

Conflict Transformation Papers

Volume 9

Ethnicity and Nationalism

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Building Peace through Partnership

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It is our intention to publish a series of papers on issues raised at community level which project participants believe are relevant to the conflict transformation process.

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The Relationship between Ethnicity and Nationalism

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The growth in racist attacks on ethnic communities across the island of Ireland has raised a thorny question, what is an ethnic, how is it formed and what does it do to survive. Given the pervasive and latent nature of racism, such questions generally arise only when physical attacks are inflicted on supposed 'outsider' communities while institutional, psychological and cultural attacks meander through ethnic experiences on a daily basis. To understand ethnicity, one must compare it with its larger sibling, Nationalism, and all its inherent interpretations: political, cultural, economic, territorial, linguistic and gender, which accompany it.

It is essential to recognize that human bonding is a natural occurrence. Maternal bonding creates life and leads to family, which in turn naturally engenders sibling kinship. Due to human developmental experiences such bonding was essential to provide the basic requirements for survival: food, shelter, safety, and belonging. Within such a 'family' structure individuals prospered and grew to renew the life cycle. Such growth created the wider family or kinship, which in turn created a tribal structure, again to maximize a protective environment for reproduction and survival. In most instances, these developments were derived from a matriarchal experience, which celebrated birth rather than paternal issue.

With the triumph of patriarchy came the legitimacy of issue, whereby one child was viewed as legitimate, as a means of securing the right to succeed its father, while another child was viewed as illegitimate in order to prohibit such accession, and from such decisions arose division and conflict, for the right to lead the family, kin, tribe and nation. The triumph of Man over Nature led to the expansion of the human race across the globe and with such transmigration skin tones waned from their natural African colour to the multifaceted human diversity now recognized globally.

In academic studies the correlation between ethnicity and nationalism has been turned into an art form. Depending on one's creative and interpretive skills anything can be used to justify the political, cultural, social, economic and linguistic movement or polarization of peoples into differing groupings. What follows is a flavour of such academic views, focusing on three different types of academic interpretation: Modernist, Rationalist, and Primordialist. However, it must be stated from the outside that, when considering the origins of ethnicity and nationalism, such is the negative power of racism that simply deviating from the belief in racial stereo-types, whatever that may be, can, at times, lead initially to ostracism and ultimately the gas chamber.

Whether one chooses to 'believe' or recognize a Creation or Evolutionist explanation for the origins of humanity, its diverse nations and ethny, it cannot be denied that we are all human, in some shape or fashion and as such deserve to be treated accordingly. Nor can it be denied that a range of factors, beyond eugenics¹, shapes divisions within humanity and people play upon such divisions to wield power and control. Therefore when trying to determine the rise in ethnicity, nationalism, racism and racist politics it is these factors one must incorporate into a 'terms of reference'. Finally, with any conclusions arrived at, it must always be remembered that we are all one human race and when someone is

killed or maligned for their differences, ultimately it is our are kin who are being harmed, irrespective of our origins or tones of our skin.

Modernists and Rationalists, such as Deutsch and Gellner, believe that nationalism has been used to modernize whole agrarian societies, regardless of past traditions or beliefs. For Deutsch, nationalism has its roots in the French Revolution, created as a means of facilitating the rise of capitalism and secular utilitarianism. It had arisen as a consequence of modernity and has no historical justification. Alter gives a further insight into the Modernist view of nationalism and in doing so, alludes to a possible relationship between ethnicity and nationalism He believes that;

‘It is clear that nationalism conceals within itself extreme opposites and contradictions and that nationalism does not exist as such but a multitude of manifestations of nationalism do.’ⁱⁱ

This ‘multitude of manifestations’ of nationalism concealed within the utilitarian concept of a nation-state are what Walker Conner increasingly terms ethnocentric identities. Alter, employing Deutsch’s definition of nationalism describes such manifestations as;

‘a state of mind which gives “national” messages, memories and images a preferred status in social communications and a greater weight in the making of decisions’ⁱⁱⁱ.

This definition demonstrates the power of Political Nationalism, to create a ‘state of mind’ that will unify and organise people through a utilitarian system of decision-making. It is in such national messages that we may find a relationship between ethnicity and nationalism, as ethnicity also mobilizes on a utilitarian system of decision-making. Therefore one relationship between ethnicity and nationalism could be seen as the potential for a utilitarian belief system to organise and mobilize a group of like-minded people, a kinship, in pursuit of a common goal, be it political, religious, linguistic, territorial, racial or cultural consolidation.

The potential of nationalism as a mobilizing factor was most vividly seen during the Napoleonic era and served as an example to other political states of how effective a modern utilitarian infrastructure could be. As the Rationalist Phillip acknowledges,

‘The massive improvement in communications in the nineteenth century with the associated urbanization and industrialization of the population of European states created the social and economic conditions in which nationalism could be successfully launched, and effected the unification of many countries linking industries to markets, governments to governed’^{iv}.

Such was the success of nationalism at unifying the complex webs of a modern state that political analysts in the 20th Century, until the growth of ethnic demands in the 1960's, believed its utilitarian approach could also be used to advance countries from the nation-state to the supranational or post-nationalist level; much in the same way as nationalism had modernized communities from the regional to the nation-state level in the 19th Century. Indeed, as Anderson reminds us

‘Dominant political groups in Western Europe in the post-Second World War period tended to discount political cleavages based on ethnic or linguistic differences and to regard only those related to ideology or economic interest as of basic significance’^v.

After the interruption of racism in the 1940's, as espoused through Fascism and Eugenics, Cold War politics emerged to emphasize the ideological differences between Western liberalism and what Gore Vidal has called the ‘neo-conservative Mongolian political system’^{vi} of the Russian empire. Increasingly, nationalist isolation became redundant in favor of supranationalism, or post nationalism, offering greater freedom and openness through free trade and global markets. This development has reinforced the Modernist belief that the post-Second World War reappraisal of the ‘national interest’ demonstrates Political Nationalism's consequential nature, as it moves to assimilate supranational economic modernity and forgets about the political and cultural ‘uniqueness’, which supposedly had made a nation-state so distinct from its neighbours.

For Rationalists such as Gellner and Phillip, the changing nature of the nation-state also confirmed their belief that nationalism had its roots in the Industrial Revolution, not the French Revolution, and the move towards supranationalism and the ‘global village’ demonstrated how liberal economics could manipulate the nation-state for its own end, regardless of a utilitarian national sentiment. With the collapse of the Russian empire, in the 1980's, even Anderson's ideological and economic differences no longer had any significance in differentiating groups of people. This development may have proved Deutsch right in assuming the gradual assimilation by core elites would have a cosmopolitan effect on the regional and peripheral. Unfortunately this has not proved to be the case and in direct opposition to Deutsch's Modernist claims, a greater move towards assimilation has resulted, not in a universal cosmopolitan society, but in a growth of ethnocentrism and regionalization.

