antagonism, hatred, conflict and violence and be utilised, with individual and communal justification, towards those opposing groups and/or communities. 'The prejudice and resultant negative actions that follow are often "legitimised" by the individual and community as being in defence of their tradition, culture, identity and 'way of life' (Grattan, 2007b: 67).

Sennett (1974:306-307) suggests that community and emotions come together to provide the 'shell of outlook and perception' as well as 'resistance' against the 'outside'. He further suggests that any attack on their community or group becomes modulated in the mind of that group or community as an 'attack' on its culture, way of life and identity. In this sense the 'collective conscience' is utilised, and mobilised to ward off the perceived threat of the outside world; a changing world that lacks understanding or even cares for their culture, history or, indeed, their future. The community serves as a 'protective shell' against a perceived hostile outside world; it is an antidote or antithesis to the global processes and its associated elements of dislocation, division and separation. 'To erase...strangerhood, you try to make intimate and local the scale of human experience, that is you make local territory morally sacred' (Sennett, 1974:295).

In addition, Sennett (1974: 300) postulates that the 'fraternal' community can also become the 'fratricidal' community in that the orientation and mentality to 'erase stranger hood' may at times be 'turned toward the world'. He continues, 'We are a community, we are being real; the outside world is not responding to us in terms of who we are; therefore something is wrong with it, it has failed us, therefore we will have nothing to do with it.' I have argued that in such a situation both 'visible' and 'invisible' barriers are created by community and its individual members; both have 'emotionally' withdrawn from the world as well as erecting a territorial and symbolic and psychological barrier to keep the world out (Grattan, 2007b:70)

Emotions and Community of Feelings

In these circumstances social and communal segregation intensifies producing a 'stand-off' attitude that further entrenches 'emotions' and division; a 'they want nothing to do with us, we'll have nothing to do with them' approach. Mutual suspicion, distrust, lack of

understanding and myth increasingly become part of reality. In this segregated situation 'moral outrage' is utilised as a means of galvanising individuals into a sense of solidarity on each side of the segregation with the result that, if required, action against the 'outsider' and the world will take place all of whom are viewed with suspicion. Resistance to the outside world serves as a catalyst for political, ideological or economically motivated action, and even conflict. Any challenge to 'way of life' is interpreted as an attack on sense of community, religion, culture and/or identity. For Sennett (1974: 307) internal passion and external withdrawal must be maintained; this tends to be achieved through the 'hyping up of emotions'.

The creation of the visible and invisible barriers is made all the more easy within an increasingly segregated society and serves as a legitimisation of actions and attitudes to keep the 'other' or 'outsider' at a safe distance. Suspicion, distrust, fear and hatred of each other serve only to reinforce the position of those who remain dogmatic and uncompromising. For such communities 'distrust and solidarity seemingly opposed are united' (Sennett, 1974: 309).

Berezin (2002) argues that through the development of a 'community of feelings', direct action and emotions become fused. The intensification of emotional identification is often exploited by influential and charismatic community leaders and serves to stimulate and harness emotions to a 'political', religious, ideological or territorial cause. Levels of inclusion, exclusion, security and insecurity felt by individuals and communities will help determine the form and extent the emotion-based action will take (Grattan, 2007b:67). Kaloianov (2007:2) argues that in such an atmosphere there is a link between alienation and radicalisation. For example alienation passing into radicalisation is aligned to the levels of attachment and detachment from a given set of values and from the social order incorporating them. In this respect the potentially 'radicalised' young urban gang member has common currency with the potentially 'radicalised' young Muslim in that both are in a state of alienation and both are prepared to 'fight back' or 'hit out' at those forces and individuals perceived to be responsible for their plight or position. As part of this process the individual and community often reach back to their tradition, religion and history, as well as to feelings of nationalism, ethnocentrism and xenophobia, for a sense of security, belonging and identity, as well as justification and legitimisation for actions and attitudes.

Add to this mix of growing community segregation the increasing sense of alienation of young people from mainstream society and the absence of meaningful forms of expression, then perhaps action based on various emotions become almost inevitable. Once such negative emotions become harnessed to particular communal or cultural causes they are often expressed through conflict and/ or violence and potentially under the guise of political, religious or sub-cultural 'causes' or 'crusades'.

The Radicalisation of Alienated Young People: Community Tension and Ideological Differences

Structural economic, political and social changes in Britain's recent history have made a significant contribution to the contemporary situation, which in turn connects the

relationship between the global and the local contexts. The structural decline of traditional industries and manufacturing and the shift to a service economy, together with the advent of the consumerist culture as part of the globalising process in the 1970s and 1980s, have all left a cultural and economic legacy for the last two or three generations (Giddens, 2002). The economic division between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' has been exacerbated as has the cultural and religious division between the 'sacred and profane', thereby increasing religious diversity in an increasingly secular society. In such circumstances economic imperatives of society and the globalised system drives a global and local wedge between those who gain and those who are increasingly disadvantaged. For many who find themselves in this 'overwhelming' situation a reversion to the local ie. community, tradition, history, religion and identity, are regarded as a rejection of the global that is seen as an unjust, uncaring and iniquitous world (Grattan, 2007b).

Additionally, and in these circumstances, Britain's involvement in overseas conflict, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and its leading advocacy of the 'war on terror', both of which have arguably resulted in direct action and violence on British soil, leads some commentators to conclude that Britain is indeed a conflict society. One unintended consequence of this has been the alienation and suspicion of a sizeable religious community within Britain. Especially within the Muslim community, some (particularly amongst its young people), have demonstrated a willingness to 'fight back' against the perceived or real prejudice, stigmatisation and discrimination against their community.

According to Woolcock and Kennedy (2007) regarding five young men from the British Muslim community convicted of a bomb plot in 2007, 'all had unremarkable starts to life [and] were typical teenage boys...happy to drink, smoke and chase girls'. However, Woolcock and Kennedy infer that it was the plight and sacrifice of Muslims in places such as Chechnya, Palestine as well as Iraq and Afghanistan that convinced them 'that Muslims needed to rise up around the world.' Meanwhile Cummings (2006) suggests 'some young British Muslims identify with their co-religionists in Palestine and Chechnya primarily as an expression of their lack of identification with British society.'

Britain is also a nation involved in a 'social conflict' with a section of its indigenous youth, especially those from the more economically deprived and disadvantaged areas. As with some Muslim young people, some young people from such backgrounds are becoming involved in 'radicalised' and 'informal' community structures ie. the gang, for the purpose of protection, 'fighting back', for a sense of security and belonging, as well as to maintain a sense of individual and community identity. In this respect there are parallels and similarities in both these processes; it is the ideological bases and motivations that differ.

The increased use of violence amongst these British youth could be aligned with the increasing socio-economic and cultural divide and segregation experienced by an increasing number of communities. The 'radicalising' process comes through the emotional association with a 'cause' that is both community and/or economically based and related to sense of identity and belonging in an otherwise 'alienating' world. 'Radicalised' in this context is a readiness and preparedness to indulge collectively in those activities that are regarded as extreme and unacceptable by the wider community and society, eg. through the organisation of gangs prepared to [in]discriminately use guns and knives to 'sort out' local

problems. This form of struggle against the perceived social and economic inequities of modern society, in the mind of the young person involved, is deemed to be more effective, and safer, through the gang structure. The gang in this respect offers a legitimisation and support for those negative emotional attitudes such as anger, fear and hate and the resultant actions that are generally condemned by society (Bullock and Tilley, 2002).

For many young people caught within the growing socio-economic divide characteristic of modern life at both the global and local levels, an 'alternative gang career' can be attractive. In interviews with eighty young men from Britain's inner city, disadvantaged communities, Jason Bennetto (2007) allowed young people to speak for themselves. For some the attraction of the gang was based upon a sense of identity and of security, while for others it was seen as a way out of poverty and an ability to be included and empowered in the contemporary consumerist culture:

like if your mum's living off benefits and she's got to pay all the bills, and she's got seven like kids and she can't make ends meet, the kids are going to see what the mum's going through and think: 'Yeah, I'll sell drugs and help my mother.' That's it. So the mums respect what the son is doing; she knows it's wrong, but he's helping get food on the table. (London)

One of my co-d's [co-defendants], he was constantly at the job centre, he was really trying to get a job...he actually got a job, he was working nights packing, but the wages were silly. He was really willing to work but that was the best he could get...that was the best the job centre could offer. It just broke him. (London)

It's the whole rat race thing, you know, where if you ain't like, wearing Nike Shox, you know, you're a tramp. And Shox ain't cheap, they're like 130-quid trainers...a lot of people can't afford it, but if they ain't got 'em they ain't part of it. (West Midlands)

The processes and causes that underlie the 'radicalisation' of those young people from the Muslim community are of a very similar nature but tend to have their basis in a religious and political 'cause' as opposed to that of an economic nature. Nevertheless, that cause is similarly community based and also, related to a sense of identity fused with emotions which they may see as under attack and challenge in contemporary Britain and, indeed, the world. Once again, the radicalising process and the expression of perceived grievances stems from a sense of alienation and frustration within an uncaring or indifferent society that views their beliefs, religion and community with a combination of suspicion and fear. As with the 'gang' culture, 'radicalisation' involves participation in group-affirming activities that are deemed to be extreme and unacceptable by mainstream society. Nevertheless, the legitimisation and emotional outlet provided by the 'group' serves as a basis for the confirmation of identity and sense of belonging.

In many respects there is a similarity of process and practice, albeit based on differing ideological orientations and value systems between those young people who join groups to become involved directly or indirectly in violence and conflict. Whether politically, religiously or economically motivated, the common denominator in both circumstances is that those young people who become part of this process are the subject of the inter-relationship

between both global and local processes that lead to a sense of alienation in an increasing globalising world. Kaloianov (2007) in this context argues that there is an inter-relatedness between alienation and radicalisation; that there is a danger of alienation passing into radicalisation, while radicalisation can be sourced in alienation.

Young People and Youth Work in Conflict Societies: Looking to Northern Ireland?

Young People and Conflict: Being Involved

While Northern Ireland finds itself moving away, albeit very gradually, from political, cultural and religious conflict, it is grappling with the legacy of 'organic' defence organisations that have now turned their structures and 'influence' more directly to gang related activities. In relation to Britain, and especially England, both of the aforementioned i.e. community gangs and identity based informal organisations are deemed to be relatively new phenomena stemming from the increased division and segregation currently being experienced. Taken together, both are potentially making a major contribution to Britain becoming a society increasingly divided and in conflict. In this respect, and in relation to working with young people, government bodies and national and regional organisations and agencies engaged in youth work may be able to look to Northern Ireland's past experiences for future guidance.

The essence and context of the conflict in Northern Ireland differs from current issues confronting British society, but some common aspects may be discerned. Within Northern Ireland, community segregation and separation based upon perceived communal identity, brought with it an atmosphere and attitude of distrust and suspicion of the 'other'. Acts of violence based upon emotions of anger and hatred and borne out of 'defence' of tradition, religion, ethnicity, culture and community were locally justified and legitimised and as such carried kudos and credibility.

Such acts were carried out mainly by young people and justified and controlled by the dominant community paramilitary organisation [gang]; directed by their dominant community 'world view'. The ethos of such organisations was based on a contradictory blend of religious and secular ideologies tinged with aspects of nationalism, sectarianism, fundamentalism and ethnocentrism. In the midst of such processes often young people from the community would be enticed or feel compelled to become involved in defence of community and all that it represents against the uncertainty symbolised and personified by the 'other'.

In such contexts youth work has a significant part to play in engaging with young people who are at risk of becoming involved directly or indirectly in communal and /or politically motivated violence and conflict. As part of this process youth work must communicate with and challenge those of 'organic' influence in the community, who would seek to negatively 'radicalise' and attract to their 'cause' disillusioned, disengaged and alienated young people. The youth worker must engage in an 'organic' struggle for the hearts and minds of young people within their own community (Grattan and Morgan, 2007:165-175).

Being Involved: Kudos or Exclusion

Hanson (2005:1) has argued that young people have been influential in 'sustaining tension within and between communities and participating in forms of violence and anti-social behaviour'. Violence and conflict involving young people is both inter and intra communal and takes both an offensive and defensive form whereby young people engage in 'turf' power struggles, attack the 'other' community or defend their own community. Additionally, intra communal conflict tends to be more gang orientated involving gang versus gang rather than community versus community; nevertheless both contain a territorial as well as an identity element. A further integral aspect is that of status and kudos; level and degree of involvement in violence will provide the young person with the reputation, credentials and prestige amongst both inter and intra communal peers.

Smyth et al (2002) relating to the Northern Ireland context, suggests that street fighting and violence has represented a way in which a young person's status can be enhanced; it is deemed to be a form of 'socialisation' and induction into the paramilitary structures. This can be related to the gang structures within the British urban context. However, they also suggest that outside of these informal community structures, the wider community and society see such young people as 'a law unto themselves'. Smyth (1998:47) observes that 'sub groups of children and young people are identified as being particularly at risk of becoming victims (or perpetrators) of violent acts.'

Kudos or exclusion is very often the stark choice for young people within these communities and often it is the dark side of social capital that prevails. In this scenario, young people are often pressurised to maintain community traditions and territorial boundaries as well as to maintain the 'other' as the enemy and to fear change. This process may be discerned within both the Protestant 'Loyalist' community of Northern Ireland and the gang culture in British cities such as Manchester, Liverpool and London (Grattan, 2007a; Nelson, 1984; Bullock and Tilley, 2002). Whether to resist or to become involved in the communal violence is a dilemma in which both choices carry serious consequences and risks for the young person, potentially leading to the development of a 'contradictory consciousness' and 'existential anxiety'.

Such risks tend to be exacerbated by communal and residential segregation where according to Connolly and McGinn (1999), young people at an early age are able to identify and attribute negative characteristics to the 'other'. Such segregation and acts of inter and intra communal violence and conflict help to create not only feelings of suspicion and fear but also grievance and victim-hood. According to Smyth and Scott (2000) a 'grievance culture' tends to form based on a combination of perceived and real wrongs and injustices. Often this culture, they argue, is inherited from parents and community and tradition. For Harland (2001) after years of violence, hatred and its legitimisation, for many young people the 'culture of violence' has become normalised within the segregated communities; adding that many young people have become 'socialised and habituated' to violence.

Being Involved: Paramilitary Recruitment and Control

Within the Northern Ireland context, evidence clearly shows that paramilitary organisations have played a significant role in their respective local community's day to day experiences throughout the period of the conflict. Indeed, despite the 'peace process' and the

paramilitary ceasefires, their legacy and their activities continue. While the rationale or justification for their existence and continuing violence may have less 'political' and 'security' credibility their activities in relation to young people remain very much the same. In this respect, one might argue that the paramilitary organisations in Northern Ireland have undergone their own 'passive revolution' in that they have 'changed' in order to remain the same. Today many of their activities would be deemed to be of a similar nature to those of the inner city gangs in Britain.

Paramilitary influence within most working class and disadvantaged communities tends to take a dual form, especially in relation to young people; that of recruitment and control. Recruitment of young people prior to the ceasefires was perceived to be politically motivated and street violence was regarded as part of an induction process as well as deemed to be in defence of the community in the face of threat from the 'other' or 'outsider' (Smyth and Campbell, 2005: 2). During the ceasefire and 'peace process' phase, circa 1998 onwards, recruitment still continues within the respective communities. Smyth and Campbell (2005: 4) argue that, 'Young people are seen in terms of their potential to augment the ranks of one side or the other. Young people themselves report feeling "safer" if they belong to one group or another'. Once again, such a situation resonates with contemporary inner city Britain (see Bennetto, 2007; Bullock and Tilley, 2002).

With reference to 'control', one aspect of this is related to that of recruitment in that some young people who engage in what the community regard as 'anti-social activities' are sometimes given the choice to either join the organisation or face the consequences of their actions; the latter option carries with it the very real threat of punishment beating or shooting. Smyth and Campbell (2005: 2) report that, '[paramilitary] leaders have espoused the view that young people who are "beyond control" are more easily controlled if recruited into a paramilitary group. In short, the 'gangs', in the form of paramilitary vigilante groups, control those young people who are deemed by the community to be uncontrollable, through the use or threat of violence. Hanson (2005: 85) reinforces this view, stating, 'Paramilitary groups exercise influence...and have frequently resorted to the use of violence against young people...have participated in 'punishment' shootings and beatings.' Citing Knox and Monaghan (2003), Hanson (2005:85) also reports that the under-25 age group makes up the largest share of all victims of shootings. Shootings and beatings are punishment for 'petty crimes and anti-social behaviour, using a tariff system of threats, exclusions and physical punishment. In some cases these physical punishments involve firearms, in so-called "punishment shootings" and in most extreme cases death or exile' (Smyth and Campbell, 2005: 3). For those who wield such influence over young people within their communities, many of those young people who have been through the youth justice system or hold the ASBO 'badge of honour' are often the prime 'targets' for recruitment as 'gang fodder'.

In the Northern Ireland context what was 'sold' as 'defence of community' quickly became 'control of the community' with the entrapment of young people within the paramilitary gang structures. Whether within the paramilitary or gang structure the feeling of security that membership brings feeds off the community's 'feelings of insecurity'. One consequence of these processes was the development of vigilantism within the communities. The role of 'law and order' within the community took the form of informal policing by the

paramilitary gangs who would also pass judgement and mete out arbitrary punishment to young people. Often these punishments were at the behest of an increasingly frustrated and despairing community tiring of anti-social behaviour of young people. Usually this was the case where confidence in the formal law and order processes was lost or non-existent. However, an unintended consequence was the community sanctioning and legitimising of the illegitimate activities of those paramilitary gangs within their midst; in doing so reinforcing vigilantism. Experiences such as these must be viewed very carefully within the current British context, especially in those communities that feel economically deprived, disadvantaged and alienated.

Being Involved: Ethics and Excitement

For some young people the choice is stark: 'join-up' or face violent punishment if they step out of line. One young person, cited in Hanson (2005: 87) stated, 'they [paramilitaries] actually think they are the "peelers"...gangsters that's all they are...only because they got the f**king weapons.' However, for other young people, as mentioned earlier, being a member is about defending their community and/ or attaining credibility, status and kudos. 'I got involved in the conflict when I was 15...I became fully involved in the conflict...the conflict was my whole identity' (Magnusson and Baizerman, 2007: 262-264).

Harland (2007:177-190) takes up this point adding that many young men saw it as their duty to defend their community if under threat and in this context believed that violence was an acceptable response. There was an 'ethical' dimension in that some forms of violence were deemed to be unacceptable e.g. attacking the very young or very old. However, overall, Harland found that amongst young men the use of violence was both condoned and a legitimatised way in dealing with some of their problems. Furthermore, and quite importantly, he points out that many young males quite willingly enter into violent acts as a source of excitement, stating that:

[there] was the buzz and excitement that many young men felt as a result of being involved in violence. Several young men perceived a society without violence as boring, suggesting that engaging in violence and risk-taking behaviour for some young males can be a rewarding activity.

This reinforces an earlier point in relation to urban gangs that often this activity, the 'dark side' of social capital, can be financially beneficial and an 'alternative career path'. Furthermore, the development of the above mentioned situations only heightens the potential for violence between young people at both an intra and inter communal level.