If Alter is correct in defining nationalism as an amalgamation of ‘extreme opposites and contradictions’ then the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism may lie in the tensions that bind the ethnic to the national. It may also then be true that these tensions that bind ethnicity and nationalism are now no longer compatible and are instead becoming polarized in the supranational or post-national era. Hobsbawm acknowledges this distinction, between ethnicity and nationalism, and argues that we need two words to differentiate between them

‘Because we are dealing with different and indeed non-comparable, concepts.... Nationalism is a political programme. Ethnicity is a readily

defiable way of expressing a real sense of group identity which links the members of 'we' because it emphasizes their differences from 'them.'^{vii}

To understand the relationship between Alters 'multitude of manifestations of nationalism' and Hobsbawn's 'we-ness' or 'us-hood', it is necessary to examine the ethny, rather than the national, in order to find the differential between 'us-hood' and 'them-ness'. By doing so the relationship and distinction between ethnicity and nationalism can be elucidated a little further.

Ryan (1990) helps this elucidatory process; he shows the complexities of human relationships and the tensions that bind these multiple identities:

'an individual will have more than one identity group. It is quite common to feel loyalty to one's immediate neighbourhood, one's town...It is also possible to define oneself in terms of nation, state, class and gender all at the same time. However, there may well arise moments of truth when individuals have to define themselves more specifically than this.... In several parts of the world this will mean choosing between an ethnic and a state identity, and in such circumstances there is enough evidence to show that the primary or terminal loyalty of many people is to the ethnic group and not to the state'^{viii}

In such 'moments of truth' the choice between an ethnic and a state identity is dependant on the 'national messages' propagated and experienced by the competing loyalties of state or ethny. If an ethnic group feels ostracized by the state it will maximize this feeling of alienation and through growing demands for self-determination, seek to establish its own nation, with all the power and trappings of state-hood. This would result in a 'them and us' atmosphere developing and a delving into past religio-historical experiences for justification in making this break. The ethny would then have to promote a concept of self-determination as a means of realizing its own ethno-national potential.

Primordialist's, like Van den Berghe and Connor, argue that there is something more to this ethno-national identity than Modernist or Rationalist theories of political or economic development. They believe that Ryan's 'terminal loyalty' or 'ethno-psyche' as Connor calls it, plays a major role in group bonding and it is this *sui generis* feeling of 'us-hood' or 'we-ness', which congeals a group into an ethnic identity. Primordialists argue that this human bonding is a primeval trait, which may be created, developed or metamorphosed through a demotic desire to transcend assimilation by other groups or ethnic identities. This demotic demand arises out of a plethora of communal bonds, determined by familial, spiritual, territorial, linguistic, political, cultural, economic or environmental experiences.

The primordialist Van den Berghe links his theory of 'genetic determinism', or 'kinship', to the Modernist's 'environmental determinism', to demonstrate how they

compliment one another by fashioning the bonds that congeal their ethnic identity. In doing so he offers the caveat that he attributes no

‘intrinsic significance to phenotypes in determining group boundaries and hence, no validity to any classification of our species into rigid subspecies’^{ix}

Using a medical metaphor he shows how ‘evolutionary biology...sheds a new light on the phenomena of ethnocentrism and kinship’. Van den Berghe demonstrates how ‘genes are not free floating’ but are carried in cells ‘which are in turn clumped together in more or less complex organisms’^x. If one were to replace Van den Berghe’s biological nomenclature with ethnocentric ones, the binding tensions of Alters ‘extreme opposites and contradictions’ may be viewed to highlight the roots of Ryan’s ‘terminal loyalties’, which link ethnicity and nationalism:

‘(humans) are not free-floating. They are bunched together in (families), which are themselves carried in these little bags of (communities) we call (ethny or core groups), which are in turn clumped together in more or less complex organisms, i.e. (nation-states)’^{xi}

In this light it is easier to see the organic complexity of human relationships and identities, regardless of the nomenclature employed to identify them. It also demonstrates how interdependent all organisms are, from chromosomes to communities, to nation-states and the multicultural global body politic. All such identities appear in a constant state of flux, bonding and repelling, reacting to the complexities and vicissitudes of political, social, economic and cultural interaction and polarization.

Van den Berghe believes the complexity of human relationships is caused by ‘nepotism between kinsmen’ and that culture, which had been seen as a fundamental prerequisite for a nationalist movement, is simply an evolving superstructure built on the ‘biological substratum’ of this ‘kin-nepotism’. This assumption is similar to Hobsbawn’s view that ‘kin-nepotism’ is a readily definable way of expressing a real sense of group identity. This does not mean that an ethny is racially pure, rather it is more a collective of diverse human beings, maximizing their political, territorial, religious, linguistic, cultural or economic power through cellular organisations to promote communal and consequentially, core group and self empowerment. Within such a definition the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism can be clearly seen. While nationalism offers political power at a macro level, the refinement of a modern societal infrastructure has enabled Alters ‘multitude of manifestations of nationalism or ethny, to be equally powerful at a micro level in order to punch above their numerical weight, as a means of attracting the resources necessary to sustain the substratum of kin-nepotism.

Like the Modernists and Rationalists, whom Van den Berghe calls environmental determinists, Primordialists also have their critics, who fear that any aversion to ‘kinship’ as a prerequisite to group identity will inevitably result in racist ideologies, propagating a new form of eugenics. Eller and Coughlan refute the concept of primordialism and see it as ‘unsociological, unanalytic and vacuous’^{xii} and Hall^{xiii} fears

than Van den Berghe's 'kin-nepotism', or 'cultural belongingness' as he calls it, will replace 'genetic purity' in determining one's group identity. He argues that;

'It is important to acknowledge that the drive to nationhood in many of the "ascending" small nationalisms can often take the form of trying to construct ethnically (or culturally, religiously or racially) closed or "pure" formations in the place of the older, nation states or imperial formations to which they belonged; or, in Gellner's terms, of trying to realize the aspiration, which they see as the secret of success of the great nation states of Western modernity, of gathering one people, one ethnicity, under one political roof'^{xiv}

Hall's fear of small ethnic groups forming to replicate the 'success of the great nation states' in creating 'one people, one ethnicity, under one political roof' may seem justifiable given the past consequences of racist ideologies but he is mistaken on two counts.

Firstly, these 'ascending, small nationalisms are only free to ascend because the nation-states, or dominant core elites, which bind them are now more concerned with global markets and post nationalism than maintaining an integral statist identity. This can be most clearly seen in the drive towards greater European Union. Increasingly this is described as a Europe of the regions rather than a Europe of the Nation States. Secondly, Hall is mistaken in perceiving the 'great nation states' as one people, one ethnicity'. As Connor^{xv} has shown most states are not nation states but multi-ethnic states and in the shift of power from the nation state to the supra national, core elites no longer feel 'nobly obliged' to look after their regional or peripheral dependencies, thus encouraging the growth of micro-nationalism, ethnicity or class empowerment.

Hall is correct to draw attention to these ascending micro nationalisms yet in his eagerness to effect greater State integration he ignores, what the conflict resolutionist, John Burton calls the underlying issues, inherent in the tensions that bind the ethnic to the 'national interest'. These underlying issues are a feeling of worth and belonging to a degree of self-determination that influence the vicissitudes of one's own life. In a complex and integrated state this just may not be feasible.

As stated above, Connor has shown how nations are in the main not homogenous identities; rather they are complexities of identities vying for power. Connor employs the classical definition of nationalism; that it is a 'community of people characterized by a common language, territory, religion and the like'^{xvi} to demonstrate that in reality nations, or to be more precise nation-states, hold less in common than had been presumed and that assimilation into the dominant identity still does not even guarantee complete acceptance.

'How much simpler it would be if adopting the Polish language, living within Poland, and adhering to Roman Catholicism were sufficient to define membership in the Polish nation were

sufficient to make one a Pole. However, there are Germans, Lithuanians and Ukrainians who meet these criteria but who do not consider themselves Polish and are not considered Polish by their Polish fellow citizens^{,xvii}.

As Connor shows, in the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism, it is of equal importance how 'others' perceive 'us' as we perceive them. Too often the relationship between ethnicity and political nationalism is akin to being a second class citizen where an ethny becomes marginalized because of its failure to assimilate or even after assimilation is still considered to be 'not one of us' and continually blamed for all the failures of the nation. This is because as Connor points out, 'the essence of the nation is not tangible. It is psychologically a matter of attitude rather than of fact'^{,xviii}

This psychological attitude appears to be the key 'essence' in understanding the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism. As Anderson argues in Imagined Communities^{,xix} people do not have any genetic or primeval connections but are psychologically influenced through the 'print media' to imagine that they do. However A. D. Smith^{,xx} points out that while nationalism is a 'largely modern phenomena' there is a reason to believe the 'nation' existed long before the emergence of print media. Smith argues that social scientists 'debunk' the myth of nationalism as a means of attaining a more interdependent and cosmopolitan world yet,

'despite growing world interdependence, the nation appears to be taking an unconscionably long time dying, in some areas like Western Europe, old communities have re-emerged to stake their entitlement to national status'^{,xxi}.

This, as has been seen, is the ethny's attempt to overcome assimilation or a loss of political power as a consequence of the changing relationship at supra or post national levels.

Smith argues that the principle objection to the myth of the 'modern nation' is its 'myopic western perspective on nations and nationalism', which prevents a proper recognition of the role 'pre-modern ethnic communities' played in influencing the 'subsequent development of nations and nationalism'. This view can also be seen by Bromley^{,xxii}, who argues that in Eastern Europe the ethnic nation has still survived despite the imposition of ideological state borders across ethnic homelands. As Karl Aun^{,xxiii} reminds us, the confusion between ethnicity and nationalism lies in fact that the word 'national' clearly refers to 'central government by contrast with localities' while Riggs^{,xxiv} has shown how 'ethnic seems to infer a sense of low status – a shunned outsider'. This view to support Harris's belief that

'in the European origins of the formation of modern states, nationalism was a means to establish the loyalty of populations and enforce some measure of homogeneity (against the local particularisms of earlier times'^{,xxv}.

Now with the arrival of supra nationalism and globalization the once desired ‘measure of homogeneity’ has been relegated from one of macro-nationalism to what may be termed micro-ethnicity for regional political and economic manipulation.

Whether nations or enthy, are primeval, imagined or arise from the consequences of the French or Industrial Revolutions, as A. D. Smyth has shown, people continually employ the primeval trait of human bonding as a means to retain a modicum of strength, influence and power. As Harris points out;

‘Individuals choose to belong to national groups...and do so as selection of a strategy for action, not the passive recognition of some primordial ordering’^{xxvi}

In choosing these ethnic or ‘national groups’ members may at times, actually believe they are *sui generis*, as their power and influence increases above that of neighbours or enemies.

However, as Anderson reminds us the very success of the nation will generate a core and periphery and in the frontier regions ‘active minorities’ will ‘seek’ to create new loyalties and territorial identities. In doing so they will be following whatever Van den Berghe calls the ‘natural selection’ of ‘kin-nepotism’, which is not based on ‘phenotypes’ but a combination of genetic, environmental and cultural determinism as a means of defence, power and influence. Groups will continue to evolve, splinter and remerge under new or antiquated identities. As Coakley has shown;

‘the ethnic criterion of boundary delimitation is superficially attractive...(but) in practice... it (has) the effect of recreating in microcosm in the new states tense inter-ethnic relationships of the type the new boundaries (are) designed to resolve’^{xxvii}.

In this light the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism can be seen as a continuous struggle between communities, enthy, nations or economic core elites for dominance and power. As Breuilly reminds us;

‘to focus upon culture, ideology, identity, class or modernization is to neglect the fundamental point that nationalism is above and beyond all else, about politics and that politics is about power’^{xxviii}

Such an observation may also be applicable to ethnicity and demonstrates that this desire for power and the human survival it brings appears to be the only constant quality in the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism.

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End Notes

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- ⁱ [Online] Available from: [Accessed February 5 2005]
- ⁱⁱ Alter, P. (1989), 5, Nationalism
- ⁱⁱⁱ op cit, 7
- ^{iv} Philip, A.B. quoted in Mitchison (1980) 7
- ^v Anderson, M. (1991) 128
- ^{vi} Vidal, G.(1987) 116
- ^{vii} Hobsbawn, E. (1992) 23
- ^{viii} Ryan, S. (1990) xxii
- ^{ix} Van den Berge, P. (19987) 240
- ^x op cit 7
- ^{xi} op cit 7 Van den Berge uses a biological metaphor to demonstrate organic interdependence the authors changes are in parenthesis to highlight organic human interdependence.
- ^{xii} Eller, J.D. & Coughlan, R. M. (1993) 2
- ^{xiii} Hall, S. (1992) 6
- ^{xiv} op cit, 6
- ^{xv} Connor, W. 1993, 374
- ^{xvi} op cit 376
- ^{xvii} op cit 376-377
- ^{xviii} Connor, W.
- ^{xix} Anderson, B. (1991)
- ^{xx} Smyth, A. D. (1988)
- ^{xxi} op cit 8
- ^{xxii} Bromley, V.V. (1990)
- ^{xxiii} Aun, K. (1980) 67
- ^{xxiv} Riggs, F.W. (1986) 1
- ^{xxv} Harris, N. ((1990) 22
- 25 op cit 22
- ^{xxvii} Coakley, J. (1982) 36-37s
- ^{xxviii} Breuilly, J. (1985) 1-2

Restorative Justice for Young Offenders: A Critical Evaluation

Michael Atcheson

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If we are 'harmed', what sort of retribution do we expect to receive and from whom? What justice (or injustice) can we expect from the existing criminal justice structure? Since the 1970s both the Conservatives and Labour (New Labour 1980s), either in government or in opposition have promoted policies which were to tackle the growing crime statistics 'head on' and win society back for the 'ordinary decent law bidding citizen' from the undesired elements in society, criminals, terrorists, muggers and hooligans.