However:

Of those young people who live with direct violence in their community, some are often faced with the dilemma of how to respond to the pressures imposed by peers and significant adults to become involved. In this situation, the young person who becomes involved in direct action will bring peer and group acceptance...while resistance may provoke psychological and physical intimidation (Grattan and Morgan, 2007:172).

Either way it is the young person that tends to be caught in the middle and whatever their

decision for whatever reason, it will potentially impact upon their lives, become a threat to their future and carry unanticipated consequences; here the dictum, 'once in, never out', is very apt!

Young People and Conflict: Youth Work Response

Harland (2007:181) reports that since the 1970s youth provision in Northern Ireland has attempted to meet the needs of young people despite the existence of 'extremely difficult and contested socio-economic and political circumstances'. Mapping out the experiences of youth work during the conflict he highlights the shift in focus from attempting to keep young people off the streets in the 1970s through to the evolution of 'specific initiatives' around 'cross community and community relations work'. Referring to Smyth (2001), Harland makes a very important point in that youth work in the 1990s in Northern Ireland 'avoided the more challenging and controversial issues associated with political education and civic responsibility'. This has arguably also been a fundamental error in the development of youth work policy and practice in Britain over the past twenty five years or so; a position compounded by respective governments approaching the issue of youth and young people in a generalised and sweeping manner as both a social problem and a social threat.

In many respects the whole notion of civic responsibility, consultation and empowerment initiatives and citizenship education in the British context, are very laudable but also very late. Paradoxically, it may be argued, that such an attempt to 'politically socialise' young people is an attempt to persuade young people to embrace those very mechanisms of governance and society, that has caused them to be so apathetic and distrusting in the first place. It may be seen that such initiatives are directed towards and embraced by those young people who have not been subject to the same levels of negative labelling and stereotyping experienced by their more socio-economic disadvantaged counter-parts. As Muldoon (2004:462-465) points out 'inequity of experiences may contribute to feelings of disempowerment and alienation of young people', especially those young people from 'deprived backgrounds'. She adds that 'young people's apathy, indifference and hostility to politics should be addressed as a matter of urgency'; arguing that young people feel a distance between themselves and their institutions of governance.

In the Northern Ireland context, according to Harland (2007:182), where societies and communities are segregated and where violence exists, it becomes extremely difficult to promote issues relating to citizenship education and civic and democratic responsibilities with young people. He argues that 'it is understandable why certain young people may be suspicious of attempts to involve them in contributing to peace building [and communal decision-making] processes'. Perhaps this is, indeed, one of the main challenges facing youth work and workers in an increasingly segregated and violent Britain.

In this respect, the role of youth work is both central and crucial in promoting political education and participation of young people in relation to issues of violence, conflict and cultural diversity. However, Harland, Morgan and Muldoon (2005) found that despite initiatives to attempt to address such issues, many youth workers reject the idea that 'political work' is part of youth work; a misapprehension that can and may have far

reaching consequences for future generations, for society and for peaceful and democratic political process. Again, Harland, Morgan and Muldoon (2005) cited by Harland (2007: 182) point out that 'Citizenship education was a response by New Labour...to apathy, ignorance and cynicism about public life... [and] societal alienation... Despite this emphasis many youth workers... have struggled to comprehend citizenship and question why citizenship education has become such a priority'. Such work is crucial and important in bringing young people into dialogue and democratic decision making processes, it is also crucial in desisting young people from solving problems by use of violence and conflict.

Northern Ireland Experiences: Some Good Practices?

Two agencies involved in working with young people that have been involved in and effected, directly or indirectly by the conflict in Northern Ireland are *Orga Sinn Fein* (OSF) and *YouthAction Northern Ireland* (YANI). Although with differing approaches, both address the delicate issues of communal conflict and politics and their consequences. Furthermore, both organisations are deemed to demonstrate examples of 'good practice' that may be adopted and encouraged in other societies living with or emerging from communal conflict. In the atmosphere of increasing community segregation, diversity and tension within British society, aspects of the work from such agencies may be worthy of consideration.

Orga Sinn Fein

Smyth and Campbell (2005), in their study *Young people and armed violence in Northern Ireland* highlight the work of OSF, the youth section of Sinn Fein. They report that OSF exists to 'provide an effective alternative for young people to membership of the IRA and direct involvement in armed conflict and violence by providing young people with a channel for political expression and participation'(2005: 6). OSF starts from the point that young people are 'political' and generally do have an interest in both 'global' and 'local' politics and issues.

Molloy (2002) provides evidence that young people are indeed interested in political issues, but not in joining political parties. It was found that young people are interested in 'single issue' politics and 'identity' politics that impact upon their everyday lives such as race, gender, sexuality and community. Further more global issues of war and conflict, poverty and the environment were also of interest. White et al (2004) found political issues of interest to young people tended to be at four different levels; personal, local, national and international. OSF through their community interventions focus upon addressing both global and local issues that are of interest to young people and begin to enter into meaningful discussion and dialogue within their own communities. However, it was also reported that 'lack of trust of politicians' together with their perceived lack of accountability and not listening to young people were the biggest 'turn-offs'. At the same time, it was also recognised that young people within marginalised, segregated and disadvantaged communities feel, a 'distance' between themselves and the institutions of governance; as has been the case in Northern Ireland.

Through the appointment of community youth liaison officers OSF provide 'organic' community links to young people with the specific purpose of addressing their immediate

political concerns and interests; issues that impact upon the communities they live and/or work in such as violence, human rights, employment rights, the justice system, immigration, cultural diversity and so on. By entering into specific politics related engagement with young people OSF provide a bridge between a sense of alienation and marginalisation and that of empowerment and awareness raising relating to both global and local issues deemed relevant. In this respect OSF, according to Smyth and Campbell (2005:7), 'provides the most effective political opportunity for young people'.

YouthAction Northern Ireland

In their *Making it r wrld 2* (2004) research, YANI found that children as young as three or four years old identify only with their 'own side' and by ten and eleven years old are expressing fear and antagonism of the 'other'. Significant numbers of young people enter early adulthood without ever having had a meaningful conversation with someone from the 'other community'. In supporting young people to build a shared and peaceful society YANI works collaboratively to develop effective ways of addressing segregation and sectarianism. As such it has over thirty years experience in community relations work responding to the violence and conflict in which young people were, and are, growing and developing.

The organisation has developed innovative cross community and political education programmes providing young people from a range of backgrounds with training in delivering community relations, conflict resolution and mediation programmes. Such an approach reflects the importance placed on community relations and the role of young people in bringing about a stable and civic society. YANI believe that engaging the most marginalised young people is the challenge facing a lasting peace in Northern Ireland. Two of their key objectives are to provide opportunities for young people across communities to contribute to the peace building process and to support a legacy of young leaders with the skills and confidence to move communities beyond conflict and contribute to solutions for lasting peace.

This has led to communities and workers expressing the need for projects and initiatives with young people to prepare them for a changing society in which they can embrace difference and share all aspects of life with others who are different from themselves. YANI believe in building relationships in which young people and adults are working together to shape a future which works to eradicate prejudice and discrimination. At an initial baseline however young people continue to feel left out of decision making and in having real input into strategies and plans that will have an impact on them and their areas. They assert there must be a level of trust, respect and confidence between adults and young people. In turn this will lead to more effective youth participation and confidence and growth in young people's active involvement in addressing those issues that impact upon their lives and communities.

Concluding Comments

One of the main challenges for youth work is to engage within those communities where young people are involved or at risk of becoming involved directly or indirectly with violent religious, political or sub-cultural conflict. Within such contexts one of the ultimate

struggles is for the 'hearts and minds' of young people. Invariably this may bring the youth worker into direct ideological conflict with those community activists and leaders (be they gang-masters or religio-political fundamentalists) who espouse a more direct and uncompromising approach to the defence of community and identity and all that it represents, against the contaminating outside world or the 'other' communities (Grattan and Morgan, 2007:165-175). It is within this context that youth work is one of the main adversaries in this process. As Magnusson (2007: 4) points out 'Youth work is a moral and existential necessity since youth are both vulnerable to and contributors to violence and trouble'.

Youth workers in these situations must engage in a real and meaningful way with how young people make sense of their world, society and community. Attention must also be paid as well to their 'emotions' of fear, anger and hatred that may stimulate actions leading to violence. Youth workers must 'learn to listen' and encourage young people to 'learn to listen' to their 'internal conversations' and recognise that any actions that may arise from these internal deliberations will carry consequences. Often such deliberations are heavily fused with both positive and negative emotions. As Camila Batmanghelidjh (2007) points out:

we are very strong in this country in showing condemnation...The answer is that Britain has created a society where the vulnerable [young people] are not being helped enough. We have a society where it is the criminal justice system that is the first line of defence for dealing with the emotionally numbed individuals that lie behind such crimes.

Furthermore, programmes and policies for cultural and political expression must be encouraged, not simply through youth forums and parliaments but community based initiatives such as those of OSF and YANI that address the real issues that impact upon that community and its youth. Given the sense from young people that politicians do not represent their interests this is an issue of some urgency that political parties and groups must address; and, indeed, an issue that youth work must also address and lobby for on behalf of young people. Without meaningful expression the alternative may be that of young people within their own community fostering and developing more extreme forms of anti-social activity, increased racism, sectarianism, xenophobia, 'Islamaphobia' as well as more extreme and 'radicalised' forms of political consciousness.

In addressing the potential of an increasingly extreme and 'radicalised' youth, youth work in its philosophy, policy making, training and practice must also become more 'radicalised' and prepared to address both local and global political issues. Given the possible consequences of global impact upon the local at individual and community level, youth work itself is and must be 'political' work.

Whereas it has taken Northern Ireland to undergo a slow, painful and costly journey in its work with young people, the opportunity for Britain is not yet lost and lies in the immediate present. Already division, segregation and alienation of young people, irrespective of their cultural and ethnic background, are rife within Britain and the seeds of violence and conflict have already been sown. Youth work in its 'organic' community sense has a central and crucial role to play. Youth workers' as 'organic intellectuals', who are of and from the

communities that feel a sense of alienation and marginalisation, whether through socio-economic or religio-political exclusion, are those in the frontline in the struggle for the 'hearts and minds' of young people. As such their thoughts, concerns and experiences ought to be considered as part of a central platform for engaging with those young people within their own communities who are vulnerable and/or at risk of becoming directly or indirectly involved in taking direct violent action as a way of resolving their conflict and solving their problems (See Grattan and Morgan, 2007:165-175). That such a suggestion has massive implications for the restructuring, resourcing and 'professionalisation' of youth work in the future is a subject for discussion elsewhere.

Government thinking and youth work policy and practice must go beyond the current parameters of 'positive activities', safe places and so on. While these are important and laudable objectives within themselves, youth work and youth workers must go further and be in the forefront of offering a real voice and real non-tokenistic participative democratic political education and involvement to young people at local and community level. Youth workers should not fear entering into such discussion, dialogue and action as the alternative may be further alienation, segregation and communal violence emanating from a totally disinterested and disengaged youth population and based upon more extreme forms of consciousness, political or otherwise. While such practice may be deemed as 'political', youth work is and should be 'political'! Furthermore, while youth workers may find such interventions professionally challenging, they may also find that this is exactly what many young people may want, need and passionately embrace.

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Examining the role of culture in the development of resilience for youth at risk in contested societies of South Africa and Northern Ireland

Vasintha Veeran and Tony Morgan

This article focuses on the power of enculturation by the youth worker in exploring the discursive discourse of contested spaces in understanding risk and resilience. It argues that the development of resilience is a complex process, which needs to be interpreted and analysed from various perspectives. The varying contexts in which youth work is practised offers a rich source of data to understand how values, beliefs and traditions differ. It also helps us to build on and embrace the complexities of multiple identities. Culture intricately interwoven with the social ecology provides the context for youth to create their own sense of reality through their subjective lived experiences.. Being cognisant of inter alia the role of cultural factors in the way that it enables youth to negotiate and buffer risks, makes youth work more receptive to contextual complexities, and is highly relevant in societies emerging from conflict.

Key Words: *youth work, resilience, post-conflict, social ecology*

Contested Spaces: The Case of South Africa and Northern Ireland

The response of the South African Government to violence against children is explained within the context of South Africa's transition from a past characterised by state-enforced discrimination, exclusion and inequity. This divisive, state-driven socially engineered project (apartheid) relegated the majority of the country's people to the fringes of the body politic and the economy and it distanced them, almost entirely, from access to developmental resources. The systematic marginalisation of black people in South Africa resulted in unprecedented levels of social, economic and cultural deprivation fracturing family and social structures with long-term repercussions that continue to reverberate through communities to this day.

Northern Ireland, like South Africa was a society in conflict. However, unlike the institutionalization of apartheid, the conflict in Northern Ireland stemmed from the repeated violence between the nationalist (predominantly Roman Catholic) and the unionist (predominantly Protestant) communities. The conflict, which lasted approximately thirty years, arose out of the disputed status of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom. In the face of these adversities, Harland (2007) concluded from a study conducted in 2000 in inner city Belfast that young people developed their own frames of reference to cope with the reality of violence. In response to the conflict, the youths' culture of coping was enmeshed with feelings of insecurity, fear, anger, violence, hatred, and mistrust. The 'troubles' in this case characterised the unique culture that developed from it and which influenced the coping strategies of youth.

Considerable efforts were undertaken to end the conflict and significant outcomes have been achieved in the last decade or so with regard to settling the conflict. Referring to Northern Ireland, this ensuing period of change is described as 'in recovery'; 'no longer at war'; 'sustaining peace'; 'emerging into a post-conflict situation' and 'being in a transitional phase' Radford (2007: 141). Unfortunately, the sequelae of conflict lingers on much longer and is often more, if not equally challenging in its eradication. Northern Ireland and indeed South Africa, while acknowledging the movement out of conflict, now find themselves in a post-conflict culture which has embraced new political dispensations while at the same time holding on to 'old' practices. For example there is current community tension in one area in Northern Ireland following the death of a young man after taking drugs from the UDA.¹ A consequence of this is that the community has started to reclaim their area from this group, which is a remnant of the past 'troubles' period. In South Africa, unprecedented levels of crime have challenged the old practice of privilege and preference, which is still a very integral part of South African society. The peace processes in both N. I. and S. A. are moving forward parallel with past cultural differences compounding the cultural context in which youth interventions occur. Thus trust and integration for young people appears to be more difficult, even in times of notional peace, due to the legacy of cultural/religious/economic-induced violence. Old practices and new ways of perceiving the social environment can be interspersed with tenuous relations while proposed changes 'necessitate the embracing of cultural and religious diversity...' (Grattan and Morgan, 2007).

Morgan and Veeran (2007), in discussing the difference between youth work in Northern Ireland and South Africa drew attention to both the similarities and differences from the socio-political perspectives and the way in which they influenced youth work. In doing so, they proposed that the contextual idiosyncrasies, which in this case focus on cultural tenets, be acknowledged as an important frame of reference for youth work in contested spaces. In these contexts *inter alia* cultural capital of youth are important in understanding how young people 'cope' with difficult and complex situations. Even within contexts where there are similar socio-economic and political backgrounds difficulties and complexities are likely to vary. Similarly, cultural contexts reflective of the micro, meso and macro levels are conceived to be different. Therefore, in order to enhance youth work practice as a response to the risks associated with youth development and as a means of building resilience, it is imperative to acknowledge the role of culture and the cultural context of youth work in contested spaces in its broadest sense.

Developing a Tri-Dimensional Approach: Development, Ecology and Culture

From a sociological perspective, culture is intricately intertwined in the daily experiences of individuals, yet its integral relationship in understanding resilience in risk situations is seemingly neglected in research (Ungar, 2004). From a theoretical perspective developmental and ecological paradigms (elaborated later on in this paper) are conceived to be significant considerations in the discourse on risk and resilience. Combined with the prevailing two theories on the discourse on risk and resilience, culture can be added as a third dimension. This tri-dimensional approach is namely:

1. Developmental theory, which is largely reflected on the mastery of skills that are attributed to 'both the outcome and context of developmental trajectories for today's youth' (Arrington and Wilson, 2000: 222). Developmental theory as an

all-pervasive theory has tended to favour western cultural hegemonic practice and to 'ignore or reject different cultural expressions of development that, although 'normal' do not reflect the established models on which ...skills and knowledge are built' (Cox and Powers, 1998: 147). In acknowledging diversity, 'developmental competence' and 'maturity' is understood within the normative benchmarks of a given culture in which youth are socialized (Bowman in Ungar, 2004). It means on occasions where differences exist between 'normative' contexts of school and home that this does not refer to inadequacies and consequently risks. Such discrepancies between the home and school environments, or any other public space are likely to be exaggerated where differences in culture are overt. For example, in arguing against the developmental approach as the predominant approach the individualistic notions of risk and resilience are questionable.

2. The ecological perspective on the other hand characterises the interdependence of the micro (individual and family), meso (institutions) and macro (policies and legislation) systems (Comptom and Galloway, 1999; Gilchrist, Whittaker and Schinke, 1986; Heffernan, Shuttleworth and Ambrosino, 1997; Jack, 2000; Kemp, Whittaker and Tracy, 1997).
3. The cultural context defines a more holistic assessment of processes and relationships that influence risk and resilience, providing valuable insight into the supports for youth in contested societies. Close examination of the relationship between unique cultural practices, based on family relations, kinship ties and extended family systems including supportive networks can provide insight into how youth mediate or are more exposed to risk in contested societies.

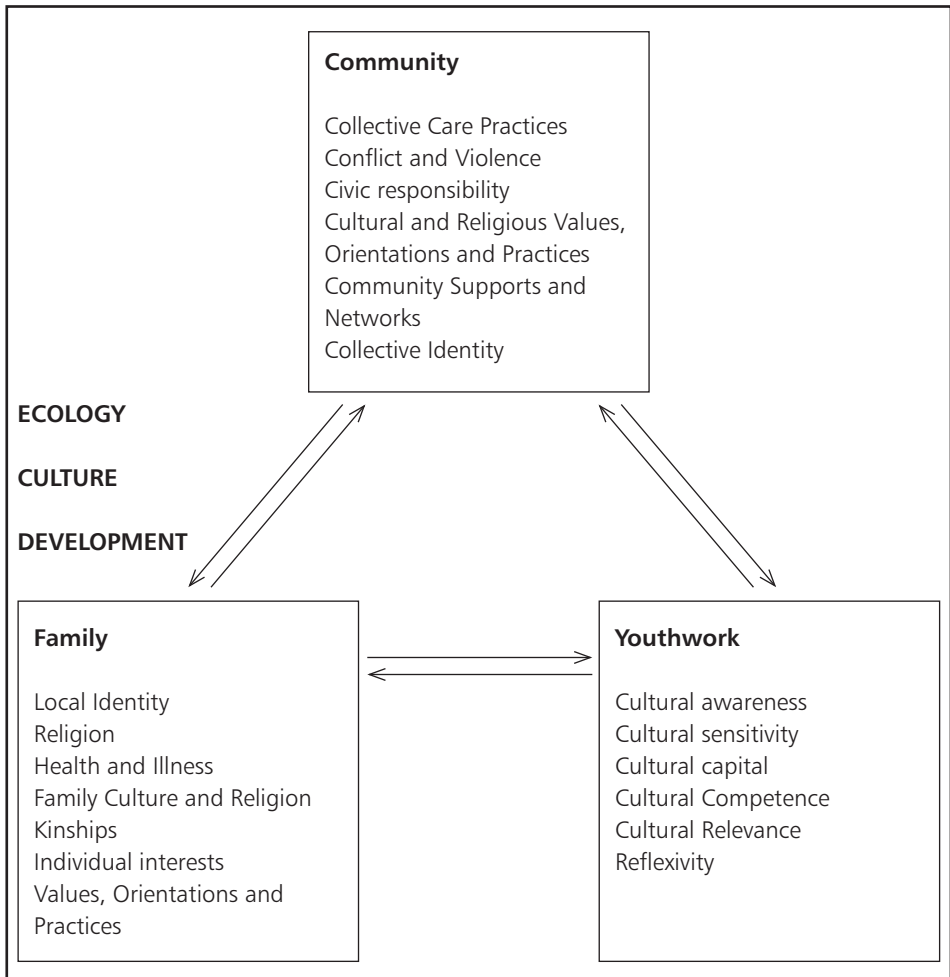
Framing the Discourse of Risk and Resilience

Much of the research and literature on risk and resilience have tended to reflect either developmental or ecological models as the dominant approaches underpinning this construct. In this regard the immediate environs of the individual's intimate relationships and interactive processes, which are culturally embedded, underpin the developmental processes. In contrast, the ecological perspective draws on the collective processes that transact multiple systems for the purposes of goal attainment. In doing so it intersects with the cultural ecology of all the systems and links the micro (family) to the macro (community). Youth workers constitute a potential third component of this triad as depicted in the model below in Figure 1. This model provides the basis for further development of the premise that the cultural ecology is the vehicle through which the developmental and the ecological facets are connected and hence comprises an equally significant cornerstone of the discourse on risk and resilience (see Figure 1 on page 56).

One of the corner stones of ecological theory is the diversity of the social ecology of communities (Jack, 2000). The aetiology of problems and the responses to them vary from community to community. As each community develops and cultivates its own cultural ecology, these dynamics need to be understood as a necessity for meaningful and constructive intervention. In youth work, workers have the responsibility of gathering the relevant information, which is generally achieved through engaging young people in not just telling their own stories but deriving their own interpretations as well. This means

A FRAMEWORK FOR THE CULTURAL MEDIATION OF RISK AND RESILIENCE

FIGURE 1: A TRI-DIMENSIONAL APPROACH



in ecological terms uncovering localised data about the community, and understanding these socio-cultural practices from the individual’s perspective. This generic (at times local) conception of culture entails, ‘the patterned nature of behaviour, beliefs, values customs and institutions’ (Herberg, 1993: 3) of the young people’s immediate environs (listed under Community/Ecology in Figure 1). The multidimensional viewpoint encompasses, ‘sets of shared worldviews, meanings and adaptive behaviours derived from simultaneous membership and participation in a multiplicity of contexts (Falicov, 1995: 375) and the various systems (listed under Community in Figure 1) youth engages with and is a part of’. If we concede that risk operates within this complex physical and social environment it is axiomatic that we acknowledge that culture is inherently a mitigating factor in these contexts. Notwithstanding its significance culture remains peripheral and has been additionally identified by Ungar (2004) as a neglected topic of research in the study of risk and resilience. The above model locates culture as the nexus between the ecological and

developmental framework. Hence, for youth work to be effective it is crucial to acknowledge the status of culture as the medium and vehicle through which risk and resilience is mediated.

The Enculturation of Risk and Resilience in Contested Spaces

Despite the burgeoning literature and research studies on the twinning concepts of risk and resilience precise dimensions about what constitute resilience remains obscure. The concept of resilience, according to Schoon and Bynner (2003: 21), is defined as, 'the capacity of human beings to overcome extreme adversity, and to show positive adaptation in the face of that adversity', which is also the predominant view of several other authors and researchers (Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker, 2000; Masten, Best and Garmezy, 1990; Rutter, 1990; Werner, 1989). In the absence of precise definitions of what is 'extreme', 'positive' and 'adversity' in different contexts, a wide variety of interpretations is possible. What would be the markers of risk and resilience for a young person caught in the midst of a violent conflict and for another who experiences bullying at school? It is also important to highlight that resilience is perceived as the development of competencies and skills that enable an individual to mediate risks and not as a personality trait as is most often misconstrued (Luthar and Cicchetti, 2000; Masten, 2001; Rutter, 1999; Schoon and Bynner, 2003). Similarly, the developmental framework alone is not an accurate measure of life stage accomplishments. Substantial evidence exists supporting the assertion that developmental trajectories vary across cultures and is further impacted upon by socio-economic and political (ecological) contexts alike (Arrington and Wilson, 2000). It is not surprising therefore, that significantly high numbers of children and youth cannot be accounted for and described according to the developmental framework because they fall into categories of child labourers, street children, migrant workers, farm workers, sex workers and paramilitary activists in Northern Ireland and South Africa that defy the norms ascribed by developmental psychology (Morgan and Veeran, 2007; Veeran, 2000). Variations in the developmental cycle are influenced by urban/rural, developing/developed, and industrialised/post-industrialised contexts. Hence, disruptions in the cumulative effects of an individual's development are unlikely to be accounted for only through normative standards. An alternative theory to the developmental cycle as the unit of measurement for resilience is a contextual analysis (Ungar, 2004), which posits that the ecological systems framework is integral in understanding the impact of the interacting socio-cultural, economic and political environments. In this regard, Cox and Powers reiterate that, notwithstanding the fact that all children encounter situations of risk, 'the incidence, magnitude and types of risks encountered vary widely with respect to race, class and culture' (1998:147). Central to the debate on the conceptualisation of risk between a measurable entity and a socially constructed phenomenon (Houston, 2001), culture emerges as a mediating factor. Not only does this approach acknowledge diversities in cultures and contexts, but it also highlights the subjective nature of measuring resilience in children in especially difficult circumstances (Veeran, 2000). In situations where young people were identified as 'at-risk' or involved in risky behaviour, they usually faced multiple risks, which were also likely to be interlinked; for example, poverty, crime, homelessness and substance abuse are risks that are commonly linked. In this situation, the young people would be more likely to be experiencing heightened risk and low resilience. Table 1 outlines a variety of permutations in relation to risk and resilience where culture is viewed as a significant factor in affecting outcomes for many young people. These outcomes are further subjected to experiences at different stages

in their development. Despite the belief that resilience can produce positive outcomes, some authors believed that children and youth who experience multiple risks, built up over a long period of time, are less likely to experience positive outcomes in their lives than 'normal' youth (refer to Table 1), namely, high risk- low resilience (Egeland, Carlson and Sroufe 1993; Masten and Garmezy, 1985). The case of Northern Ireland and South Africa are excellent examples of multiple risk trajectories, which have resulted in concomitant low outcomes of resilience by and large. However, the contrary has also been evidenced where high risks and positive outcomes resulted in some situations. These are perceived as character building experiences and are most likely to prevail in culturally dominated family and community contexts (as in the practice of *ubuntu* elaborated on later) despite structural adversities. This means that not all risk producing experiences weakens one's level of resilience; in fact the opposite is also likely to contribute to developing high resilience. A concomitant high risk-low resilience outcome is therefore not a given, on the contrary high risk – high resilience is possible. The following table elucidates the variations in the outcome of risk and resilience, where the role of culture is significant in understanding the development of resilience underscored through the combined influences of the tri-dimensional approach:

TABLE 1: VARIATIONS IN RISK AND RESILIENCE OUTCOMES

High-risk	—————>	High resilience	—————>	Effective coping through Positive Cultural Experience
Low-risk	—————>	High resilience	—————>	Positive cultural experiences and outcome
Low-risk	—————>	Low resilience	—————>	Negative equity of cultural capital
High-risk	—————>	Low resilience	—————>	Weak cultural impact-poor outcome

Much of the work with youth needs to be analysed from the perspective of their cultural affiliations and researched accordingly. With reference to the model depicted in Figure 1, the interacting contexts provide a framework for youth workers in contested spaces. As a socially constructed concept resilience is perceived to be the 'outcome from negotiations between individuals and their environments for the resources to define themselves as healthy amidst conditions collectively viewed as adverse' (Ungar, cited in Ungar, 2004:342). In essence the defining characteristics of resilience are evident in both the ecological and the social construction paradigms where the nature of interactions between the individual and the environment are crucial determinants. The constructions of the realities of the social world of individuals include cultural practices, traditions, and processes such as narratives, which best describe resilience.

Take for example Black South African youth, their deprived socio-economic circumstances provided a springboard for alternative system building. Resilience in this instance was reflected as a healthy outcome if, despite the deprivation, young people were able to fulfill their life goals and aspirations, whatever these may be, through devising ways of transcending structural adversities. In this case community supports combined with family culture and tradition can serve to strengthen protective factors and contribute to developing resilience. Morgan and Veeran concluded that as, 'agents of social change, youth workers

have to be aware of the macro-ecological context, which includes the legacy of violence, the needs of the youth (micro), and the objectives and policy of the agency (mezzo, macro). This complex set of interacting variables makes youth work a difficult proposition in a society free of conflict and can be exceptionally challenging in 'contested spaces' (2007:154). Despite adversarial structural factors, identifying collectively with the culture of deprivation can strengthen efforts and consequently resilience. This collective approach (Cox and Powers, 1998) implies that risk can be mitigated through a supportive family and community environment, which according to Veeran (cited in Morgan and Veeran, 2007) can be extended to include the interconnectedness experienced by individuals in these contexts. However, the extent of interconnectedness is variously experienced for example, in Northern Ireland and South Africa, the basis for such variation lies in cultural differences between the two societies.

The sense of community as a dominant value shared largely by the black community (including 'Indian' and 'Coloured') is underscored by the unique characteristic of *ubuntu*, meaning (in the absence of a direct literal translation) 'a person is a person through other people' (Musa and Fraser, cited in Veeran 2002: 102). Through this shared value of community, a collective approach to the development of resilience takes precedence. Resilience developed within and between the different 'racial' groups on the one hand is a direct consequence of the culture of oppression (in solidarity) and on the other the shared value of community by the varying cultures. It is the nuances of this collective cultural practice that is seldom acknowledged in the development of resilience of individual members of the community.

Turning to Northern Ireland, two specific examples of cultural transmission operate as significant trajectories of resilience, namely cultural differences between local Northern Ireland citizens and cultural differences between Northern Ireland citizens and immigrant groups (incorporating asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers). In the first instance, results emanating from a research project by Radford (2007) about cultural diversity described a group of immigrant youth, all facing and fleeing the risk of persecution, having lost a family member or close friend through politically motivated shootings. In contrast to the dominant approach to youth work within Northern Ireland, described by Morgan and Veeran as 'aloof from grassroots youth work' (2007: 160), the research study in question reflected a pluralistic approach focusing on areas of commonality within a diverse experience. Youth who fit the category of asylum seekers, immigrants and refugees found themselves in a paradoxical situation where the notion of a sense of belonging and safety is impacted upon by their status. However, in coming together as a group they utilized the opportunity to expound on and reify:

(C)ultural and gender specific traditions that emphasised family centeredness. It was clear that intergenerational support was crucial to their perceptions of safety. From within their distinctive traditions, they collectively recognised that the extended family and respect for traditions provided forms of social capital that they expected and wanted to call on to provide buffers to deflect wider community challenges (risks) (Radford, 2007: 148).

It is not uncommon within contested spaces for cultural dislocation and alienation to

motivate immigrants to identify with and seek out opportunities for common (collective) religious expression as their main cultural and social space (Warner in Kelly, 2007). This practice must not be viewed as simply the need to identify with one's culture. It must be viewed against the propensity of increasing cultural capital and consequently resources that include kinship supports, extended family networks and community support networks that are integral to the development of resilience.

The potential for risk is exacerbated and sustained as in the case of Northern Ireland where conflict is envisioned as a consequence of 'not knowing better', a 'lack of skills', and largely individually controlled. In some situations it may also assume a lack of a particular kind of 'enculturation' (Magnuson, 2007: 5). This particular kind of enculturation influences and is, in turn, influenced by the prevailing historical and ideological constructs of the conflict. Despite being a part of the developed world, the dilemmas of risk in Northern Ireland are no less urgent than in other conflict-ridden societies. The issue is not only when, where and what exchanges between the environment and the individual occurs to transpose risk to resilience, but also how. The answers to the above are culturally and contextually embedded. For youth in conflict societies the meanings young people construct phenomenologically may be tempered by either their internal locus of control (Morgan, in Ungar, 2004) or the power of enculturation.

Cultural Processes: Aspects Of The Social Ecology

In researching risk and resilience, Howard, Dryden and Johnson (1999), suggested three precepts that needed elaboration. The first two highlighted the ecological context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) while the third precept related to children's understanding of concepts as experienced in their social context. Howard et al drew attention to the differences in meaning that adults and children ascribe to concepts. These differences cannot only be confined to how adults and children define concepts. Variations in meaning emerge as a result of different cultural and social contexts which are imperative in the final analysis of socially constructed processes. For example, the concept of youth in western society is often associated with independence linked to loosening ties with the family, whereas in non-western cultures youth dependency remains intertwined with family and community responsibilities that progress into adult life. Whatever the practice, these patterns of behaviour are enmeshed in traditions, values and customs that account for some consistencies in lifestyle even when conflict and violence erupts. In heterogeneous communities, these differences may be subtle and overshadowed by the dominant hegemonic culture. Professional responsibility of the youth worker under these circumstances includes a critical analysis of the diversities inherent in the social contexts of youth and their families. This indigenisation of knowledge is in fact lacking in the discourse on risk and resilience as Ungar concedes that:

A broad developmental perspective on resilience that can fully account for how children become resilient in multiple contexts and across cultures has yet to be fully articulated (2005: xvii).

The critical components of culture, namely, 'race', ethnicity, gender, social status, language and religion (Falicov, 1995; Lerner, 1995) provide intricate insights into the prevalence of risk and the development of resilience in contested societies. For example apartheid in South

Africa was calculated to discredit black individuals as equal human beings, relegating them to a lesser status, with minimal needs and resources. This marginal status increased the potential for youth to drop out of school thereby contributing to spiralling unemployment figures (Veeran, 2000). When the circularity of relationships and transactional processes between the individual and the environment, resonant of the ecological systems is considered (Compton and Galaway, 1999; Cox and Powers, 1998), then youth workers are more likely to adopt a systemic approach that targets macro-level factors. For example in considering the negative sequelae of the apartheid system and the 'troubles' in South Africa and Northern Ireland respectively, youth workers became more attuned to family and community level factors that helped youth to overcome these structural inequalities. On the one hand youth workers sought to encourage and strengthen resilience of the young people while at the same time drawing attention to the destructive forces of structural processes to influence positive change. Hence, the cyclical role of youth workers in perpetuating positive cultural experiences through a radical approach remains a significant aspect of their work.

The ecological approach alone, (Ungar 2004:345) however, cannot be, 'reified as the correct way to view resilience'. The salience of the ecological perspective lies in its circularity of relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Luthar and Cicchetti, 2000) to sustain the socio-cultural ecological relationship. In addition Arrington and Wilson (2000:222) maintain that 'socioeconomic status and culture appear to be of considerable importance in both the outcome and context of developmental trajectories for today's youth'. For example in NI and SA, the disparity between privileged and the disadvantaged youth were important predictors of success in educational and job aspirations. Despite the level of conflict in these societies, the fact that not all young people dropped out of schooling or remained unemployed or engaged in deviant behaviour is a manifestation to some extent of the resilience they developed to the inherent adversities. Various notions of hardship and perseverance can be considered as valuable cultural constructs for resilience. For example in African culture, patriarchy accounts for the male's dominant role in meeting the family's basic needs irrespective of whether one is employed or not. Males are socially pressured 'not to lose face' and to be seen to be a respectable member of the community can be positive from both a cultural (collective) perspective and from the developmental (individual) perspective as an attempt to fulfill role expectations. Structural factors, such as the absence of a substantial social security system in South Africa intensify the pressure of the patriarchal role. The cultural biases (Goldstein, 1986) of the Eurocentric and ethnocentric approaches are limited in explaining the prevalence of risk and the development of resilience in situations similar to South Africa. Multi-culturalism as an important consideration in risk and resilience (Arrington and Wilson, 2000; Cox and Powers, 1998) entails 'openness to plurality' (Ungar, 2004:345) in ways that promote a better understanding of the dynamics of the social ecology and human behaviour. Stresses within the environment precipitated through violence and conflict create additional challenges for working with youth already predisposed through structural inequalities to high levels of risks.

What is often meant to be a mutually beneficial relationship between culture-specific discourse and social ecology supporting and strengthening vulnerable youth and families is often compromised by contested contexts. Harland (2007) refers to these contested spaces as hostile environments where young people feel marginalised, anxious and vulnerable. The contested spaces in Northern Ireland and South Africa have been precipitated by two

different sets of circumstances yet they raise similar challenges with regard to violence, mistrust, fear, and aggression and indeed hope for reconciliation.

Contested societies may be viewed as contexts in which the right to safety, security, healthy lifestyle and opportunities for development are threatened because of adverse environmental conditions, which include deficits in the socio-political and economical environment. There are numerous examples of such contested societies globally, especially in extremely disadvantaged, impoverished and strife torn areas, however, in many respects Northern Ireland and South Africa share similarities as contexts of contested spaces. The nature (extent, origin and manifestation) of the contested spaces may be inherently different but the adversities that predispose youth to risk can be interrogated along common themes ranging from the macro to the micro. Despite differences in the conceptualisation and the process of conflict in both countries, the 'social, physical and psychological impact on its recipients seldom differ' (Morgan and Veeran, 2007: 153).

The notion of contested societies is extensive (as pointed out earlier in the discussion) and can be extended to include all situations where evidence of alienation and isolation exist between individuals and their social and physical environments. This is especially common with ethnic groups, where language, dress, religion and food (all culturally defined) are visibly different, are discriminated against. It is not surprising that despite these hostilities, positive outcomes are in fact achieved. This can be linked to the intertwined dimension of the discourse of cultural capital espoused by Bourdieu (1977). Where cultural differences are not part of the equation in understanding risk and resilience it limits a holistic assessment of the situation (Hixson and Tinzmann, 1990). However, it is important to bear in mind that cultural differences are mediators of ecology (environment) and development (individual) and not identical to or a property of ecology. It is sufficient to add that unless culture is an integral aspect of the discourse on risk and resilience, the other theoretical frames may provide inconclusive assessments and, in turn, interventions. There is substantial evidence supporting the value of cultural practices and more especially when families are in crisis and at risk (McCubbin and McCubbin 2005; Mouton, 2000; Rutter, 1979; Symeou, 2007). To some degree such cultural capital is viewed as the manifestation of rituals that reify cultural practice eg. to illustrate the profound influence of culture on developing resilience, Mouton cites the case of African American families experiencing grief and loss. Mouton believes that the strong belief in 'God's power to conquer all and a resilient hope that a miracle will happen' (2000:74) underpins the significance of cultural practice in the development of resilience for these families. However, in understanding and addressing cultural differences, we need to guard against the tendency to emphasise ethnic categorisations and over generalise, as it is apt to devalue or stigmatise people. This assertion holds true for Northern Ireland and South Africa where commonalities such as language, religion and tradition are marked conspicuous cultural practices, and similarly for Hispanics, comprising Cubans, Mexican American and Puerto Rican. In line with seeking to integrate the significance of cultural diversity is the need to understand cultural dimensions in their different contexts. The process of promoting a conceptual paradigm of risk and resilience necessitates the recognition of recurring themes of culture and diversity that is context specific.