During the nineteen-nineties the population of British prisons "attained a new post war record of 66,500 in 1998" (McLaughlin and Muncie, 2002, p.212). These increases included a rise in young prisoners whose numbers,

"rose by 22 per cent, despite the fact that this was one group whose representation within the prison population had fallen consistently during the 1980s". (McLaughlin and Muncie, 2002, p.213).

But while these figures should cause concern it would be wrong to connect a rise or fall in the prison population to an increase or decrease in crime. Many crimes committed by young offenders are not reported because they are not seen by many within the community as crimes, broken windows, verbal abuse, vandalism and bullying are rapidly becoming part of our 'social culture' were some communities accept certain levels of delinquency as part of every day life but even these 'acceptable' violations leave a growing list of victims. For those members of the community who do report such crimes, the police can do little if the crime is not recognised as a crime by Law. Existing criminal jurisdictions can only provide retribution or 'justice' so long as the act is seen as a violation of law and the retribution or justice desired by the victim is replaced by the justice desired by the state which, usually results in a caution, fine or prison term for the offender. The retribution or justice desired by the victim is in many cases never met because existing criminal justice deals with the consequences of an individual breaking the law (state) but does not deal with the consequences of the violation to the victim and the community or indeed the social or economic consequences which, has contributed to the aggressor causing the violation in the first place. There are many within society that demand punishment for those who break 'the rules' but the existing strands of punishments do not seem to be working,

"the rhetoric and policies of 'discipline and punishment' seemed to do little to halt a 'rising tide' of criminality and lawlessness. The inability of the criminal justice policy to reduce the crime rate was also highlighted by failures in the 'deterrent' value of a punitive prison system. Despite tougher sentences – epitomized by the 'short, sharp shock'-just under a half of adult prisoners and two-thirds of young prisoners were reconvicted within two years of release" (McLaughlin and Muncie, 2002, p.3).

Taking this into consideration I would like to provide in the following paragraphs a short evaluation of a programme which, I *believe*, has the potential to not replace the existing criminal justice system but compliment it by providing alternatives to the

criminal justice system with regards to the criminal activities of young people which would address the needs of the victim, the offender and the community and that alternative is Restorative Justice.

The debate about the origins of restorative justice is ongoing but it has been argued that elements of modern restorative justice methods can be found in religious and indigenous cultures, for example New Testament virtues and Aboriginal and Maori cultures.

John Braithwaite states that,

“Restorative justice has many roots that cannot be easily separated. It emerged as a movement espoused by a relatively small but energetic group of activists, academics, non governmental organisations and policy entrepreneurs, many who have campaigned for many years to highlight the shortcomings of dominant western systems of criminal justice”

(McLaughlin, Fergusson, Hughes, and Westmarland, 2003, p.2).

But apart from ‘crime’ being on the increase what other shortcomings do many western criminal justice systems have and what alternatives can restorative justice provide? Nils Christie argues that conflicts in Western societies are stolen from the parties involved by isolating them from playing a key role in bringing a conclusion to the conflict that meets the needs of all those affected by the conflict.

“My suspicion is that criminology to some extent has amplified a process where conflicts have been taken away from the parties directly involved and thereby have either disappeared or become other people’s property”

(McLaughlin, Fergusson, Hughes and Westmarland, 2003, p.21).

If this is the case then what role can Restorative Justice play to ensure that all parties involved in a criminal incident are in control of a process that will both help to reduce ‘crime’ and bring existing and new conflicts to a ‘healthy’ conclusion?

Before attempting to identify any role we first need to define a working definition of Restorative Justice, no easy task because restorative justice, “encompasses a variety of practices at different stages of the criminal process” (McLaughlin, Fergusson, Hughes and Westmarland, 2003, p.196).

Restorative justice is about creating happiness and harmony through the acceptance of shared or collective responsibility for the wrong. It is about decisions being made through agreement between all parties involved and not sanctions imposed by another. It vigorously promotes the involvement of victims, offenders and community in a process, which searches for restoration, healing, responsibility and prevention. Based on this my working definition of restorative justice would be, “Restorative Justice facilitates a process of healing for past wrongs and seeks to install harmony for the future by restoring just relationships”. But how can the principles of Restorative Justice be applied to youth offending?

If we agree that the vast majority of criminal offences carried out by young people are not against the state but against individuals and communities, then their role (individuals and communities) in any justice process much be elevated from one of standing on the periphery to one of full participation in a justice process which highlights the importance of youth offenders taking responsibility for and making ‘right’ their ‘wrongs’. Restorative Justice can then provide a service to both those affected by criminal activities of young people and young offenders themselves.

Mark Umbreit and Howard Zehr state that in North America,

“Juvenile justice systems in at least 10 states are engaged in redefining their mission and restructuring their activities in order to promote a far more balanced and restorative juvenile justice system based on understanding that victims and communities along with offenders are their clients and must be given opportunities for active involvement in the justice process”(McLaughlin, Fergusson, Hughes and Westmarland, 2003, p.69).

I do not believe that restorative justice can replace the youth justice system but it can provide an alternative, which is both informal and community orientated. But before we look at the role restorative justice and especially restorative conferencing, can play within the youth justice system, I believe, that we should briefly look at past and existing strategies of crime control in relation to young offenders.

The Children and Young Persons Act 1933 established the primary principle that the welfare of young offenders should at all times be taken into consideration by the criminal justice system when considering the appropriate ‘punishment’ for young offenders. By the 1960s custodial institutions became increasingly criticised for their poor record for looking after the ‘welfare’ of young offenders. The result was that young offenders whose crimes did not merit a custodial sentence were handed over to ‘treatment oriented’ professionals who followed a course of welfare and treatment rather than correction and punishment. A Labour Party Study Group in 1964 stated that,

“We believe that in justice to our children and for health and well being of society no child in early adolescence should have to face criminal proceeding, these children should receive the kind of treatment they need, without stigma or any association with the penal system” (McLaughlin and Muncie, 2003, p. 267)

The 1969 Children and Young Persons Act in England and Wales as well as the 1968 Social Work Act in Scotland also incorporated alternative models to crime and punishment,

“by means of systems of treatment, supervision and social welfare in the community rather than by means of custodial punishment” (McLaughlin and Muncie, 2003, p.268).