Considerations for youth work

Traditional youth work operates from the juxtaposition of the youth worker's own frame of reference with that of the young people and is contextually embedded. This section builds on the primary thrust of the article that locates the discourse on risk and resilience within a tri-dimensional framework comprising ecological theory, developmental theory and cultural mediation. A combination of the above is considered to be important precepts in the discourse on risk and resilience. With reference to Northern Ireland and South Africa, youth work has been 'significant and pivotal' in relation to the reality of conflicted space (Grattan and Morgan, 2007: 168). This has resulted in a profound and unique way in which this contested space became a fertile ground for not only the proliferation of youth work services, but also for the indigenisation of youth workers. Building on Gramsci's theory of the 'organic intellectual', Grattan and Morgan articulated the indigenisation of youth workers as operating 'according to a commonsense philosophy' (2007:168). Applying this principle to Northern Ireland and South Africa youth workers in these contested spaces are all too familiar with macro-level factors responsible for the conflict. Through the proximity of their relationship with the community they are more familiar with cultural factors that play a significant role in intercepting the trajectory of violence and conflict. Hence, indigenised workers operating from an advantaged position of such knowledge can strengthen their approach through the realignment of the macro, meso and micro level factors. However, the indigenised youth workers may be symbolic of the past as communities tend to be much more diverse and multi-cultural as a result of globalisation. Hence, for the 'professional youth worker' it is more of a necessity now, as they require specific skills and knowledge to engage and intervene with youth from a multi-dimensional perspective and in a multicultural context. The tri-dimensional approach offers youth workers a more substantial 'tool box' (theory, skills and values) replacing the dominance of developmental and ecological theory as the primary basis of assessment and intervention in the discourse on risk and resilience. This means that youth workers need to operate from a broad philosophical base that includes working within the life-space of the individual through a therapeutic relationship. From a practical perspective the youth worker aims to 'become indigenised' through unravelling the cultural processes. From the range of contexts provided in Figure 1, the process of enculturation purports to be complex and engaging for any significant shift to occur in acknowledging the power of culture as a mediating context in risk and resilience. Hence cultural competency in youth work must share equal status with the range of skills, values and knowledge necessary for youth work. Hence, a purposeful and structured process of enculturation is inherently essential to the profile of the role of the youth worker.

Conclusions

Risk and resilience in themselves are fairly complex phenomena to dissect let alone the added dimensions of conflict and oppression as evidenced in Northern Ireland and South Africa. The youth worker's role is intertwined with the cultural sphere of youth and as such is an influential factor in the mediation of risk and the development of resilience. Much of youth work derives from the contexts of practice and only by paying special attention to what keeps the young people from totally falling apart can these cultural

idiosyncrasies be better understood for their role in building and developing resilience. Part of the process of contributing to this important body of knowledge and skills lie in exploring the discursive discourse of contested spaces in understanding risk and resilience in this paper. It argues that the development of resilience is a complex process, which needs to be interpreted and analysed from various perspectives, not least of all the role of culture. That one perspective is more significant than the other is not the intended focus of this article. Hence, youth workers need to be cognisant of the gestalt of the intervention process. The varying contexts in which youth work is practised offers a rich source of data to understand how values, beliefs and traditions differ, eg. definitions of family, and community and the interdependency between family and community within the various cultural contexts. It also helps us to build on and embrace the complexities of multiple identities as equally significant in contributing to this richness of cultural capital, eg. in the case of immigrant youth, beliefs and practices may not be readily decipherable and would need to be understood from a broader perspective. Culture intricately interwoven with the social ecology provides the context for youth to create their own sense of reality through their subjective lived experiences, which unfolds through each (new) experience. Deeper understanding of the way in which these practices contribute to the development of resilience purports to provide youth workers with valuable insights and knowledge that can help them build on the strengths of the young people. Consequently, being cognisant of *inter alia* the role of cultural factors in the way that it enables youth to negotiate and buffer risks makes youth work more receptive to the contextual complexities, and in turn, highly relevant.

However, neither developmental theory nor ecological systems per se provide comprehensive answers to the discourse on risk and resilience. Further attempts to understand how the twin concepts of risk and resilience are operational in various situations call for a comprehensive dialectic approach.

Notes

1 UDA stands for the Ulster Defence Association, which is a loyalist paramilitary grouping involved in sectarian killings during the troubles. They continue to have a presence in most loyalist/protestant areas of Northern Ireland dealing in drugs and other criminal activities. Changes to their 'military' function are happening slowly as they have still not decommissioned their weapons.

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Youth Work in South East Europe: Youth Transitions and Challenges in a Post Conflict Environment

John Crownover

Youth work in the countries of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia has undergone many changes since the years of war and conflict that saw the breakup of Yugoslavia. Youth work has slowly grown into a largely positive force for social change in these countries in transition. This article outlines some of the achievements and challenges of youth work in South East Europe and how they are contributing to the rebuilding of divided societies in this post conflict phase. Some youth work specifically addresses human rights and dealing with the past, while much is focused on promoting the healthy development of young people, volunteerism and youth participation. We will look at some positive examples of youth work and some of the lessons learned by CARE International in its youth work in the region.

Key words: *South East Europe, post conflict, youth work, nationalism, transitional societies*

In most places in the world where there has been war, conflict or some type of transition, young people¹ are often the most resilient in adapting to changes. In many cases though, young people are often one of the main victims of such calamities. The social exclusion of youth, lack of political representation and ignoring of their concerns often put them in a difficult position. The break up of Yugoslavia² and the current transitions affecting Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia have continued to have a disproportionate affect on young people. Whether it is unemployment, disillusionment, rise in drug abuse or the flight of youth from the region, young people continue to struggle through these transitions.

Youth non governmental organizations (YNGOs)³ currently play an important role in engaging young people in community life and provide a vehicle for addressing their interests and concerns. YNGOs play a vital role in creating opportunities to combat the disillusionment and support the creativity of many young people. These organisations have flourished since the break up of Yugoslavia and the large infusion of donor funds into these countries. During the past 10 years CARE International⁴ has played a role in supporting the development of youth work as a vehicle for giving a voice to young people, to promote reconciliation and democratisation efforts within the region during this transition period. As one of many international development organisations in the region, CARE saw its focus on youth as a way to build on the inherent energies that young people have for change and their openness to confront the divisions that characterize these societies.

During these ten years of work CARE has worked at the local level with community youth initiatives, at the national level with youth networks and councils and across the region promoting regional cooperation and collaboration between different youth actors, including

student unions, scouts and youth organisations. In this article I will highlight some of the positive developments in youth work, continued challenges and key recommendations for development of youth work in the region.

Youth Development Challenges in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia

The break up of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s and the wars that followed in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and later within Serbia and Kosovo had a great affect on the region’s youth. Massive displacement, poverty, violence and the death of family members was the reality for many young people during the 1990s. The post conflict period brought a cessation in the violence but left many communities destroyed, peoples divided by ethnicity and religion and youth particularly wondering what the future would bring. According to La Cava et al (2006), young people in the region have been strongly affected by poverty and neglect. During the transitional period, social exclusion, vulnerability and poverty are strongly interconnected and one of the chief causes of risky behaviours amongst teenagers and young adults.

The numbers of young people that have come of age during this period of transition is outlined in table 1.⁵

TABLE 1: YOUTH AGED 15–24 IN SEE, 2000		
	% of Population	Absolute number (000s)
Bosnia and Herzegovina	15.0	598.0
Croatia	13.8	641.0
Serbia (and Montenegro)	15.3	1,613.0

Source: World Bank 2006 cited in Cava, G. et al 2006, p. 24

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, many young people continue to want to leave the country as they see no long term prospect here. In a 2003 report on youth by the United National Development Programme (UNDP) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BaH) almost 25 per cent of youth expressed a desire to leave the country. This was mainly due to unemployment and living conditions. The youth unemployment rate hovers near 30 per cent, with many of those young people on the threshold of poverty (UNDP BaH and IBHI, 2007). In many cases, the opportunities and conditions for Roma young people⁶ and those with disabilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and throughout the region is much graver, as they continue to confront discrimination and poor educational opportunities (UNDP BaH and IBHI, 2007).

In Croatia youth unemployment continues to be a major issue, with an official unemployment rate of 18 per cent and with the youth rate 2 to 2.5 times higher than the general population (UNDP Croatia, 2006). In addition, young people from the Roma

and Serb minority communities tend to have even higher rates of unemployment, due to discrimination (UNDP Croatia, 2006). Young people, especially in more rural regions continue to feel marginalised and dependent on their parents, often living at home longer and dependent on parents for financial support (UNDP Croatia, 2004).

According to UNDP Serbia (2005) over 300,000 Serbian young people have left the country in the past 12 years, mainly due to economic issues and instability. In addition Serbian youth find themselves increasingly more dependent on their families for support due to lack of resources consequent upon unemployment and the cost of housing. In one study, young people in Serbia were found to be ten years behind the European average of young people becoming independent from their families (Tomanovic and Ignjatovic, 2006).

The issues of unemployment, family dependency and desire to move abroad amongst young people are quite similar throughout the region. The lack of sound youth policy and resources for its implementation has allowed many young people to become invisible in the statistics within their society. Increases in risky behaviours have been evident in most research carried out on young people in the region, including some of the highest suicide rates reported in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina; poor contraception use by sexually active young people and heroin use becoming more common with youth in South East Europe in general (Cava et al, 2004: 16-19). These youth development challenges are increasingly being addressed by youth workers and in some cases in partnership with government.

History of Youth Movements

To examine youth work today it is important to take a step back and look at some of the earlier history of civil society and organised youth movements in the region. In 1878 under Austro-Hungarian rule, civil society began its intensive development, especially between the years of 1908 and 1914 (Solioz, 2006). Within the countries of the former Yugoslavia the development of youth movements, defined by Braungart and Braungart as 'organised and conscious attempts on the part of young people to initiative or resist change in the social order' (1990, cited in Nikolayenko, 2007:170), has both an older and more recent history. By the year 1916 over one thousand Bosnian associations and charities were in existence, focusing on culture, sports and educational activities. Solioz (2006) points out that most of these were formed along religious and national lines.

After 1945 when Yugoslavia became a communist state, many organisations were able to continue their work but were expected to toe the party line and serve the ideology of the state (Solioz, 2006:2). One example of this was in regards to the Yugoslav Scout Association, which was formed in 1919 and in 1922 and was a founding member of the World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM) (Orans, 2001). In 1950 communist Yugoslavia membership in the world body was forfeited and scouting took on more of the ideals of the socialist party. It would not be until 1995 that Yugoslavia would rejoin. It is planned for Serbian and Montenegrin Scouting Associations to join WOSM under the respective names of their countries, the last of the former republics of Yugoslavia to do so. Today with over 7,000 members, the Serbian Scout Association is the largest membership based youth organisation in Serbia.

During the years of socialism many youth movements existed in support of promoting the state and the vision set out by its leader Marshal Tito (Georgeoff, 1964). In 1960 there were 111 organisations active in Yugoslavia with a total membership of 12 million; this included the Red Cross, the confederation of trade unions, and The People's Youth⁷ (Georgeoff, 1964:3). The People's Youth organised voluntary work camps for young people to do community service activities across the country (Georgeoff, 1964).

The break up of Yugoslavia gave way to the emergence of many new youth organisations and the re-establishment of older groups, such as scouting. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, scouting was divided between the political entities that exist within the country, with a central coordination body to help facilitate its international work with the World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM) established in 1999. CARE was very engaged in the early development of scouting during this post war period. CARE came into contact with scouts who were very open to reestablishing contacts across ethnic nationalities with friends with whom they had lost contact due to the war and break up of scouting. Many of the facilities owned by scouts were damaged or destroyed during the war. While many of the post war divisions that faced the region impacted scouting, many scouts supported reestablishing contacts beyond these political barriers.

In the late 1990s tensions were high in Serbia due to the authoritarian politics of Slobodan Milosevic and the difficult living standards that affected most people. In 1998 OTPOR⁸ was developed by a few university students; this movement grew to over 70,000 youth by the 2000 elections (Nikolayenko, 2007:171). Nikolayenko (2007) points out that one of the main focuses of OTPOR was the demand for free and fair elections and recognition of the electoral victories by the opposition. In addition, growing discontent with corruption in the university system helped galvanise many students and youth activists (Nikolayenko, 2007). OTPOR faced violence and repression at the hands of government, as many young people were arrested. During this whole process OTPOR focused on its ideals and refrained from joining with any political parties (Nikolayenko, 2007). When Slobodan Milosevic stepped down from power and recognised the opposition wins in the 2000 elections, OTPOR became an example to other youth around the world living under repressive regimes. As Nikolayenko points out, members of OTPOR were in demand around the world, especially in places like the Ukraine and Georgia, to share their expertise (2007:180).

Youth work and positive social change: some examples

There is a strong diversity in the type of youth organisations operating within the region which includes small community youth organisations and youth centres which focus on improving the social and recreational opportunities for young people and those with a specialised focus such as on the environment and culture. A few organisations operate at the entity⁹ and state level; this includes youth think tanks, sexual health/HIV/AIDS organisations, human rights groups, networks and councils. These organisations all depend on voluntary workers and focus on providing opportunities for youth to engage in community life. The level of organisational structure is usually similar, with a number of paid young people as workers. Outside a few well financed organisations that have more than one or two paid staff, most groups are dependent on voluntary youth workers.

These groups have made many efforts to promote the active participation of young people in local decision making processes and in building the social change necessary for these newly independent states to meet the European norms around human rights, youth participation and democratic reform. The movement for positive social change follows the pattern of a good citizen outlined by Westheimer and Kahne (2003, cited in Watts and Flanagan, 2007: 781-782) in three interlinked patterns: (a) the personally responsible young person who demonstrates citizenship through volunteering; (b) who stays engaged and up to date on current local and national development issues; and (c) the social justice oriented young person who engages in collective work towards the improvement of community and takes a more critical stand on social , political and economic issues.

TABLE 2: MAP OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, CROATIA AND SERBIA



All types of youth organisations play an important role in promoting youth work and engaging young people in the development of their society. In reviewing the types of youth organisation in the region, three different types emerged that CARE has worked with in the recent period, and each has been found to contribute to the positive development of young people and the promotion of positive social change at different levels of society. All

of these organisations grew out of the post conflict period of Yugoslavia. Many of the youth leaders in the three countries started primary school under the banner of brotherhood and unity¹⁰ within a united country of Yugoslavia, but saw the rise of nationalism and violence during their adolescence. It was during these teenage years that they witnessed the birth of their new countries. While each country context is different, what unites them is a shared history connected to Yugoslavia, experiencing their late adolescence under authoritarian government structures during the early days of independence, mixed level of support for youth activism from local or national authorities and a personal idealism committed to social change that improves the lives of youth and addresses the social inequalities within their societies.

In Croatia, the Croatian Youth Network (CYN) is the leading membership based organisation, with approximately 50 youth organisations as members, including local and national groups. CYN is focused on promoting cooperation between youth organisations, advocating for the interests and needs of Croatian young people and working with government authorities in the development of youth policy (Buzinkic et al, 2007). CARE International has been both a funding organisation and partner with CYN on several of its projects. CYN was the first network to work independently of government political parties and is often in the position of challenging government policies. This integrity of keeping their independence has cost CYN direct financial support from the government. Their continued refusal to not provide general financial support to CYN continues to be a sign of the democratic weakness within the Croatian government and its institutions. Most European countries have recognised the value of such organisations and provide critical general support funding to their national networks or councils. Many in CYN feel this lack of support is due to their independence from political parties and willingness to criticise the government.

CYN plays vital roles in the promotion of youth work and through its actions demonstrates the value of tolerance and diversity within Croatia society. CYN has built strong relations with youth networks and organisations through South East Europe and within Europe. It has started the process of joining the European Youth Forum, the largest representative body for young people in Europe. CYN continues to be a good example for neighbouring countries in the development of a transparent, open and democratic youth structure working outside the influence of government. In Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina nothing similar exists at the moment.

In Serbia, Youth of Jazas is a national youth organisation focused on educating young people about HIV/AIDS, about sexual health development and supporting people living with HIV/AIDS. With headquarters in the capital city of Belgrade, they have twelve affiliates throughout the country implementing their programmes. These members, while independent organisations, share the same name, vision and mission, and agree on the programmes and strategy through a participatory management scheme. A mixture of professional staff, voluntary workers and youth peer educators, makes this one of the largest youth organisations in the region with over 3,000 members (Yugoslav Youth Association Against AIDS – Youth of Jazas, 2008). They have played an active role in the country's HIV/AIDS strategy, the strategy for youth development and health in the Republic of Serbia, and through their participation in the Coalition for Youth efforts to establish a national youth policy.

CARE began working in a partnership with Youth of Jazas through a regional project focused on engaging boys and young men around issues of gender equality, masculinity and violence. The project takes a holistic approach to the healthy development of young men and addresses a number of lifestyle and health issues as part of its programme. Youth of Jazas with its network of members reaching thousands of young people, provided a good opportunity to outreach to young men. As an organisation with many youth volunteers and with successful social marketing campaigns aimed at adolescence, Youth of Jazas have been able to reach out to young men more successfully than most organisations. This project has allowed staff to reflect on how young men receive different messages on what it means to be a man and how we can support young men to confront hegemonic masculinities within the social context. The aim is to look at how adolescent males deconstruct masculinity within their culture and determine how gender norms and male socialisation can lead to inequitable attitudes and behaviours towards women and girls.

In addition, Youth of Jazas is playing an important role as a watchdog organisation, particularly around youth health policy and in advocating for young people in general. This includes monitoring government efforts and commitment to young people. They are also helping to mainstream youth work around gender equality and the need to confront social norms that support gendered and peer violence, all of which affects the healthy development of young people. This type of youth work is challenging, both for staff and participants and requires a long term perspective in building the kind of organization needed to affect change.

In Eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina, lies the town of Vlasenica, a community of approximately 8,000¹¹ people. In the year 2000, CARE International came into contact with a group of young people interested in improving conditions in the town. During this time Vlasenica was under control by a nationalist party that had very little commitment to civil society and or cooperation with young people. The distrust for young people organising was further highlighted during this time by the OTPOR movement in neighboring Serbia, which had mobilised over 70,000 young people against the government during the 2000 elections. Vlasenica officials, as many others in the region, saw the potential power of young people and feared similar movements gaining strength in their communities (Nikolayenko, 2007). While the young people of Vlasenica were not looking to overthrow their government, they were looking for more attention and resources for youth issues.

CARE provided financial support and mentoring to a youth organisation called Javor, which developed from youth activists within the town. In challenging communities throughout the country, international organisations often provided a safety net for young people who wanted to become active in their communities outside of the political parties in control. This was also the case in some communities in Croatia and Serbia. Javor continued to go through many transformations and challenges during this period, but a core group of young people continued to be engaged. As the political environment started to change and the government showed more signs of openness, opportunities for collaboration and support developed. In 2005 Javor was one of the founding members of a local youth council in the town of Vlasenica. These youth workers were dedicated to their work and had begun to attract additional support, both from local authorities and other donors. The local authorities have since provided regular funding for youth activities through the adoption of

a local strategy for young people developed by the local youth workers.

In a region where many war crimes have been documented, Vlasenica young people have also been confronted with dealing with the past and overcoming inter-ethnic divisions that developed between Serbs and Bosniaks as a result of the war. The youth centre has made efforts to include all young people regardless of ethnicity and has established with international support an international summer camp. This camp brings together young people of all nationalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the wider European community such as Germany and Belgium. Through workshops and community actions they promote inter ethnic cooperation and social activism amongst young people.

Youth work and Peace building

In trying to promote democratisation and stability in the region, especially Bosnia and Herzegovina, many organisations working shortly after the Dayton Peace Agreement¹² was signed focused on peace building and young people. A diverse group of largely European and American organisations came into the country with a variety of programmes to promote reconciliation and contact between youth of different nationalities. In a policy research brief on peace building, Skrabalo (2004) highlights the analysis of two peace building experts in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, Paul Stubbs, a United Kingdom sociologist and Goran Bozicevic, a Croatian peace activist, who help conceptualise peace building in the post war and post Yugoslav context (2004). They embrace the definition of peace building as 'building bridges between the parties to allow for positive and creative interaction, which is significantly focused on social, economic and psychological environments of ordinary people at the grassroots level' (Bozicevic and Stubbs, 1997 cited in Skrabalo, 2004: 4). In addition the paper highlights that just focusing on the grassroots is 'potentially deflecting attention from structural causality and the need for fundamental social change' (and Stubbs, 1997 cited in Skrabalo, 2004:5).

A Closer look at Peace building in Bosnia and Herzegovina

In Bosnia and Herzegovina many positive efforts were made at the grassroots level, while very little was done at the structures that promoted the division and conflict. Many positive programmes focused on young people's struggles against the weight of the various structural influences. Gillard (2001) highlights the case in Mostar where the youth organisation Mladi Most¹³ sought to bring Bosniak and Croat¹⁴ young people together in their youth centre, but the young people found themselves being harassed by different elements within the city often ending in violence. The project of promoting reconciliation and an alternative climate to nationalism was often weakened by the structural influences in the city which affected the resources and staff of the centre and undermined its message (Gillard, 2001).

Young people have strong potential to be peacemakers in their community and promote reconciliation, but if neglected the opposite can also be true (Fischer, 2006). As Fischer (2006) highlights, if no social integration activities are provided, young people, particularly

young males, provide willing members to criminal gangs and voices for nationalist politicians. Meanwhile programmes focused on addressing some of these issues tend to be in short supply, under-funded and with short-term implementation schedules. In his groundbreaking book Lederach (1997) describes a process referred to as an integrated framework for peace building. Lederach argues that for peace building to work, it should take place in an integrated fashion across four dimensions: personal, relational, structural and cultural (1997:82-83). In his research, Lederach has found this multidimensional approach can change often hostile and violent relationships into an interdependent relationship capable of finding non violent initiatives to resolve conflict (1997).

In Bosnia and Herzegovina the multi dimensional aspects of peace building have been generally lacking. The political establishment displays a lack of commitment to breaking down the barriers of the ethnic divide which continues to be a tool to promote differences amongst the population. A lack of commitment to youth development and confronting the structural and cultural dimensions has largely left young people to develop in a divided society. The integration of schools in some parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina has led to parents withdrawing their children. It is these types of barriers that have confronted youth work across communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. While many programmes have developed, often young people- led, to promote cross community initiatives, most are dependent on international funding and minimal support from government institutions.

As Fischer (2006) notes, inter- ethnic cooperation in post conflict societies can generally only be achieved through a process of trust and confidence building. Fischer (2006) also highlights the importance of taking the different needs of young men and young women into account in the design of programmes, assessing the different social constructs that often account for gender inequalities. As the post war rise in juvenile offending and violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina continues, relevant youth programmes are seriously lacking (Strategy Against Juvenile Offending for BiH, 2006).

CARE International's work with young people around peace building took several fronts, this included working in partnership with a variety of organisations, including the Mostar Youth Theatre and the Center for Drama and Education in the PAX¹⁵ Project, which was designed to work on social transformation through engaging young people in theatre work. In addition the project worked with teachers to integrate peace building and conflict resolution skills in the educational curriculum. While this work was challenging and started to address some of the structural issues within the education system, the project was also confronted with donor constraints and short timelines.

On the regional level, CARE International work with young people focused mostly in Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Through projects like the Balkan Youth Project, implemented in partnership with the European Youth Forum and supported by the European Commission Youth Programme, and innovative donors like the Charles Stewart MOTT Foundation and the Western Balkan Youth and Student Democracy Initiative, a generation of youth workers have been trained and supported. In evaluations of the projects, it was highlighted that strong networks were established that crossed ethnic and political boundaries which in the long term would enhance inter ethnic cooperation and collaboration.

Regional stability and prosperity in this region is tied to the progress of neighbouring states, as well as the development of civil society where young people play an active part. This is a precondition for effective governance and democracy. The regional youth initiatives have worked on fostering cross border initiatives on a variety of levels from youth policy initiatives, developing of scouting standards and youth cultural manifestations. As mentioned in the Balkan Youth Project evaluation, these initiatives have provided a vehicle for confronting regional stereotypes and xenophobia that grew during the conflict and exist in a post war environment (Milivojevic, 2005).

More recent efforts have focused on working with YNGOs to build their competencies to address issues around the culture of violence, including gendered and peer violence. Much of the training for youth workers in the region has focused at the organisational level, building strong organisations, advocating for effective youth polices and becoming sustainable. Too little training has been on skills necessary to be an effective youth worker; how to address social or gender inequalities in your community, issues with dealing with the past, racism or xenophobia; or confronting the culture of violence or hegemonic role models that exist for young people. Where we have seen strong investment around capacities of youth workers has been around peer education on issues of sexual health and HIV/AIDS. This effort to build practical skills has generally been lacking outside the field of youth and health.

The Role of International Actors in Supporting Youth Work in the Post Conflict Societies of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia

During the past ten years CARE International has worked with youth organisations and youth workers across the region. We have seen how the power of youth committed to social change can influence communities in positive ways. Conversations with many youth workers throughout the region over these years has provided the opportunity for reflection on some of the key issues impacting youth work development in the region. The lessons include the need for:

- More investment in peace building to support positive young people as key institutional actors within this process;
- Long term programmes to replace short term projects in order to make a sustainable impact in the promotion of youth development, peace building and reconciliation;
- Real engagement with young people that involves handing over ownership of programmes to young people and supporting their voice at all levels of society;
- International organisations to seek out more local experts;
- More than good intentions: working with young people in divided societies requires knowledge about the social and political dynamics (structural forces) that influence the divisions and a commitment to do no harm.

Clearly there are many more lessons to learn from the experiences of other divided societies.

Key Challenges Ahead

The future for youth work in the region continues to be faced with many challenges. A new generation of youth workers is emerging that appears to be less focused on differences and more on the commonalities of young people in the region. The following list suggests some of the challenges based on the experience of youth work in the region:

- Governments in the region must value the importance of youth work and increasingly play a role in funding and supporting these types of activities. This should be based on joint principles and not with the intention to control or manipulate young people;
- Youth workers must continue to confront inappropriate political interference in their work and challenge it when necessary;
- Youth work needs to increasingly explore qualification, training and programme quality issues to better integrate with European standards and most importantly increase its impact and outcomes for young people;
- Gender equality and greater inclusion of girls and young women in leadership positions within organisations should be a stronger priority of youth workers;
- Governments need to continue to support youth policy at local and national level and increase its resources in support of targets and actions;
- Evidence based research should play a stronger role in the formation of youth policy, with youth participation mandatory within that process.
- International organisations should continue to facilitate and support efforts that enable young people to shape the direction and focus of initiatives.

Conclusion

This article was designed to highlight some of the positive accomplishments that have taken place within youth work in South East Europe. In addition I wanted to explore some of the remaining challenges of delivering youth work in region that continues to struggle with its post war legacy and the transition towards closer relationships within the European Union.

Young people in this region continue to be one of the largest socially excluded groups; confronted with poor employment prospects, on-going nationalism and limited opportunities to be engaged in their communities. Youth workers face a daunting task to mobilise resources in a diminishing funding environment, especially as many international organisations, the main financial source for most youth organisations, continue their withdrawal from the region as funding priorities change.

Despite these challenges youth workers are forging ahead and improving the conditions for young people who increasingly see their future tied to the European Union (EU) and the ideals of tolerance and diversity that the EU represents. CARE International, like many other international organisations, has tried to promote those ideals, recognising young people as the best hope to move beyond the conflicts and current instabilities that face this region.

Notes

- 1 For clarifications purposes young referred to in this article refer to those aged 15-24. Many international organisations use this age range, including the World Bank.
- 2 Yugoslavia describes three political entities that existed successively on the Balkan Peninsula in Europe, during most of the 20th century. This included the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929) and later the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia founded by communists in 1943 and then renamed in 1963 the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Following the succession of most republics within Yugoslavia, it was renamed Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (comprising Serbia and Montenegro) in 1992.
- 3 Youth non governmental organisations (YNGOs) is a term used to identify all types of youth organisations, including youth led and youth serving.
- 4 CARE International is a co federation of 11 national CARE's working together to end poverty and promote social justice. <http://www.care-international.org/>
- 5 Youth population numbers have to be taken as approximate, as in some cases a census has none been done for a number of years.
- 6 Roma population is one of the official minorities within the region and has historically faced discrimination and social exclusion.
- 7 The people's youth organisation was made of youth 14 and older and focused on preparing youth for participation in a socialist society.
- 8 OTPOR means resistance in the Serbian language.
- 9 The Dayton Agreement recognized a second tier of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina, comprising two entities – a joint Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) (mostly Bosniak/Croat entity) and the Republika Srpska (RS) (mostly Bosnian Serb entity) – each presiding over roughly one-half the territory.
- 10 Brotherhood and unity was a popular slogan of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia that was coined during the Yugoslav People's Liberation War (1941-1945), and which evolved into a guiding principle of Yugoslavia's post-war inter-ethnic policy.
- 11 The numbers are based on 1991 census figures, the last time a census was done in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Due to the political discord, the major political parties have postponed conducting a new census. These numbers should be taken as approximate, especially in light of the population changes due to the war.
- 12 The Dayton Peace Agreement signed in November of 1995 provided for the cessation of hostilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and provided the governing framework.
- 13 Mladi Most translates into Youth Bridge.
- 14 Bosniak, sometimes referred to as a Bosnian Muslim, Croatian and Serbian, are the three main ethnic constituencies of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- 15 Latin for peace

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Inter-racial Conflict and Identity Formation

Joan Bailey

Whilst inter racial conflict amongst young people is not a new phenomenon in the UK, it gained media attention following the riots during the summer of 2001 which involved large numbers of White and South Asian young people. More recently there have been incidents involving conflict between Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups, primarily African Caribbean and South Asian young people. Inter racial youth crime raises issues for community cohesion. Whilst the government seeks to encourage communities to understand and be tolerant of difference, BME young people, in particular, often experience their attempts to establish their own identities and a place within British society as a competition with other ethnic groups. This article argues that for some young people, these conflicts are central to the development of a social and ethnic identity. By understanding these links, it may be possible to develop strategies which divert young people away from violent confrontations whilst at the same time contributing to the resolution of conflicts that exist between different groups of BME young people.

Keywords: *inter racial conflict, community cohesion, identity formation*

Britain has been a major recipient of immigrants throughout its history. Following the Second World War, citizens of Britain's former colonies in the Caribbean, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan came to settle in the UK, often invited by the British Government to fill gaps at the lower end of the labour market. Many of the immigrants coming at this time were highly visible in terms of colour, 'race' and religion. More recent arrivals in the UK including those from the Middle East, from South East Asia, Africa and the former Yugoslavia have come from countries where persecution is commonplace and they have sought refugee status. More recently many immigrants have arrived in the UK from the EU accession states.

On the 20th April 1968 the Conservative MP Enoch Powell gave what became known as his *Rivers of Blood* speech, calling for an immediate halt to immigration and prophesying that by the end of the 20th century, 8 per cent of Britain's population would be black or brown-skinned, and a third of the residents of some cities would be non-white. The result, he said, would be a nation 'unimaginably wracked by dissension and violent disorder', (*Birmingham Post*, 1968). The 2001 census recorded the non-white population of England as 9.1 per cent. Of the 20 local authority districts with the highest concentration of non white ethnic minority groups, 16 are London boroughs. The ethnic minority population is a majority in Newham (61 per cent), Brent (55 per cent), and is close to half the population in Tower Hamlets (49 per cent). The highest rating non-London local authorities are Slough (36 per cent), Leicester (36 per cent), Birmingham (30 per cent) and Luton (28 per cent) (Home Office, 2005a).

No doubt Enoch Powell, were he alive today, would say, 'I told you so,' and if we were to ask the British National Party (BNP) they too would be in total agreement in their concern about the implications of increased numbers of migrants that have come to UK shores. However, in terms of Powell's forecast of increased violence, he might be surprised to learn that, as often as not, where it did occur it would be between between different non-white racial groups rather than between whites and other BME groups. Such conflict, I shall argue, is often the product of attempts by these young people to establish a plausible identity.

Ethnic Minority Identity Formation

Each one of us has two heritages, a 'vertical' one that comes to us from our ancestors, our religious community and our popular traditions, and a 'horizontal' one transmitted to us by our contemporaries and by the age we live in. It seems to me that the latter is the more influential of the two, and that it becomes more so every day. Yet this fact is not reflected in our perception of ourselves, and the inheritance we invoke most frequently is the vertical one. (Maalouf, 2000:102).

Before moving to an exploration of how ethnic minority identities are formed it is useful to understand something about self and identity. Self-concept is the knowledge that young people have about themselves. This comes about through their interaction with significant people in their lives as well as the day-to-day interactions that they have with others. Over the last two decades, social and behavioural scientists have 'increasingly emphasised the role of self and identity in the causes and consequences of inter group hostility and harm doing' (Jussim et al, 2001). They believe self-concept issues occur at several different levels: the socio-ethnic group into which individuals are born; the socio-political context in which they grow to maturity and the role of the society in which they live in the wider world.

In looking at these three elements and their association with inter group hostility, Jones (1997) says 'at the level of an individual within a social context, ethnic identity may contribute to both in-group bonds and hostility towards other groups'. In terms of self and identity at group level:

social identity theory and self categorisation theory emphasise the potential for group-based identities to foster support for the status quo among higher power and status groups, and to foster inter-group competition and movements for political change amongst lower power and status groups (Jussim et al, 2001:7).

The role of self and identity in the global context is, of course, impacted by a variety of world conflicts (Greenfield and Chiro, 1994; Keegan, 1993).

Ethnicity or ethnic identity is based upon the belief that a group of people shares similar origins and traditions. Within that same group individuals will feel a sense of inclusion and cultural connection to others. However ethnic identity will also be influenced directly and indirectly by their experiences of the social.

Erikson's eight-stage theory of psychosocial development (1968) suggests that, during adolescence, young people are engaged in 'the search for identity'. During this process, he argues, some will experience an 'identity crisis'. In his model, adolescents are faced with finding out who they are and where they are going. Confronted with new roles, which are both social and vocational, they need to go through an exploration phase in order to arrive at a positive identity. He goes on to say that if an identity is pushed onto the adolescent by parents, the school or peers, he or she may not adequately explore alternative roles and this will result in identity confusion. As a result they may withdraw and isolate themselves, experiencing an erosion of identity. Meanwhile, Santrock (2004) argues that identity is a self-portrait composed of many pieces, which will include religious, political, relationship and ethnic identities and that young people have to go through a series of stages in order to gain this positive identity.

BME young people not only have to work through their own adolescent developmental phases but they also have to explore the cultural issues associated with the country they are living in along with the cultural expectations of their own ethnic group in order to determine their identity. Thus, as Thomas (1986) has argued, the BME adolescent faces additional developmental tasks which unite around:

- The construction of an ethnic self identity (the label that a person chooses);
- Critical engagement with ascribed ethnic identity (the label that they are given and give to others);
- The absorption of cultural identity (based on preferable and familiar style);
- The consolidation of a racial identity (based on physical experience, like skin colour);
- The acceptance of a national identity (based on country of birth – usually based on ethnicity of parents).

Willis (2002) argues that in undertaking such tasks, young black people cannot simply base their identities on earlier inter-generational experiences, which in BME communities are often fundamentally different. Indeed the identity that most BME young people develop will be profoundly influenced by their relationships with white young people and their core task will therefore be to negotiate what it is to be a 'black' young person in a 'white culture'.

Modood et al, (1994) observe:

Identities are not closely tied to single issues or symbols; people hold multiple identifications, some more strongly than others, and they use these flexibly according to circumstance. In this context these identifications are also expressions of cultural hybridity, where a variety of historical, international, ideological and political factors influence expressions of self-hood, belonging and relationships with others. People have created cultural spaces through which they express a variety of different and competing identity claims (p.12).

Thus, BME identity cannot be disengaged from questions of power, structured inequalities and history, since, as Modood argues, they are rooted in 'collective experiences of migration, diaspora and racism'. As we have seen however, there is both a large, national and a small local politics at play for many BME young people and sometimes small local politics take a violent form.

As David Pearson notes, nationality, race and ethnicity are not natural categories or predetermined identities; they are political constructs with shifting memberships and meanings, ways of naming oneself and others, of representing identities and interests within different orders of collectivity (Pearson, 2001:16). Identity formation is a complex and difficult process, the more so in an increasingly diverse and uncertain social and cultural world and this may encourage young people to develop an unrealistic sense of their own socio-cultural separateness which, as Young (2003:453) has argued, can mean:

In a late modern world where people increasingly create their own sense of identity and culture, multiculturalism encourages ... [young people]... to go to [their] roots and find [their] 'true' self. Such a fixed essence is then contrasted with 'Others' (Catholics against Protestants, Islam against non-Islam, White against Black) and allows prejudice to be based on notions of fixed differences. A multiculturalism that seeks tolerance paradoxically creates the conditions for prejudice and intolerance.

Identity formation can be seen then to be a very complex subject. There is no template as to how young people form their identities, but rather a series of considerations that should be taken on board that may influence that formation. Each person's experiences are therefore individual and unique within an identifiable set of processes.

Inter Racial Conflict

In the UK over at least the last two decades, intense conflict between different ethnic groups has created a range of social problems. The history of slavery, conquest, exploitation and war has played a part in the 'most extreme manifestations of inter group conflict,' (Jussim et al, 2001). Whilst conflict amongst young people can take place between any groups, in conflict between (BME) groups, the issues of race, religion and nationality will be intertwined.

Following the Birmingham (Lozells) incident of social conflict involving African Caribbean and South Asian young people in 2005, Lee Jasper, the policy director of equalities and policing for the Mayor of London said, 'The recent riot in Birmingham has shown the need for unity between African Caribbean and Asian communities and has starkly exposed the gross racial inequalities suffered by both communities' (Oct. 2005). He asked that there be, a recognition and acknowledgement of these very real concerns and tensions and that youth groups, mosques, temples, churches and community organisations...engage... in serious dialogue to gain an understanding of the issues that gave rise to these terrible events.