Welfarism did not replace custodial intervention, it provided were necessary alternatives but by the 1970s it had come under attack from various political, professional organisations that welfarist interventions were too ‘soft on crime’ and that there was little evidence to show that welfarist interventions were successful in preventing re-offending and reconviction. The ‘back to justice’ movement argued that,

“the interests of young people would be better served by restoring the principles of legality and due process to the youth justice system” (McLaughlin and Muncie, 2003, p.271).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s we have witness various strategies for dealing with young offenders and though there was a drop in the number of offenders going to prison this was more to do with ‘diversionary strategies’ driven by cost-effective and efficiency principles based on the theory that such strategies,

“would produce a better managed system and would also save on the excessive costs of both welfare and justice approaches” (McLaughlin and Muncie, 2003, p.272).

The 1990s also seen the emergence of the ‘just deserts’ philosophy which argued that prison should not be looked at as the last resort for young offenders but should be considered as the desired option for young offenders. Of course these policy changes were influenced by external factors such as the ‘moral panic’ over the increase in youth crime and disorder, which the media featured on a daily if not weekly basis. Punishment for young offenders either in custodial institutions or in the community became the dominant theme.

In 1996 the Labour Party stated that,

“the welfare needs of the individual young offender cannot outweigh the needs of the community to be protected from the adverse consequences of his or her behaviour” (Labour Party, 1996, p.9).

As we can see there have been a considerable number of changes in government policy towards young offenders with policy moving between care and welfare and control and punishment. But whether the government approaches to crime are ‘hard or ‘soft’ incidents of ‘crime’ continue to rise and it is within this existing retributive environment that we must examine alternative restorative ways of dealing with the criminal activities of young people, which balances the needs of the victim and the community to the needs of the offender? As Braithwaite said, restorative justice has many components, reintegrative shaming, victim-offender mediation are among several but one model/s for considering with regards to youth offending is restorative conferencing. Restorative conferencing or Family Group conferencing originated in New Zealand and has received considerable attention in North America and Australia from those involved in victim-offender mediation, school officials and law enforcement officers. In regards to New Zealand, the conferences are facilitated by a youth justice worker who is employed by the welfare/social service sector while in North America police officials usually facilitate the conferences. In both cases the facilitator aims to be as inclusive as possible, as well as the offender and victim their family members are invited as well as those individuals and professionals who have been involved in some way, with both parties. The process is expected to reach an agreement, which includes accountability, healing and prevention.

“Family Group Conferencing provide victims with an opportunity to express what impact the crime had upon their lives, to receive answers to any lingering questions about the incident and to participate in holding offenders accountable for their actions. Offenders can tell their story of why crime occurred and how it has affected their lives and are given an opportunity to make things right with victims through some form of compensation” (McLaughlin, Fergusson, Hughes and Westmarland, 2003, p.71).

A standard role of Family Group Conferences is that offenders usually speak first in an attempt to make the offender take ownership of his/her actions, provide more background information on the circumstances that led to the offender taking his or her course of action in the first place and by doing so provide different perspectives to the crime and the offender and even ease any fears which the victim might have that the crime will reoccur.

“Conferencing engenders in the offenders and their supporters a sense of shame through providing the victims with a forum to explain directly to all experienced in the process. (Such an explanation) is sufficient for the expression of a sincere apology for the harm flowing from the offence. In a successful conference, the shame (experienced by) offenders, in turn, gives rise to the expression of forgiveness by the victims while the outcome can provide for material restitution.” (Strang, 1995, p.3)

So an obvious strength of Family Group conferencing is that it aims to heal relationships as opposed to the existing criminal justice system of attempting to balance hurt with hurt. It also attempts to put the ‘problem’ in the spotlight and not the offender but there are still some concerns with many arguing that the needs of the offender are over emphasized to an extent where the needs of the victim are neglected to such a degree that victims might refuse to participate. While pre-conference preparation of contact with all participants in the process is seen as vital in an attempt to address this perceived imbalance between meeting the ‘needs’ of the offender and those of the victim many co-ordinators believe that spontaneity is best,

“arguing that hearing the victims and offenders stories before the conference may even diminish the impact and focus of these stories”

(McLaughlin, Fergusson, Hughes and Westmarland, 2003, p. 86).

I believe that there are dangers to this approach. If young offenders are put into a conference ‘cold’ then they may not participate in a process, which would involve both adults they know and those who are strangers. It is also quite possible that the conference will be attended by or facilitated by a police officer who regardless of any new role would not be seen as impartial to many young offenders. Who tells the story first victim or offender? If Family Group Conferencing is about healing relationships then I believe that there needs to be an agreed strategy for all participants so that everyone knows who will be there and how they are expected to contribute to the conference.

While the healing of relationships is one indicator of the success of Family Group Conferences so also are indicators, which show a reduction in re-offending. The Youth Justice Board states that,

“restorative practice clearly contributes to the objective of preventing offending, recent research has established that participation in VOM alone is likely to reduce re-offending by 32% among young offenders.”

(McLaughlin, Fergusson, Hughes and Westmarland, 2003, p. 174).

But this statement would be challenged by Andrew Ashworth who describes the claim as ‘wild’ and states that, “it is extraordinary that this claim is not supported by reference to any of the alleged evidence”(Current Legal Problems, 2001, p357). Kathleen Daly also states in relation to restorative justice that, “there is a thin empirical record of what is happening on the ground” (McLaughlin, Fergusson, Hughes and Westmarland, 2003, p. 195). The problem identified by Daly is that statistics are well and good but until empirical work is carried out, not only can we not be certain what is going on but also are any of these new restorative practices ‘restorative’ or just old practices repackaged as restorative. For example, police cautioning and restorative cautioning. In regards to young people I do not believe that anything has changed, the police officer is still the dominant figure and the shaming of the offender uncontested,

“offenders said comparatively little in these sessions and their contributions were prompted by directive questioning by the police officer” (Daly, 2000).

So how can we measure the success of restorative practices such as Family Group Conferences? As I mentioned earlier one measure is the amount of young offenders who participate in Family Group conferences who re-offend. But taking into consideration the failure of the existing retributive system to reduce re-offending should we condemn one process for doing no better than another (if that is the case)? I believe, we should measure the success of Family Group Conferences by measuring what it does that the existing criminal system does not. The existing criminal justice system in many ways ignores the needs of the victim and offender,

“Throughout the criminal justice process the wounds and the needs of both the victim and the offender are neglected. Worse yet, injuries may be compounded” (Zehr, 1990, p.63).