However, the ensuing debate latched onto questions of culture and the way that different groups interacted, sidelining questions of history, discrimination and deprivation. As Bardhan (2005:169) has observed:

it is not uncommon to see communities sharing some historical animosities coexisting peacefully [...] for generations (Serbs, Croats and Muslims in the former Yugoslavia, for example) and then something snaps and inter-community violence erupts.

Understanding these eruptions requires us to go beyond pointing to primordial antagonisms, but examine the nature of that crucial 'something,' and see if it can be placed within some meaningful framework.

An understanding of the historical issues associated with this area of violence needs to be explored. Writing about inter-racial antagonisms within the BME community, Darcus Howe (2004), the veteran race campaigner and broadcaster argues that West Indians and Asians have:

Forgotten how much they were loathed when they first arrived in the UK. There is a collective memory loss in some parts of the elderly populations in terms of forgetting what it was like to arrive with nothing. They have now rejected the very people that they should show solidarity with and instead view the new arrivals with suspicion, and blame them for severe overcrowding, rising crime rates and stretching public services to breaking point.

He goes on to say that there was a time when Caribbean and Asian young people, 'teamed up' to fight white racists, during the days of the Tilbury Trojan Skins, (1977 to 1984) whose activities included 'Paki bashing'. This 'unity' that appeared in the late seventies during the era of the 'jack booted skinheads,' seems to have now been replaced with a desire to attack each other (Howe, 2004).

In his response to the Lozells incident in Birmingham, John Denham noted that, 'Historical Britishness cannot deny the strong strands of racism, exploitation and class division that have been interwoven with the more amenable parts of our history' (Denham, 2001). Part of this history involved strategies of governance that placed different racial groups in a relationship of antagonism with one another. Indeed as John Rex observed over 30 years ago, race relations in the UK still carry echoes of the social and economic circumstances in which the different racial groups first encountered one another and the status and respect accorded to them as a result (Rex, 1970).

Throughout its history the British Empire created a middle tier status for different minority groups. They were given separate rights and privileges that, for example, in the case of the Asians in Africa, were less than Whites but more than Blacks. Various commentators have suggested that this 'honorary White' role has been instrumental in fermenting inter-racial conflict throughout the world. This divide and rule strategy was used to great effect, allowing the British to gain and maintain control of huge territories by keeping their peoples divided along lines of difference such as religion, language, caste. In the process, ethnic and religious differences were magnified (Segal, 1995) and when the British left, the hostilities that they had nurtured remained. Many believe that inter-racial conflict between and amongst Blacks and Asians in modern Britain are, in part at least, a product of this historical legacy. In 2005 Trevor Philips, CRE Chairman, acknowledged in his response to *Strength in Diversity* (Home Office, 2005c) that there is growing tension between settled ethnic minority communities that have been British for many years (notably African-Caribbeans and those from the Indian sub-continent). At the heart of this conflict is the question of 'whiteness'.

Leland Saito's (1998) study of relationships between Asian Americans, Latinos and Whites

in San Gabriel Valley in Los Angeles analyses the role of 'whiteness' in the construction of identities among the ethnic minority groups. He notes that while these groups might come together in solidarity on some issues they can become embroiled in conflict on others which threaten their particular interests. He argues that a key division when these conflicts emerge concerns who is perceived to be 'whiter' because both Asians and the Latinos have become 'reluctant ethnics in light of this racial construction and white privilege'. In a similar vein, Trevor Phillips observes of the UK that: 'Some immigrants do not feel accepted as British, despite their efforts to integrate. It can often feel as if ethnic minorities are travelling on the same bus as everyone else, but are scared of being thrown off because they've not bought a ticket'(2004:5).

The issue of 'whiteness' is, of course, thrown into stark relief with the arrival of poor white migrants from the EU accession states and white asylum seekers who tend to settle in or near neighbourhoods inhabited by BME citizens. Thus, in 2004, *The Times* reported an increasing number of asylum seekers experiencing violence and hostility from established ethnic minority groups rather than from right-wing, white racist groups.

The Impact of Inter Racial Conflict on Government Policy

The involvement of BME young people in inter-racial violence is clearly of concern for the government particularly in terms of its impact on the policies they have implemented. In looking at youth crime inter racial conflict could be seen to be a key component in the over representation of Black young people involved in the Youth Justice system:

The over representation of black young people among those deprived of their liberty is a continuing cause for concern, with children classified as Black or Black British accounting for 15 per cent of those remanded to custody or secure accommodation, 11.3 per cent of all custodial disposals and more than 20 per cent of all those sentenced to long term detention (Youth Justice Board, 2003). Furthermore, the over representation of black young people held within the juvenile secure estate has increased significantly since the introduction of the youth justice reforms from 1998 onwards (Bateman, 2005: 159)

Young (2003) argues that, in part, this over-representation is because, 'It is the second generation immigrants who have become more assimilated to the values of the wider society who most acutely feel relative deprivation, the discontent of which frequently leads to higher crime rates,' and so:

the prevalence of criminality in minority neighborhoods is not a product of any racial essence but of subcultures which have adapted to the new country and which transmute rather than replicate the original culture of origin [...] Over and over again the determinants of class are confused with the propensities of 'race' or ethnicity (p.456).

It is arguable that the concentration of Black young people in long-term imprisonment is in part a consequence of their involvement in crimes of violence; the bulk of which are committed against other BME young people.

In addition, the issue of inter racial conflict has been raised on a number of occasions at Government level in relation to the riots in the Northern cities in 2001 and the Lozells incident in 2005. The issue has achieved the prominence it has because of its centrality to two governmental policy priorities; crime reduction and community cohesion. The Government appears to believe that by building more cohesive communities, young people will be less likely to become involved in violence. However, this somewhat utopian view fails to recognise that many of these young people not only feel estranged and excluded from the socio-cultural mainstream but also from their cultures of origin.

Following the disturbances in the Northern cities, the Home Secretary set up a Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion to consider the impact of existing policies and what other policy initiatives might be developed to promote greater community cohesion and avert future racial conflict and violence. At the same time a Review Team, led by Ted Cantele, was established:

To obtain the views of local communities and young people, local authorities, voluntary and faith organisations, in a number of representative multi ethnic communities, on the issues that need to be addressed in developing confident, active communities and social cohesion (2001).

The review team produced three reports. *The Community Cohesion Review Team Report (2001)*, *The Bradford District Race Review (2001)* and *The Local Government Association's Guidance on Community Cohesion (2002)*. These reports informed the development of a national policy for cohesive communities, *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society* (Home Office, 2005a) which states that:

Communities that are strong and inclusive lead to a better quality of life, a stronger sense of identity and belonging, and mutual respect and equality. This is central to the idea of a civil society on which democracy rests.

This report outlined a commitment to community cohesion stating that a cohesive community is one where:

- there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities
- the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued
- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities
- strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods

(LGA et al, 2002:6)

In enabling local authorities to determine their priorities for community cohesion it outlined the main purpose of their agenda in order to identify problems within a neighbourhood and to tackle barriers that exist between different groups. Undertaking community based consultations which enabled the development of a local strategy that reflected the core principles of community cohesion which secure the promotion of greater knowledge, respect and contact between various cultures and thereby, a greater sense of citizenship.

Cantle (2001) focused on the importance of developing understanding between different cultural and religious groups suggesting how this might be achieved. This overly simplistic approach to ensuring that everyone gets along with each other, while simultaneously developing a shared understanding of what it is to be British is fraught with difficulties. Nowhere is there recognition that to be British also means to be part of British history, a history which contains both 'winners' and 'losers' from the colonial enterprise. In developing an identity based upon the cultural experience of being British, in as much as some individuals may wish to become more closely associated with the tradition, others may wish to achieve greater distance.

The Cantle report led to the establishment of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, a fixed term advisory board. Setting about to determine how local areas could make the most of diversity whilst responding to the tensions that could arise out of this; they undertook a wide-ranging consultation process, involving some 600 plus organisations and individuals. This resulted in a final report, *Our Shared Future*, published in June 2007. A selection of case studies accompanied the report with an aim of demonstrating good practice ideas that could be rolled out at a local level.

The report identified new definitions for cohesion and integration, one of these being around identity. It states that in terms of identity:

cohesion implies a society in which differences of culture, race and faith are recognised and accommodated within an overall sense of identity. An integrated society does not depend upon assimilating these differences into a single identity (p.46.)

The report recognised that tensions existing today affected both the African Caribbean community and young Muslim men and that the 'root of alienation' concerns history and identity. However, although it mentions intra-racial tensions, in relation to conflict amongst those of the same minority group, it is not explicit about the types of inter-racial youth conflict between BME groups which is evident in a number of urban areas, one of which is Luton.

Inter Racial violence in Luton

Luton has a resident population of about 184,000. The population density per sq km was recorded in 2005 as 4,307, the highest in any district or unitary authority in the Eastern region and the third most densely populated place in England outside London, (Census, 2001). Overall, 23 per cent of Luton's population is under 16 years old, with the national average being 21 per cent. The two wards with the highest population (Dallow and Biscot) also have the highest proportion of people aged 0 to 15; and are amongst those which have the lowest proportions of residents who are aged 60 or above. (Luton Crime Audit, 2005). Immigration settlement in Luton has followed a similar path to most industrial towns in Britain.

Luton is the home of people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. It is one of the most ethnically diverse towns outside London. BME groups account for 35.0 per cent

of the total population, compared with an average of 12.5 per cent for England and Wales. In the wards of Dallow and Biscot, the non-white population accounts for 66.6 per cent and 65 per cent respectively. Significant BME groups represented within Luton are the Pakistani (9.2 per cent), Caribbean (4.2 per cent), Indian (4.1 per cent) and Bangladeshi (4.1 per cent) populations, and approximately 46 per cent of school pupils are from non-white minority ethnic backgrounds, rising at approximately 1 per cent each year. Over 100 different languages are spoken and the residents practise all the major religions of the world. Muslims form the largest religious minority group, composed mostly of Pakistanis/Kashmiris and then Bangladeshis plus others from Africa, the Middle East, Bosnia, and elsewhere. The largest faith and ethnic group in the town are white Christians. However, there are Christians in the town from African Caribbean, African and Indian backgrounds as well. Luton also has other faith communities, including Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Zoroastrian, Bahai and Jewish groups (Luton Crime Audit, 2002).

Whilst Luton has so far succeeded in avoiding the riots of the kind that some of the Northern towns of England experienced in the summer of 2001, it has experienced low level inter racial conflict between the African Caribbean community and the South Asian community since about 2000. The death of Kamran Shezad, a young Pakistani/Kashmiri college student at the hands of a group of African Caribbean young men in August 2003, marked a low point in this continuing conflict.

This incident, which took place on August 20th 2003, in Wardown Park, Luton, occurred in the vicinity of a fun fair as darkness was falling. The evidence in this case shows that the attack mounted on Kamran Shezad and others was not random. It was a reprisal attack arising from fighting which took place an hour earlier in which Kamran was one of a group who assaulted at the summer fair a small number of young African Caribbean boys, following a verbal altercation. In my discussions with a number of young people who observed the attack on Kamran they said that the intention had been to frighten and not kill him.

Prior to the attack a number of phone calls were made from the fair summoning assistance and as a result, a number of older black youths arrived with weapons including baseball bats, knives and crutches. They entered the fair seeking revenge for the earlier incident and split up, chasing several youths in different directions.

Kamran received a number of injuries including cuts to his back and wrist. The sole cause of death was a single stab wound to the thigh, which severed the femoral artery resulting in fatal blood loss. Tragically he died nine days later in hospital, despite all attempts by medical staff to save him. Despite the police interviewing hundreds of witnesses, no one appeared able to identify a single offender who chased after Kamran Shezad and beat him in a wooded area of the park away from the funfair. Yet the investigation succeeded in arresting and convicting one African Caribbean young man who was believed to be directly responsible for Kamran's death and eight other African Caribbean males who were involved in the violence on that evening.

The arrest, trial and sentencing of the African Caribbean young men served only to further divide the South Asian and African Caribbean communities to a point where daily verbal

altercations between young people from the two communities became commonplace. Some of this was fuelled by a perception of injustice. The African Caribbean community believed that they were being made scapegoats for a series of incidents in which members of both groups had been aggressors.

Following this incident more intensive youth work was implemented. The youth team which I manage and am part of at 'The Safer Luton Partnership' is made up of a diverse team who reflect many sections of the community. Over a number of years delivering youth based, detached and outreach work the staff have developed relationships with many young people in the town. The team was well placed to initiate youth focussed meetings with young people from both communities, to listen to the issues, raise awareness of these with other professionals and the wider community and to develop a strategy for implementing a range of projects to address some of these. As part of this team I was able to support these discussions, primary led by male staff because attendance was almost exclusively from the male members of the communities in question. I was also, as the person in charge, able to access funding and resources to develop ongoing work with the young people.

In our discussions with young people a picture emerged of increased tensions in the community and particularly in school playgrounds. Verbal insults and antagonism raged between those who had been observers of the incident or knew those who had been involved. In addition there were many young people from both of these communities who became involved in incivilities. Whilst the majority of the incidents remained as verbal insults coming from either the African Caribbean or the South Asian young people and directed at each other, a few cases erupted into fighting involving a core group and being observed by some large numbers in a few cases. At the very extreme end there were incidents of knife stabbings that took place on school buses and in the street.

The arrest or failure to arrest certain individuals, along with verbal and physical assaults played a part in spreading disturbances across the town. Often this would be done quickly through phone calls, which could lead to large numbers of young people suddenly congregating in specific areas and resulting in incivilities long before professional intervention could taken place. My discussions with the young people suggest that the majority of these were based primarily on young people's identification with those who had been involved. Both sides believed that an injustice had been done towards them and many more incidents became embroiled in racial slurs, intimidation and vindictive threats: 'We're gonna get you'. In many cases the threats to each other were hurled simply because the other was either South Asian or African Caribbean. It became difficult for young people to separate themselves from the issue irrespective of whether they had previously been involved in the conflict.

The conflict led to an increase in the numbers of young people who carried knives amongst the two groups. This evidence came from the young people who openly discussed with those working with them the need to protect themselves from the 'other'. This was supported by the increased number of young people being stopped with weapons in the street and the ultimate police initiative to address this through the implementation if a knife amnesty. Such knife carrying represented a response to feeling unsafe on the streets of Luton. Many of the young people talked of being scared about going to school knowing

that if tensions escalated in school playgrounds there was a real threat of serious incidents occurring.

Groups of young people would wait for those of the other racial group at school gates and it became necessary to 'police' particular schools. This policing involved community workers, youth workers and local police officers. On many occasions incidents extended to young people who were not necessarily attending the schools. Older young people would also hang out at the gates prior to the school bell going. Bus trips home for a number of students became frightening experiences and many young people with no link to the incidents were forced to decide whether walking or travelling on certain bus routes posed the greater threat.

A large number of young people from neither of these communities also began carrying weapons as a kind of security blanket, so that they could protect themselves if the need arose. Friendships between young people from the two groups became tortured and fragile. A number of youth organisations in the town became aware of an increasing amount of tension between these groups taking place. It was not acceptable for South Asian and African Caribbean young people to be spending any social time with each other. Young people from other backgrounds avoided any involvement with anybody from either of these community groups, as this could be seen as them taking sides. Youth workers attempted to engage these young people in debate but found that the informal rules of association hijacked these conversations. What they were able to do was to raise ongoing awareness of the increasing hostility with other professionals working in the community along with community leaders and community development workers.

As the trial of the young African Caribbean men was being prepared in relation to the murder of Kamran, during the days leading up to the trial and the sentencing increasing tension ensued. Luton police dealt with numerous issues that they could link directly to the hostility that had developed between groups of young people from the community groups involved.

The trial was covered by the local papers and on a few occasions picked up by the regional newspapers; it however did not escalate into the type of highly visible and protracted news story that surrounded the Lozells incident in 2005. One of the key reasons for this was due to the proactive work that took place by a number of professionals working in the town. The Chief Superintendent of Police for Luton, along with others met with a number of local newspapers prior to the commencement of the trial and gave them a briefing on the operations that had taken place. The media were kept fully informed throughout the trial and along with this multi agency approach to the media for sensitive reporting the situation was managed in Luton. The media were naturally asked to consider the issues that the North of England towns had encountered and asked that they play their part in not antagonising the situation.

The young people arrested and charged from the South Asian community for their involvement in a preceding incident at Market Hill in Luton, (in which Kamran had been a player), had their cases heard several months prior to the African Caribbean young men who were involved in the murder of Kamran. Where the South Asian young men

were found guilty they received fines and community sentences. The media covered the sentencing in a small column on the third page of the local weekly newspaper. This served to cause uproar amongst the African Caribbean community who felt that they had 'got away with it'. A number of months later in March 2005, the nine boys involved in Kamran's death were sentenced to custody of between 8 years for the person who pleaded guilty to manslaughter and 18 months to 3 years for all the others who pleaded guilty to violent disorder. The local newspaper carried pictures of all nine African Caribbean young men with the verdicts and sentences taking up the full front page with the headline 'GUILTY'. The outrage from the African Caribbean community following this could not be contained and the wounds from this have continued to be of major significance for many young people to this day.

The aftermath of this incident, which could be considered the most significant that has occurred between the two groups in Luton, is that whilst there are a lot less altercations it seems that when something does 'kick off' between the groups it quickly escalates and the division between the two groups becomes very obvious. The outcome of this is that youth workers have intervened in order to reduce the conflict, encouraging debate whilst at the same time ensuring that they are not seen to take sides. It seems however that very little work has been or is going on with the young people to identify the source of the conflict.

Following the murder and subsequent trials, monitoring of the community conflict was undertaken by professionals. Regular and extensive debates took place with 'community leaders' to keep them abreast of developments, elicit their help in containing animosity and to seek their support in ensuring that accurate information was given out through community meetings, the mosques and other religious and cultural venues. This model of practice is fraught with difficulties. The expectation that a community leader can address all the elements of the issue is unrealistic. Many community leaders who believe themselves to have a highly influential role simply don't. This is particularly evident in their dealings with young people and especially those who are involved in 'anti social behaviour' and offending. This is primarily because these young people often do not attend mosques, churches or temples and almost never appear at community meetings where they might hear these messages, and even if they did, it is unlikely that their perception of reality would coincide closely with that of, usually considerably older, community leaders who have had a very different experience of life from second generation youth. Additionally, many community leaders are closer to the historical issues than young people. They may have experienced these directly or indirectly and as such may be the carriers of the very inter racial animosities enacted by their own young people. This of course raises the alarming possibility that those charged by the Government to act as mediators in the struggle to create community cohesion may well be those who, inadvertently or otherwise, through their attitudes, beliefs and utterances, may have fuelled the very conflict that they are, ostensibly, endeavouring to resolve.

Young People's Perception of the Situation

Whilst it was difficult to engage with numerous young people about the issues following the death of Kamran and the sentencing of those involved, there were opportunities for

youth work colleagues and me to engage in discussions with young people who were directly or indirectly involved in the events described here and their aftermath. We used a range of methods to enable young people to share their experiences. Informal workshops held in youth centres and community settings were undertaken with the members of the two groups separately. Some of this work concentrated on individuals whilst a large part of it engaged groups of young people. Focus groups concentrated on developing strategies to minimise violence and risk. Bringing the two groups together was considered too risky in the current climate but was identified as a future objective for the work with the two communities.