Unlike the existing criminal justice system where the ‘state’ takes up the mantle for the injured party to the extent that both the voices of the victim and offender are replaced by the voices of solicitors and other court officials who argue and bargain for retribution which might meet the needs of the state but in many ways does not meet the need of the victim or the offender.

“In criminal law, crime is defined as an offence against the state. The state, not the individual, is defined as the victim. The state and only the state may respond” (Zehr, 1990, p.81)

Family Group Conferences provide the opportunity for all those affected by a wrong to voluntarily express their hurt and fears in a ‘safe’ environment where all participants are encouraged to tell their story. Many victims want to know, why them? also is it going to happen again? The existing criminal justice system does not accommodate this dialogue (or where possible reconciliation) between victim and offender because they are no longer in the equation. Legal professionals have taken over and those directly affected by the crime have been put aside.

While supporters of restorative justice or retributive justice argue that an ideal justice system should be of one type only, I believe that this does not have to be the case, one can compliment the other. The Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 which claims to “build on principles underlying the concept of restorative justice” (The British Journal Of Criminology, 2002) defined as the ‘3Rs’ of restoration, reintegration and responsibility brought significant changes to the Youth Justice System with the establishment of the Youth Justice Board and the involvement of members of the community on Youth Offender Panels, “YOPs are potentially one of the most radical aspects of the entire youth justice reform agenda” (Dignan, Marsh, 2001, p.99).

Delivery of ‘justice’ is not just a matter for the state alone, it is matter for everyone directly involved in the incident and no one should be afraid to try new tools or test new ideas but we must also learn from past errors and that is punishing ‘hurt’ with ‘hurt’ does not seem to work. Excuse the pun, but the jury is still out on the success of restorative justice initiatives such as Family Group Conferences. I agree with McEvoy, Mika and Hudson when they state that,

“restorative justice is largely practice led, with significant and obvious gaps and lags in the development of attendant theory, standards and evaluation”, (The British Journal of Criminology, 2002, p.475)

These can be improved by the implementation of systems of good practice. Family Group Conferences can bring about desired improvements to the existing youth justice system, “such as victim satisfaction”(Ashworth, (2001) p. 358). By promoting a policy of shared responsibility for dealing with young offenders, Family Group Conferences allows an approach that engages communities in owning and resolving problems in a way that the needs of ‘all’ are considered rather than handing the problem over to state bureaucracies and professional experts who in many ways by ignoring these same needs actually increase the initial injury.

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InterComm's Peace Building Programme

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For the last number of years the InterComm Peace Building programme has sought to engage with, and work with, communities and constituencies in an effort to build trust and promote understanding between communities emerging from conflict, built on the values of equity, diversity and interdependence. The programme has sought to initiate and facilitate dialogue on a range of divisive and sensitive issues among key stakeholders from across the north of the city.

To assist efforts in developing a new approach to peace building across North Belfast the programme team has forged working alliances with key academic institutions at home, the Centre for the Study of Comparative Ethnic Conflict at Queens University Belfast and Future Ways at the University of Ulster. In addition the programme team has forged a working relationship with the Stanford Centre for Conflict and Negotiation, California to further develop the remit and experience of the programme.

This process was consolidated in May 2001 at Stanford when InterComm facilitated discussions with SCCN staff and community peace building practitioners.

The programme team is currently strengthening the programme research and development portfolio. This will have implications for team personnel. It is anticipated that ongoing relationship and capacity building work will be documented, conceptualised and will inform recommendations to government on the good community relations practice that exists within and between communities.

The research will focus on developing new strategies and generating new thinking and processes that will assist in developing a clear and strategic focus to peace building across North Belfast. Essentially, a second track process that has the confidence of the majority of its people. It is envisaged that this work will further integrate community relations activity and language into everyday life.

By developing an internationally recognized Centre of Excellence for Peace Building, InterComm will further its goal of facilitating peace building through community development in the North by providing a safe, neutral environment in which groups and individuals may attend job training and negotiation skills and technique programs.

Building Peace: A Protocol for Engaging Protagonists

This protocol has emerged from practical experience of engaging protagonists within the divided communities of North Belfast. It is intended that the following protocol will inform those working at the coalface of conflict intervention to reflect on the nature, dynamic and implications of such a process.

The following stages have been outlined as the basis of a protocol for engaging stakeholders, political or military, as part of intervening in conflict/ building relationships at a local level:

Stage One

It is essential that the broker accurately assesses the dynamics at work in the local area; assesses the influence/ status of the individual with whom one is dealing; assesses their potential influence with other stakeholders. This initial research will inform analysis and guide expectations throughout the process.

Stage Two

An initial assessment will be made as to whether or not the person is a bona fide conduit to key stakeholders/ protagonists. This person must have sufficient credibility but must not be a direct or active protagonist.

There must be an early recognition that progress will be slow and that any links must be discrete and low profile. Time scale will be informed by initial research.

Stage Three

Those involved in the process must accept responsibility for disseminating the basis of the discussions. There must be clear information processes; this must be, balanced with the view that dialogues in an early stage must not become public.

Quite often when dialogues become public it may give rise to a knee-jerk reaction that may jeopardise the development of the process, thus resulting in a loss of confidence within constituencies.

Additionally if dialogue is initiated it may well be the case that “ground troops” are not equipped to understand the dynamics at work. In such circumstances the message and the language used must be tailored to take consideration of the local circumstances.

Stage Four

As the process develops, to protect the safety of all those involved, it is essential that the proper authorities (including the police) understand the process and permit it the space to develop without any interference.

Stage Five

With the agreement of all those involved, knowledge of the process must be expanded privately to all realms of participating organisations. Opening dialogue with other power brokers/ influencers may make dialogue with the main protagonists more acceptable. Proximity talks are also an option worth exploring, if thought to be useful.

Stage Six

It is essential that measures be in place to continue to build/ put in place mechanisms that will sustain dialogues into the longer term. This is particularly useful if the outcome of the dialogue between the main protagonists is negative, or perceived to be such.

This could take the form of an agreed set of regular meetings or the establishment of a mechanism to monitor indiscretions or actions that would be perceived to be violations of trust.

Stage Seven

The process has now come full circle. The dialogue between the main protagonists must now happen. This face to face contact, “eyeballing”, must be seen as a win-win situation for all involved irrespective of relative political/ military strength. At all costs a loss of face must be avoided.

The first dialogue between protagonists should only happen when the honest broker makes a firm assessment that all parties are ready and the signals indicate that there is a recognition that this encounter must happen.

To break the ice initially it may be of benefit if a series of exploratory questions guide the initial dialogue.

Stage Eight

It is essential that consideration be given around the idea of support programmes to underpin any dialogues. The responsibility for introducing the idea of support programmes and making contacts with relevant bodies and agencies rests with the broker.

Support programmes should focus on the need for inward investment, training needs and education. Equally emphasis should be on confidence building, capacity building, developing weak community infrastructure, personal development and developing negotiating skills.

Caution should also be given to overstating what realistically can be achieved in this process with regard to attracting resources to meeting community needs. Also each case should be assessed individually.

The integrity on process development should be emphasised. Additionally it is also critical throughout this process to develop other “players” as the process dictates. Finally as the process develops the implications of personal contact, or as otherwise referred to “eyeballing”, should not and cannot be underestimated. This model for engaging protagonists in certain cases must be promoted differently to different political/ military stakeholders.

Building Peace through Partnership

Billy Mitchell & David Murphy
Linc Resource Centre

Building Peace through Partnership is an inter-community peace-building initiative being developed by LINC with the aim of broadening skills and raising awareness of the role of community-based peace building initiatives in breaking the cycle of alienation, conflict and violence.

The programme focuses specifically on peace education and is about developing the capacity of practitioners and potential practitioners to understand the scope and nature of first and second track peace building, with a specific emphasis on second track peace building work.

Project Aims

To address the legacy of cynicism, suspicion and alienation, within and between communities, that has inhibited the fostering of a more just, equitable and interdependent North Belfast, by encouraging and promoting a Community Peace Education Programme that embraces the continuum of community relations and is offered to the widest possible constituency.

Objectives

Objective 1: To develop and facilitate a diverse thematic series of peace-building related seminars and workshops that will continue to advance the process of community peace building in North Belfast.

Objective 2: To lobby political, church and trade union leaders to raise awareness of problems facing peace building practitioners at grass roots level and to emphasise that peace is something that must be continuously worked at and nurtured.

Objective 3: To record document and disseminate international good practice in Community Peace Education by producing papers based on our interaction with practitioners and academics who have worked in other conflict zones.

Objective 4: To support and encourage the development of Community Peace Education programmes within communities by providing resource materials, organisational support and appropriate training.

Objective 5: To work in partnership with similar networks whose work encourages the promotion of non-violent responses to conflict while proactively promoting the values of restorative justice and conflict transformation.

Summary of Objectives

The workshops provide participants with information derived from practitioners and academics that have many years experience in either practical peace building or conflict research. They also provide participants with an opportunity to share their own experiences and, in particular, to highlight any problems that they are experiencing in their peace building work. The interactive process upon which the workshops are based enable facilitators and participants to conduct a critical analysis of local issues and experiences.

Where the workshops focus on developing the capacity and skills of local practitioners, the seminars focus on bringing local practitioners and participants into interactive contact with practitioners from other areas of Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Great Britain and, where finances permit, international conflict zones.

The lobbying component of the programme enables participants and other local practitioners to (a) inform the leaders of civic society as to what exactly is taking place on the ground in terms of practical peace building, (b) bring issues (problems) that need to be addressed to the civic leaders with a view to assisting groups and individuals resolve problems, (c) encourage a joined-up approach to practical peace building (Unions, Churches, Politicians, Government and Council together with the community & voluntary sector), (d) help to influence policy in relation to the development of strategic approaches to peace building and peace education.

By recording and disseminating principles of good peace building practice the programme is further informing local communities and agencies (a) what has/is happening in other conflict zones, (b) what has worked or failed in other conflict situations, and (c) what may or may not be modified and transferred to the local situation.

By providing resource materials, organisational support and training (where appropriate) we are seeking to develop the capacity of local groups and individual practitioners to develop and implement local community-driven peace building initiatives.

By meeting with key individuals from the various community networks that are engaged in developing one or more elements of peace building we hope to analyse our various strategies with a view to developing a broader peace building strategy for North Belfast that is inclusive of the specific areas of work of each network and that is clearly community led and community driven.

Setting the Objectives

The programme was discussed initially with our community networking partners and there was a consensus that structured peace education, linked to mentoring, was one of the missing elements in interface work. Feedback on our proposals in relation to this was positive. There was a specific positive response to the idea of mentoring and the proposed opportunity to meet and interact with others involved in peace building

elsewhere. The objectives were identified during discussions and this has helped shape the structure of the programme. Proposals to address specific issues were also raised and will be incorporated into the workshop and tutorial components.

The idea of researching academic papers and translating them into user friendly language for local people arose of our discussions with Dr. Steve Steadman of Stanford University and Ms Brenna Powell, formerly Assistant Director of the Stanford Centre for Conflict and Negotiation. This was also discussed with Dr. Duncan Morrow of the Community Relations Council. The need for structured lobbying came up at almost every community discussion and has been raised regularly at other workshops and seminars. The proposal for non-managerial support and mentoring arose during discussions on the interface with individuals who felt they wanted to do more but felt they needed someone more experienced to work with them. The need for strategic liaison meetings between key people from the various groups involved in one or more aspects of peace building came up at most discussions.

Benefits of Programme

The practical benefits for the participants, as identified during monitoring, include (a) access to structured peace education modules delivered by experienced practitioners and validated by academia, (b) support at practical level by experienced practitioners serving as mentors, (c) elicitive as well as prescriptive learning methods and (d) exposure to the experiences of practitioners from other world conflict zones.

The practical benefits for the participants' respective groups include (a) group members who have gained a wealth of theoretical and practical knowledge in peace building, (b) group members who have access to mentors who will assist them to put their learning into practice and (c) group members who are in a position to pass on their learning and skills to other members and (d) group members who have the capacity to make a significant difference at community level in terms of practical peace building. Sustainability will be measured in terms of social profit – i.e., the capacity of the participant and the group to engage positively in both short-term crisis intervention and long-term peace building, and the degree of skills given to the group and transferred to other group members.

The Concept

The concept of the programme is based on the need to get people around a table to discuss the issues that fuel conflict and a breakdown in community relations. The programme is therefore interactive, participative, inclusive and directed towards stimulating a synergy surrounding an evolution in mindsets.

Three words frame the context, development and approach of the programme. These are community, peace and building.

The community context is Greater North Belfast, although the programme now has an outreach to Newtownabbey, East Antrim and several rural areas. North Belfast has suffered effects from violence and has been stigmatised by the wider society. It can be understood as a place apart with unique problems and a political geography characterised by interfaces and dereliction. The programme is an example of practical peace work and involves the creation of a safe and secure space in which parties from different communities in conflict can interact. It is important to reflect that there is more to peace than simply the absence of violence. Peace involves active work to

build channels of communication and relationships centred upon solving problems that could if ignored spark violence. The “building” of peace relates to the specific tools used by the project to deliver the programme. These include seminars, workshops, lobbying, liaison and the production of papers by academics and practitioners. The outcomes and outputs of the programme have therefore created a form of Open College within the unique context of our wider community network. Networks are a core element in project delivery.