The majority of the young people we spoke to felt that the situation had been handled 'OK' by the police. The difference in their feelings about the outcome of the two trials was evident however. A number of young people from the African Caribbean community believed that the trial was yet another example of how differently they were treated in comparison with the South Asian community. For example, T is a 16 year old African Caribbean young man. He made no secret of the fact that if, 'they mess with me... [meaning the South Asian lads] ... I am gonna give it them good'. The implications of any actions he took were not of major concern to him. He was focused on ensuring that the African Caribbean community sent the message that they were not happy about the outcome.

Through the discussions it is clear that a number of young people from both these groups were travelling in numbers to assuage their fears for their own safety. For example, A is a 17 year old South Asian young man. He came from Pakistan several years ago. Following the events that led to the death of Kamran Shazed he says that he always carries a knife. While he had nothing to do with the incidents that took place, African Caribbean young men verbally abuse him, throw things at him and try to pick fights with him. He says, 'If the time comes and I have to defend myself, I will,' meaning that he will use the knife. He has never been in trouble and is what one would regard as a 'good citizen' and a model student, yet he could very easily become involved in the youth justice system if he continues to take this view.

Whilst inter-racial conflict between African Caribbean and South Asian young men continues, similar incidents are starting to occur between them and other young people from different racial groups. P is a Somali young man aged 15, who came to Luton in 2003. He talks about his experience of dealing with South Asian young people in his school:

I get picked on every day going to and coming from school, there have been many times when I have been beaten up, once really bad that I had to go to hospital.

He says that they tell him to go back to where he came from. The only time that he feels safe is when he is with a group of his Somalian friends. He admits however that if there are a few of them and they come across lone Asian young people they will pick on them although the lone Asian youth may have nothing to do with the group. He feels that these attacks based on retaliation are justified. This is alarming, and interesting in relation to the fact that professionals monitoring inter-community tensions in Luton, have noted that it is now the most recently arrived migrants who are subject to the greatest risk from inter-racial crime.

In the discussions between youth workers, those from other professional fields and young people it was recognised that the incidents of inter racial conflict amongst young people predominately involve young men. Whilst they are the ones that are visible in the conflict it was very apparent that young women on a number of occasions play a part in the incidents. Their role however is covert and as such often overlooked, or minimised. Young women involved in our discussions told us that whilst the young men's interactions with other cultural groups were physical, young women would get into verbal arguments. Often this would be progressed through the use of text messages and e-mails. They also confessed that they would 'talk a lot behind each others backs'. The young women said that sometimes disputes and fights did not start off as racial incidents, but 'cultural differences always come into it, in the end'.

Identity Theft

There is a range of myths about the new migrants. The interesting element of these myths is that they are the same as those once levelled at groups who are now well established in the town. These groups claim that the young incoming migrants to the town are 'trying to be like us,' 'talking and acting like us'. For these young people whose identities are already fragile, this apparent emulation through acculturation is not seen as a compliment but as a threat.

The unsubstantiated slurs levelled at the incoming migrant groups derive from familiar discourses of race and ethnicity, yet few of the young people caught up in these conflicts understand the historical context and recurring nature of these local racisms, let alone the media's role in perpetrating the distorted perceptions held by many in the socio-cultural mainstream. As newly arrived minority groups enter 'their' geographical and social space, the contest for who gains and who loses results in increased conflict. Many young people from these communities believe that they have to fight back to retain what they believe is theirs. In this struggle, fragile identities are put to the test and reasserting 'who I am' becomes an integral part of retaining control. These processes are documented in work carried out by the Chicago School of sociology 80 years ago, who argued that the social organisation of the city is a product of the social processes of invasion, conflict, accommodation, and assimilation (Shaw and McKay, 1942).

The young people from more established BME groups express discontent about new arrivals being housed in their areas, taking over their parks, their community centres, youth clubs, and their schools. They claim that the newcomers are 'taking all our housing'; that 'we can't get jobs because of them'; that 'they smell'; that 'they are trying to take over'. There is a perceived threat; a fear that they are losing what they believe to be those places and spaces which define where they are and, as such, who they are. What is at risk here is more than just social space; it is their hard won identity, which appears to be at risk.

It seems that established Ethnic Minority young people in Luton can co-exist with the newer ethnic minority groups until they think that the newcomers are emulating them in terms of dress, music and language. In this sense, they have a fear of identity theft as a perceived attempt to appropriate the signs and symbols of a hard won and very fragile identity. This

fear is exacerbated, but not generated by the belief that local resources are being directed at the newcomers at their expense. This sense of threat can be a springboard for on, one hand, issues around 'identity theft' and on the other, about invasion of their space. Many young people have group identity hallmarks. These can be associated with the clothes that they wear, the music that they listen to and the way that they speak. This may be particularly important for this group, especially when the formation of elements of their identities is derived in part from media images and a globalised youth culture (Young, 2003). This can sometimes make good the paucity of acceptable role models within their own communities. In this situation many South Asian young men have adopted the hallmarks traditionally associated with Black young men. This leads many of the Black young men to question the meaning of this emulation and as we have noted above, far from finding it a flattering experience they see it as an unwarranted incursion into their socio-cultural space. This serves as a source of conflict because they come to believe that a culture that they believe they have created is being stolen from them.

Adolescent development theory would suggest that in such circumstances, if they were unable to retain an identity they would experience 'identity diffusion' in which they find difficulties incapable of choosing or making commitments. As a result of this they may have to re-form their identity and re-establish who they are. Thomas (1986) says:

as a possible defence against identity diffusion, adolescents may become overly ardent in their identification with super-heroes, cliques, and causes – each of which can be the focus of personal devotion.

Given that identity appears to be central, in addressing the conflict we need to understand the centrality of identity formation and the peculiar struggles confronting BME young people in this arena. Through my own work with a number of young people in Luton who are either participants or observers of such conflict situations, it is evident that the question of identity and the threat to identity posed by other ethnic minorities is central to the antagonism they feel towards other ethnic minority young people. It appears that inter racial conflict and the violence that arises from it is part of a process in which young people, but boys and young men primarily, engage in conflict as a way of securing, retaining and reclaiming their identity

Responding to the Conflict: The Involvement of Young People

The community cohesion agenda appears to want to involve young people primarily because they are the perpetrators of youth conflict. We need to move from this position to one that recognises that young people can be instrumental in the solution of these conflicts, the origins of which lie elsewhere.

The CRE 'YouGov' survey (2004) found that young people from BME communities were 'twice as likely as their elders to have a group of friends that completely excludes whites'. This certainly reflects the reality in Luton. There are very few diverse friendship groups amongst young men. The majority of young people from BME groups form friendship groups within their own cultural, religious or racial groups. Much of this is related to fear

and mistrust of the 'other', based largely on myth and misinformation.

All too often it is left to community groups to implement local initiatives that seek to bring communities together but they are unable to tackle the core issue: BME young people's struggle to identify who they are in a situation of social, cultural and economic marginalisation where they frequently find themselves under threat from similarly located young people, who are also seeking to establish their own identities through conflict. This suggests a need for early and sustained intervention with young people from BME communities that strives to involve them in understanding issues of identity formation and inter-ethnic conflict. Young people need opportunities to explore how their own and the identity of others have been influenced and to consider the perceptions and myths that they hold about one another's religion, ethnicity, and national origin. In identifying where these beliefs have come from, work with young people can expand their options, and offer greater choice about the type of person they wish to become.

Tackling issues associated with identity with young people from BME communities will throw up more opportunities for working to alleviate inter-racial conflict. Young people have to understand themselves before they can understand others. Confidence about oneself can then translate into a willingness to understand the 'other'. When young people are working towards shared goals, evolving understanding moves them to a new sense of 'us' which is most likely to contribute to less hostility (cf. Gaertner et al, 1990).

Being aware of our own ethnic identity and the stereotypes we hold about others is a good starting point for work with young people. As professionals we need to dismantle the obstacles which do not allow space for the development of a positive sense of self or constructive identity outcomes and enable young people to be part of this process. Thomas (2006:57), discussing community cohesion work undertaken by youth workers in Oldham, points to the centrality of enabling 'meaningful direct contact'. In Luton the diverse ethnic backgrounds of the youth workers proved to be instrumental in facilitating this direct contact with a range of young people at different stages in the conflict. The way they were able to work together paved the way for bringing the young people together.

Young people from BME communities need to be supported to understand and cope with changes over which they may have little control. Young people growing up confident of their individual identity and respecting the unique blend of others are more likely to develop the cultural and personal resources needed to counter unsettling effects of a changing and diverse world.

Conclusion

Conflict between different cultural and religious groups is often reduced by observers to 'irrational hatreds,' which ignores the role of structural and social inequalities. In so doing, these observers fail to recognise the historical, political, economic, cultural and developmental factors that are crucial elements of these conflicts.

What we have seen is that for many young people identity formation is a complex task.

Those who may be managing difficult issues may not yet have explored all of the identity options or alternatives. Yet, 'in order for the culturally different adolescent to achieve a stable self-identity, he or she must integrate the racial or ethnic identities with a personal identity' (Rosenthal and Feldman, 1992:13).

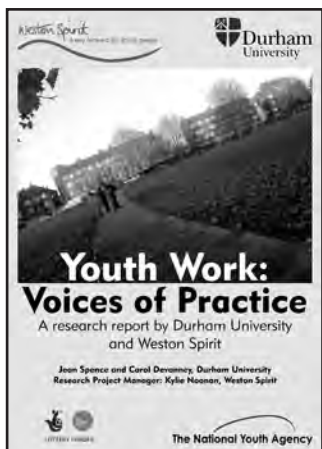
Ethnic identity conflicts are multi-dimensional, and many factors can contribute to successful resolution. However, we cannot wait until society and the political system change. We need to address this with BME young people now. Society needs to work on the development of a more inclusive and accepting style when dealing with young people from BME communities.

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Youth Gangs, Ethnicity and the Politics of Estrangement

John Pitts

The propertied class and the class of the proletariat present the same human self-estrangement. But the former class feels at ease and strengthened in this self-estrangement, it recognizes estrangement as its own power and has in it the semblance of a human existence. The class of the proletariat feels annihilated in estrangement; it sees in it its own powerlessness and the reality of an inhuman existence. It is, to use an expression of Hegel, in its abasement the indignation at that abasement, an indignation to which it is necessarily driven by the contradiction between its human nature and its condition of life, which is the outright, resolute and comprehensive negation of that nature. Within this antithesis the private property-owner is therefore the conservative side, the proletarian the destructive side. From the former arises the action of preserving the antithesis, from the latter the action of annihilating it.

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 1845, *The Holy Family*

Violent youth gangs are now a world-wide phenomenon and two new books endeavour to explain their proliferation. *A World of Gangs* by John Hagedorn (2008) discusses the findings of *Neither War Nor Peace*, an international study of 'children in organised armed violence'. *Street Gangs, Migration and Ethnicity* (van Gemert et al, 2008), is the third edited collection from the *Eurogang* research group and focuses on the role of migration and ethnicity in gang formation. Both books concern an emergent politics of estrangement amongst socially excluded, ethnic minority young people; the first explicitly, the second inadvertently.

While Hagedorn locates the proliferation of the violent youth gangs in the globalisation of neo-liberal economic policy and practice and the consequent withdrawal of the state from the public sphere, the editors of *Street Gangs, Migration and Ethnicity* are more concerned with the individual, familial and cultural characteristics of the young people who become involved in street gangs and 'gang process', the psycho-social mechanism whereby peer groups are transformed into gangs. While *A World of Gangs* proceeds deductively, representing the gang as an epiphenomenon of broader social, economic and cultural shifts, *Eurogang's* avowed approach is inductive, predicated, ultimately, upon the hypothesis that we can best understand the street gang by understanding the deficiencies and proclivities of its members. That's the plan anyway.

The *Eurogang* Project

In his foreword to *Street Gangs, Migration and Ethnicity*, Malcolm W. Klein, *Eurogang's* US founder, explains that he embarked upon the *Eurogang* project partly because street gangs

were beginning to be recognised in Europe, but also because of the difficulties inherent in conducting systematic gang research in the USA. There, Klein notes, gang scholarship is uncoordinated, with researchers utilising different theoretical perspectives and different research methods. This problem is exacerbated, he says, by the absence of an agreed gang definition *that would permit replicable data collection*, noting that 'If there is such a thing as a street gang we should be able to define it both conceptually and operationally'. Founded in 1997, by 2004 *Eurogang* had developed just such an agreed definition:

A street gang (or problematic youth group) is any durable street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of their (sic) group identity.

The third problem that Klein hopes *Eurogang* will remedy is that while in the USA there is 'no data-based gang policy', Europe offers fresh hope; an opportunity to 'get in before the door is again closed'. Thus, he argues, *Eurogang* should develop a shared theoretical perspective, a shared gang definition and shared research instruments that will, in the fullness of time, enable 'a series of prospective, multi-method, cross-national, comparative studies of street gangs'. And, presumably, at some future date, this would lead on to the development of a shared evidence-led EU gang policy. However, the *Eurogang* project as envisaged by Klein is dogged by two sets of problems. The first is ontological, the second epistemological.

The Ontological Problem

Eurogang's North American pre-history consists largely of studies, often undertaken on behalf of the police and criminal justice agencies, designed to identify targets for, and methods of 'preventive' and 'correctional' intervention. However, as David Matza (1969:17) warns:

When deviant phenomena are seen and studied from the correctional perspective, the possibility of 'losing the phenomenon' – reducing it to what it is not – is heightened. The purpose of ridding ourselves of the phenomenon manifests itself most clearly in the overwhelming contemporary concern with questions of causation or 'etiology'. The phenomenon itself receives only cursory attention. The ultimate purpose of liquidation is reflected in this highly disproportionate division of attention between description and explanation. ... Why bother with detailed and subtle description? The task before us, in the correctional perspective, is to get at the root causes in order to remove their product.

As Michel Foucault (1972) has observed, the organisational structures and the operational imperatives of criminal justice systems determine in crucial ways the forms of knowledge about institutional subjects, demarcating that which is to be explained by the criminologists who service the system. A close reading of the *Eurogang* research instruments suggests that their theoretical world view is bounded by a hybrid 'self control'/'social disorganisation' theory, (Shaw and McKay, 1942; Hirschi, 1969; Hirschi and Gottfriedson, 1983). Thus, individual predisposition and deficit, the quality of parental control and surveillance, cultural disjunction and the strength of the young person's affiliations to family, school or college are seen to hold the key to the development, or not, of youthful deviance in general and

gang affiliation in particular. In effect, the *Eurogang* research instruments ask, 'What are they [gang affiliated young people] like?' but in doing so, abstract the young people they study from their social, economic, political and cultural context. In consequence, they fail to ask, or answer, three more pressing questions: *Why them? Why here? Why now?* The theories of criminal motivation developed by *Eurogang* inevitably yield research strategies and research instruments that focus, first and foremost, upon the proclivities or deficiencies of criminal individuals, yielding information which articulates with the organisational structures and operational imperatives of criminal justice agencies.

The Epistemological Problem

Klein's 'ultimate goal' of a 'prospective, multi-method, cross-national, comparative study of street gangs' is predicated upon a belief in 'categorical equivalence' (Pitts 2001/3); a conviction that, historical, social, political, cultural and linguistic differences notwithstanding, the essential 'street gang' is out there waiting to be discovered. But such a belief inevitably raises the question of whether this quest impedes rather than facilitates our understanding of social phenomena in dissimilar social and linguistic contexts. Loic Wacquant (1996) writes:

Terminological difficulties, therefore, are co-extensive with and revealing of political assumptions that should not be pushed under the rug but brought out into the open. Cross-national comparison compounds this difficulty because the terms proper to each country are also excerpted from different semantic spaces and traditions. The fact that, very roughly put, Europeans have emphasised the language of class, labour, and citizenship when considering urban hardship, while American discourse has been framed in 'supply side' views of poverty anchored in the vocabularies of family, race and individual (moral and behavioural) deficiency, makes the question of terminology even more touchy. It would be not only naive but dangerous to make such differences disappear with the sleight of hand of translation.

Street Gangs, Migration and Ethnicity, Klein maintains, is the book which sets the scene for his 'prospective, multi-method, cross-national, comparative study of street gangs'. However, one of the book's major strengths is that it calls into question both the possibility and the desirability of such a project.

Social versus Economic Disorganisation

In their introduction, Frank van Gemert, Inger-Lise Lien and Dana Peterson observe that:

Since the early 20th century, sociologists and criminologists have pointed to the culture conflict, social disorganisation and strain that immigrants experience when they fail to live up to the American dream as a root cause of crime and deviance. It has become a general finding in criminology that second generation immigrants are often more involved in criminal behaviour than both the actual migrants of the first generation, and the third generation.

But the suggestion that a hypothesis developed in the early 20th century to explain the psycho-social adaptations of successive waves of migrants to Chicago, at the height of the American industrial revolution, can simply be pressed into service to explain the link between street gangs, migration and ethnicity in post-industrial, contemporary Europe is inherently implausible. While this 'deviant dip' amongst the 2nd generation may have occurred amongst certain migrant groups in the USA in the past, in much of Western Europe over the past 40 years the economic plight of successive generations of poor migrants, particularly if they are non-white, has worsened and this has meant that the third and subsequent generations have not desisted from crime in general and gang involvement in particular. The street gang phenomenon is relatively recent in Europe and in the UK, for example, it is often 3rd, 4th, and in some cases 5th, generation young people of Caribbean origin who are setting the pace in 'gangland' (Pitts, 2008). In France, the grandparents and great grandparents of the young 'migrants' rioting in the Parisian banlieues in 2005 came to France from countries which were, at the time, a part of France.

As Jock Young (1999) observes, it is precisely because many third and fourth generation gang-involved young people in the UK are fully acculturated, having shared an education with their white counterparts and been exposed to the same cultural values, that the denial of recognition and opportunity that they experience is so painful; and their response so antagonistic. It is this reality that causes John Hagedorn (2008) to reject conventional accounts of the aetiology of the youth gang, arguing that the motor of gang proliferation in the late 20th and early 21st centuries is not 'social disorganisation', as many mainstream gang scholars contend, but the retreat of the state. Indeed, he believes that, increasingly, the beleaguered communities may need armed gangs for protection and income. He writes:

Loss of faith in the state renders the armed gang a normal feature of what Davies calls the Planet of Slums.

Given this reality, it seems unlikely that the link between migration and gang formation is more or less the same in both the USA and Europe as Frank van Gemert and Scott Decker, citing only US research, suggest in their chapter. What they fail to consider is the relationship between migration, the social and economic circumstances encountered by migrant groups and gang formation. In the UK, for example, a majority of migrants hail from the old (predominantly white) Commonwealth, the USA and the EU; yet there is no evidence of Canadian, Australian or Belgian gangs creating mischief in UK cities. While in France, a disproportionate number of young Arabs are involved in group offending, in London's Mayfair, despite the presence of many Arab adolescents, they are not. Similarly, despite the plethora of criminal gangs, young and old, in many Indian cities, in the UK hardly any Indian young people enter the criminal justice system because for the most part, their parents are middle class professionals. Meanwhile, down at the other end of the social scale in some of London's poorest neighbourhoods, Tamil and Somali gangs proliferate. Clearly, the point at which these young migrants enter into the social structure is crucial to any understanding of their subsequent behaviour.

The issue is further confused by a failure to specify what, or who, a migrant actually is. In Europe, within a generation, most white migrants simply disappear into the socio-cultural mainstream. However in France, 4th and 5th generation French citizens of Maghrebian

origin continue to be described as 'migrants'. Too often, contributors to *Street Gangs, Migration and Ethnicity* conflate 'ethnicity' with 'migration', sometimes using the terms interchangeably, thereby giving the impression that all migrants are non-white and that all non-whites are migrants.

Shooting the Messenger

In marked contrast, the chapter by Judith Aldridge, Juanjo Medina and Robert Ralphs is centrally concerned with the stigmatisation of non-white young people in gang affected neighbourhoods. One of their aims is to remedy what they see as 'the predominant focus within research, police and journalistic accounts on ethnic minority youth and their gang involvement', because of the:

... distorted view of gangs, gang members and their communities [they present] through a sensationalised, skewed and superficial emphasis on crime and violence. Moreover some of these publications over-emphasise the relevance of ethnicity or immigration status as factors that explain or define gangs.

Their critique is not without substance, although it is somewhat naive. Journalists are not interested in 'youth gangs' that are not involved in crime and violence and nor are their readers. Put simply, good news does not make good news. The authors bemoan the lack of police and journalistic attention to the 'white gangs' in what they call 'research city'. The authors have chosen not to reveal the name of the city where their research was undertaken but if it is where I think it is this is probably because the white gang members were not killing one another.

The role of race and ethnicity in gang formation is one of the more politically sensitive areas that many liberal and radical criminologists have endeavoured to sidestep. While acknowledging the laudable intentions of 'progressive scholars' in endeavouring to debunk the notion that gang violence is the prerogative of particular racial groups, Hagedorn nevertheless argues that:

... the deracialising of gangs is one of the most egregious errors of Western criminology, a 'pernicious premise', to use Loic Wacquant's pungent phrase ... today's gangs cannot be understood without an analysis of the history of racial, ethnic or religious oppression and resistance.

Today, Hagedorn contends, those with a shared experience of racism and the degradations of the workless townships, favellas and housing projects have developed 'resistance identities', bent upon '... the exclusion of the excluders by the excluded'. But whereas the depredations of the 19th Century factory system spawned a politically conscious working class with identities rooted in what they *did*, in a post-industrial world, Hagedorn maintains, the identities of the 'socially excluded' are rooted in what they *are*, and so race and ethnicity become central to self-definition. Hagedorn cites Alain Touraine the French sociologist who notes that:

...those no longer defined by the work they do, largely because they are unemployed, define themselves in terms of what they are, and for many of them this means their ethnic background. Those counter-cultures are embodied in gangs, and often in forms of music, with a high ethnic content.

Adaptation

Eurogang's commitment to abstract empiricism notwithstanding, James Diego Vigil's contribution eschews the *Eurogang* definition and turns instead to the links between the emergence of cultural resistance in response to the social and economic circumstances encountered by migrant groups. He notes that from the 1920s, enforced 'Americanisation', or coerced assimilation, required Mexican migrants:

... to drop all their ethnic baggage in becoming Americans , but, simultaneously, restrictions and barriers (social and residential segregation based on 'race', often hostile police, job discrimination, and so on) were placed in their way. The result was an intense marginalisation of the people, especially the youth, and the first stirrings of street boy gangs.

This culminated in the 'Zoot Suit Riots' of 1943 in which Chicano young people fought with servicemen on the streets of Los Angeles. However in the 1960s, because of the civil rights movement and the War on Poverty, government imposed obstacles were successfully challenged and as a result:

The gang problem was also considerably curtailed by prevention and intervention policies that addressed the needs of Chicano youth. Unfortunately, gangs subsequently became a more serious issue than even before when law enforcement suppression strategies began to supplant intervention efforts.

Vigil also notes that racial discrimination means that lighter skinned Mexicans fare better in the labour market than their darker skinned contemporaries who therefore tend to be heavily represented in Chicano youth gangs.

The question of cultural resistance also arises in the chapter on the Latin Kings in Barcelona, by Carles Feixa, Noemi Canelles, Laura Porzio, Carolina Reico and Luca Giliberti. In the 1990s Spain's economic boom led to an influx of immigrant workers, mainly from South America, some of whom were associated with the *Latin Kings*. The original *Latin Kings* emerged from Chicago's Puerto Rican neighbourhoods in the 1940s and were said to be heavily involved in drug trafficking. The Latin Kings and Queens of Barcelona, composed largely of Ecuadorean immigrants, while modelling themselves on the original US gang, did not appear to be involved in such serious criminality. Seizing the initiative, the authorities in Barcelona engaged the gang in talks which culminated in it being declared a cultural association, with a similar status to the Boy Scouts. The aim was to support the integration of these South American migrants into the social, cultural and economic mainstream and in so doing, to neutralise the threat they were seen to pose.

While, like Judith Aldridge et al the authors express a desire to counter the effects of media labelling, they nonetheless employ the curious *Eurogang* concept, one which appears elsewhere in this volume, of 'a gang in process' which they describe as 'an incipient group-based entity and not yet a gang'. They are not yet a gang, it transpires, because they are not yet involved in crime, but if this is so, how do we know they are 'incipient', ie in the process of becoming a gang? Is it not possible that they are what they appear to be, namely, what Robert Gordon (2000) calls a 'youth movement'. In a recent interview, David Brotherton, who has researched the Latin Kings in Spain, noted:

We wanted to see what was different about this group (in Spain) ... why it was called the violent gang in America and yet was so involved in community action projects and what they called 'community upliftment'. We (Brotherton and Barrios) wrote all about this in a book called The Alqñ: Street Politics and the Transformation of a New York City Gang (Columbia 2004). In the end we called this group a 'street organization' and not a gang, as is common in the criminological literature...

Or as one of the young people interviewed by the authors said, 'We are not a gang, but a nation of organised people'.

The authors conclude that these groups serve as both a mode of cultural resistance and a second family for young people who are discredited in popular discourse and stigmatised by the media.

Interestingly the researchers were also instrumental in brokering the deal between young people and the Catalan government. In an interview, Carles Feixa said, 'Can it work? It can if certain things are clear: One side agrees to give up the clandestine life. Local powers agree to interact and have dialogue'.

The *Cultural Association of Latin Kings and Queens of Catalonia* was recognized in July 2003 as a civic group that could apply for money for projects to improve their members' prospects. To reap such rewards, the Kings wrote a constitution, vowing to reject violence, cooperate with authorities and obey the laws of their new land. Erika Jaramillo (a.k.a. Queen Melody) a 32-year-old Ecuadorean, spoke for the Latin Kings during negotiations that set up the cultural association. She acknowledges that the first meeting with the government was edgy. Ecuadoreans, like many Latin Americans, are not used to trusting government officials or encountering police who want to greet them, not arrest them.

In their chapter on the Netherlands, Frank van Gemert and Jantien Stuijbergen are also concerned with questions of cultural solidarity but, in this case, it is solidarity between indigenous white young people, precipitated by their hostility to immigrants. The 'Lonsdales', named after a popular UK sportswear brand, adopt a skinhead style, sporting the Dutch flag, swastikas and HH (Heil Hitler) badges on their bomber jackets. They are said to number between 100,000 and 500,000 in the whole of the Netherlands and are suspected of arson attacks on Mosques and involvement in violent attacks upon groups of Moroccan young people. However, as the authors point out, while they are not a gang in terms of the *Eurogang* definition, neither are they a youth subculture because, far from being at odds with their parents, they actually share their views about the threat posed to the Dutch way of life by immigrants.

The Lonsdales have been around since the 1990s but recent events – the attack on the twin towers in New York in September 2001; a violent demonstration against the Iraq war in Amsterdam involving Moroccan young people in April 2003; the emergence of Moroccan youth crime as a key political issue in March 2002; the Killing of Pim Fortuyn, the founder of an anti-immigrant, nationalist, party in May 2002; the assassination of Theo Van Gogh the film director in November 2004; and more recently, in May 2007, when the Moroccan national football team played Holland, Moroccan young people stormed the field and vandalised the stadium – seem to have galvanised them into action. Taken together these events have breathed new life into anti-immigrant sentiment in the Netherlands. However, the Lonsdales have only a tenuous link with the more organised neo-nazi parties.

By emphasising only those recent high profile events to which Dutch politicians, an increasingly illiberal media and the Lonsdale groups responded, however, this chapter fails to account for the factors precipitating the emergence of these neo-Nazi youth groups in the 1990s. Until the 1980s the Netherlands enjoyed unprecedented prosperity from an economy fuelled by apparently limitless supplies of North Sea gas and inexpensive foreign labour. Until the 1980s it had one of the most generous welfare regimes in Western Europe and amongst the lowest rates of unemployment, crime and imprisonment in the world. But in the 1990s the gas began to run out, unemployment grew, the welfare state retreated and crime rates and imprisonment rose. This was the backdrop against which a new right wing politics emerged in both the Dutch parliament and on the Dutch streets inhabited by the Lonsdales. In the process both Moroccan and indigenous, white, lower class, young people were radicalised and racialised.

The chapter concludes by asking: 'Are these Dutch groups gangs according to the *Eurogang* definition? ... Are they fighting, and violent, and is this part of the group identity? These are important questions to answer'. In fact, these are remarkably unimportant questions to answer. The changing social relations described by the authors and their political implications are far more important and far more interesting than whether or not these groups can somehow be shoehorned into *Eurogang's* simplistic definition.

Alexander Shaskin is also interested in the origins and significance of racist skinheads, but this time in Moscow. He estimates that, in the city and its suburbs, there are between 12,000 and 15,000 young people associated with racist skinhead groups. He too abandons the *Eurogang* definition, and ideas of 'gang process', focusing instead on the socio-structural factors that may have precipitated their emergence. Consulting with a panel of experts, Shaskin identifies six such factors.

The economic crisis of the 1990s impoverished many middle and lower class Russians and destabilised their families. Alongside this, the Soviet system of state education and out of school activities was also collapsing. Meanwhile there was a rapid and radical ideological shift from the domination of communist ideas to a condemnation of Soviet totalitarianism. State violence and, in particular the savage wars in Chechnya were also regarded as central by the expert panel. Shaskin writes:

Some young people emphasised that their acquaintances, friends, boyfriends and relatives actually died in this war fighting in the Russian army and it was for deeply

personal reasons that they hate Caucasians and are ready to kill them. Sometimes these particular episodes from their personal life become a driving force for particular forms of cultural participation and organisation that involve racism and violence.

Beyond this, of course, the Beslan school massacre in 2004 and other terrorist atrocities galvanised anti-Chechen and anti-Islamic sentiment in Russia. These experiences fuelled the 'everyday racism' which focussed particularly upon the perceived economic domination of the Moscow economy by Chechens. Meanwhile, increased migration spawned myths about 'ethnic crimes' and the view that the state was too weak to control them.

It is important too, to remember that the collapse of the Russian economy in the 1990s had a particularly grievous impact upon the middle classes. Doctors, nurses, teachers, police officers and academics would sometimes remain unpaid for months and there were many instances in which university students were paying for their education through prostitution. Thus, Shaskin's observations about the social class make-up of racist skinhead groups are, perhaps, less surprising:

We understand the differences between the agency of young people and the structural factors that might influence the situation in general. But those structural factors mentioned by our experts can also turn into popular myths. For example, members of skinhead gangs are usually presented as 'stupid working class aggressive young males who live in Moscow suburbs and have nothing to do'. At the time, about 80% of all skinheads I interviewed (including three girls) had middle class (or lower middle class) backgrounds, study at Moscow universities, read a lot and are interested in history.

'I will fuck France until she loves me.'

This poignant double entendre was composed by French hip-hop artist Monsieur R. (real name Richard Makela) at the time of the 2005 riots that saw many of the 750 'cités' or ghettos in France erupt in largely spontaneous violence. The song triggered a call from 153 Parliamentarians and 49 Senators in the ruling UMP coalition, led by Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy, for the prosecution of Monsieur R. and other 'political' rappers for perpetrating an 'outrage to public decency' and inciting the riots. The politicians also demanded action against polygamy, clandestine immigration, mixed marriages and history lessons on French colonialism. This response contrasts starkly with that of Françoise Mitterand's socialist administration of the 1980s which, in response to rioting in the banlieues in 1983, launched a remarkably successful social prevention initiative which endeavoured to establish 'solidarite' with the rioters (Pitts, 2001).

In a *Le Monde* article, Richard Makela defended his lyrics, saying that he 'uses virulent terms to avoid the explosion of violence in the cités.' He denounced the campaign as a witch-hunt. His video clips were banned from television but, nonetheless, the FNAC chain store made the CD one of its records of the month.

The chapter on youth gangs in the French banlieues, by Coralie Fiori-Khayat, offers a graphic

illustration of John Hagedorn's contention that street gangs may contain many different and sometimes contradictory strands; that there is often a crossover between criminality and political consciousness, and that what he calls 'resistance identities' may take many different forms and may change over time.

Gangs and criminal cartels, narco trafficking networks, mini-mafias and favela bosses, through community, grassroots and non-governmental organisations, to secular cults and religious sects ... are the alternative social forms that fill the void left behind as state powers, political parties, and other institutional forms are actively dismantled or simply wither away as centres of collective endeavour or social bonding

Fiori-Khayat's meticulous fieldwork, over several years, enables her to contact and interview groups of Maghrebian young people in the Parisian banlieue who, on the face of it, correspond closely with the *Eurogang* definition of a street gang, being fairly heavily involved in theft, arson, burglary, robbery, rape and assault. However, it appears that these young men draw a distinction between the routine crimes in which they become involved and their criminal actions, directed against 'political and social symbols' and representatives of government and the law. These offences they justify by reference to their ethnicity and religion; the fact that, in their dealings with the French state, social workers, teachers, the police, judges etc., they are the victims of racism. Fiori-Khayat writes:

The hate that these young rioters and gang members express is a message in itself ... These youth do not see themselves as part of French society. During field research I have often heard serious, violent young street members say, 'Why should I feel French?' They assert that such issues as the 'Muslim veil' job discrimination, and the implicit racism of Caucasians make them think they are rejected ... They express anger at France because of the situation of their brothers in Iraq and Palestine, although France has no troops in Iraq and, until the election of Sarkozy, did not support Israeli policy.

As her narrative unfolds, the distinction she draws between the crime perpetrated by these young men and their politics becomes less clear. This 'crossover' was evident in my own (unpublished) research in East London where some young people followed the line, propounded by radical Islamist organisations like Hizb ut-Tahrir and Al Majaroon, which have their counterparts and their influence in the French banlieues, that because, the British had taken everything from the Muslims, reparations were due and, excepting serious, unpalatable, crimes like rape and child molestation, the *kaffir* (non-Muslims) were fair game.

Hip-hop and Resistance Identities

It is an interesting paradox that the widespread rejection of Western culture by Muslim young people in Western Europe often parallels their embrace of hip-hop, a quintessentially Western musical sub-genre which is, nonetheless, amongst the most powerful narratives that shape, and give meaning to, their resistance identities. This is, Hagedorn writes, because:

What we are witnessing in hip-hop is the creation of a powerful global identity based on street experiences that are filled with multiple meanings, contradictions, and intense cultural struggle. This complexity is not understood in mainstream social science ... Many who write about gangs today remain ignorant about basic facts, even the difference between hip-hop and gangsta rap, and are unaware of the crucial role of gangs in the history of hip-hop culture

Hip-hop has its origins in the American Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. Early hip-hop is credited with helping to reduce inner-city gang conflict by replacing physical violence with dance and artwork battles. In the early 1970s, Kool DJ Herc, once-gang leader of the Black Spades, began organizing dance parties in his home in the Bronx. The parties became so popular they were moved to outdoor venues to accommodate more people. Tony Tone, a member of the pioneering rap group the Cold Crush Brothers, notes that 'Hip-hop saved a lot of lives.' Later, inspired by Kool DJ Herc, Afrika Bambaataa created a street organization called Universal Zulu Nation centred around hip-hop. Key contemporary performers in this tradition are Tupac, Gill Scott Heron, Missy Elliott and Public Enemy, whose *Burn Hollywood Burn* and *Fight the Power* represents an angry rejection of the glorification of gangsta identity by White commercial interests. As Hagedorn observes:

Hip-hop today is torn by a searing 'culture war' between two resistance identities: a defiant but life-affirming 'black atlantic Hip-hop', and consumer-oriented 'corporate Hip-hop that now controls gangsta rap. ... The gangsta persona is the textbook glorification of gang culture ... It is in essence the tendency of the excluded to 'direct their brutality against themselves and their immediate community rather than against their structural oppressors.' Understanding the culture of gangs, first of all, means understanding their music.

What is to be done?

In both the UK and the USA it is a 'taken-for-granted' that effective intervention with violent youth gangs involves a pincer movement, with tough enforcement on the one side and educational, vocational, welfare and therapeutic intervention on the other. However, Hagedorn's preferred response, one which grows out of his historical researches, is different. He argues that, from their inception many street gangs were political actors and that the answer to the 'gang problem' therefore lies in engaging with them as political actors.

The original Chicago street gang, for example, were part and parcel of the racialised urban politics in that city, where the youth gangs, which hung out at the Social Athletic Clubs in the Irish neighbourhoods, were mobilised by the Democratic Party machine not only to prevent African Americans voting but also to ensure that they remained in their neighbourhoods of settlement. In *Street Corner Society* (1943), William F. Whyte describes a similar interplay between youth gangs, the political machine and organised crime in Boston's Italian community in the inter-war years.

Inevitably, Chicago's African-American young people formed their own gangs in response

to White racist violence, a pattern that was repeated later in New York and Los Angeles. In the following decades, White youth gangs across America were involved in violent attacks designed to maintain segregated communities either at the behest, or with the tacit support, of local political machines.

Later as the Kennedy/Johnson Great Society programme aimed to secure the rights and opportunities previously denied African Americans by circumventing the corrupt political machines in the cities and pumping resources directly into the ghetto, youth gangs were once again involved in political action. John Hagedorn (1998) writes:

In major U.S. cities, gangs were strongly influenced by revolutionary and civil-rights organizations. The ideologies of groups such as the Black Panther Party, the Brown Berets, and the Young Lords Organization attracted many youths away from the gangs. Many of these political groups in fact began as gangs and aimed their recruiting efforts at the children of the street ... Rivalry between gangs and political groups was balanced by negotiations between them, and gangs joined many movement demonstrations. Gangs also initiated community service agencies, started local businesses, and got federal grants for education and job training. The Conservative Vice Lord Nation, for example, a Chicago gang that came into existence in the 1950s, began multiple social programs and businesses in the 1960s.

Perhaps, if Hagedorn is right and youth gangs and their like, rather than simply being the sum of the personal, social and cultural deficits of their members as *Eurogang* suggests, are also political actors, then as was the case during the American War on Poverty between the 1960s and the 1980s, the Mitterand social prevention initiative in the 1980s in France and the negotiations between the Latin Kings and the Catalan government in the recent period, we might be wise to endeavour to develop politicised responses which aim to establish solidarity with these embattled young people, rather than ones which simply aim to cure or suppress them in equal measure.

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