The programme is an example of community education within the dynamic of community relations and has developed initiatives that respond to specific needs as identified by communities. This is a bottom up approach and is an example of the community development process in action. The community development principles of empowerment, collective action and participation underpin the delivery of the programme. The programme links into the definition of Community Development as set out by the Community Work Education and Training Network;

“Community Development is the process of developing active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect. It is about influencing power structures to remove the barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that affect their lives.”

The programme is further influenced by the Kolb learning cycle that underpins learning theory. This places an emphasis upon the cycle of planning, action and reflection. Tutorials, seminars and workshops are key tools utilised by educators to inform and motivate students. Learning is a process of discovery and reflection. This approach comes through in the ethos of the LINC and its community partners. The life experience of participants is a key element in the process of conflict transformation and the programme places an emphasis on matching the life experience of the learner with new information supplied by the facilitator. The model of the learning circle has emerged in the course of the programme as a seminal project delivery tool.

The learning group is a small informal group of community activists and key influencers who have indicated a wish to be agents for transformation within their local communities. They come together to discuss issues of concern to both themselves and their communities with a view to learning how best to develop and deliver actions that will lead to change. The model of the learning group places an emphasis upon using common resources that consist of life experiences. The process of learning therefore occurs through shared inquiry and dialogue, with each participant being both the learner and a teacher. The task of the tutor in this model is to enable participants to frame their discussions, draw out experiences and support actions identified by the group. The programme therefore fulfils the definition of community education as presented by the Community Work Education and Training Network,

“Community development learning is that which develops strengths within communities and promotes good practice within the community development role. It should validate people’s experiences and include approaches to delivery, which have elements of involvement, equality and empowerment. It is concerned with knowledge and skills for positive change at individual, group and community level.”

The participants and communities involved in the programme have suffered the effects of conflict, thus the process is rooted in the belief that it is the person within the community context who is the key agent for change in the conflict transformation process. The programme therefore has a person centred approach in which the individual is supported to be an agent for conflict transformation.

Conflict Transformation

Conflict transformation underpins the delivery of the Building Peace through Partnership programme. This approach recognises that the conflict in Northern Ireland is embedded and has cultural, political and psychological dimensions. In comparison, conflict resolution carries a connotation that there can be a permanent resolution to conflict. A further approach utilised to approach the conflict in Northern Ireland has been that of conflict management. This places an emphasis upon the control of actors and an acceptance of an “acceptable level of violence”. The advantage of the conflict transformation approach is that it recognises the deep causes of conflict and need for a holistic approach. Conflict transformation therefore focuses on the dynamic processes through which conflict becomes violent rather than focusing narrowly on how to bring a violent conflict to simply a cease-fire settlement. With such an emphasis upon the transformative aspects of conflict a focus is placed upon relationships, individuals, cultures and identity.

This approach further recognises that changes are needed at many different levels of society in order for peace to emerge and hold. The essence of the Building Peace through Partnership approach is therefore to transform a conflict from violence into a constructive force which stimulates social change and thereby develops a shared peace. This is a good example of an intervention project that maximises the participation of people in decisions that affect them. The programme is therefore linked to the idea of building peace from the grass roots or community level.

The project of peace building from below recognises that there is more to peace building than simply negotiations between political elites. People living and working in conflict-affected communities must be empowered to build an effective and sustainable peace.

The Building Peace through Partnership programme recognises the following:

- A simple one-dimensional approach / intervention by peace keepers or mediators aimed at securing a formal political peace agreement leading to a cease-fire is unlikely to produce a lasting solution.
- Recognition that post-settlement of agreement must be underpinned by frameworks that will address cultures of violence and support peace building on the ground.
- Recognition that the community / voluntary sector is a key resource for the conflict transformation process.

Sustainable Citizenship

Building Peace through Partnership is linked to the concept of sustainable citizenship based on a peace-building approach that is participatory and interactive. Through the workshops, tutorials and seminars a public space is opened up that contributes to civic society. John Paul Lederach who works as a practitioner in this field writes that,

“The principle of indigenous empowerment suggests that conflict transformation must actively envision, include, respect and promote the human and cultural resources from within a given setting. This involves a new set of lenses through which we do not primarily see the setting and the people in it as the problem and the outsider as the answer.”

Lederach describes the affected population as a triangle with the key political leaders at the apex. In the middle is placed a larger group of leaders who have significance in sectors such as education, health and the military. Finally at level three is found the majority of the affected population. Within Northern Ireland the diplomatic level of peace building was carried out at Level 1 between the British / Irish Governments and political elites. The Building Peace through Partnership programme however works across the three levels with an emphasis upon peace building from below. The uniqueness of the programme is that it does not consider people within the conflict to be the problem but as a key resource.

With respect to the role of third parties or outsiders the approach of the programme places an emphasis upon their re-orientation of third party roles and responsibilities. The lesson of past peace building interventions is that outsider / third parties should be aware of how their short-term interventions are to be integrated with long-term resolution processes.

Building Peace through Partnership recognises that peace making also involves the transformation of the process of justice and equality in the social system as a whole. The transformation of the personal relationships between participants is therefore a key and participants have addressed themes such as truth, the inter-dependence of communities, justice and poverty.

Within the context of the conflict in Northern Ireland, the two traditional communities define the abstract concepts of peace and justice in different ways. Lederach argues that activism and advocacy is the approach of choice in situations where power is unbalanced. Advocacy helps to raise awareness and to balance power. With reference to the Building Peace through Partnership Programme this is achieved through lobbying meetings with government ministers / departments.

Lederach further argues that justice involves, “the pursuit of restoration, of rectifying wrongs, of creating right relationships based on equity and fairness. Pursuing justice involves advocacy for those harmed, for open acknowledgement of the wrongs committed, and for making things right. Mercy, on the other hand, involves compassion, forgiveness and a new start. Mercy is orientated toward supporting persons who have committed Injustices, encouraging them to change and move on.”

Within the context of Northern Ireland the concept of justice is defined as determining the truth and punishing the guilty party. In comparison, mercy involves compassion and forgiveness. With reference to this key point, Lederach reflects that, “the challenge is to pursue justice in ways that respect people and at the same time to achieve restoration of relationships based on recognising and amending injustices.” This theoretical approach frames the work of the Building Peace through Partnership programme.

The approach developed by Lederach requires participants to acknowledge harm and for the empowerment of disputants to make things right. This is identified in the restorative justice element which underpins the transformative nature of the programme. Lederach defines transformation in the following manner,

“Transformative peacemaking, then, empowers individuals and nurtures mutuality and community.” This concept has been made real through the creation of the various learning circles and round table discussions that have evolved through the Building Peace through Partnership programme.

From assessment of the various outcomes of workshops, seminars, tutorials, liaison and lobbies it is evident that a process of dialogue between communities has evolved through the Building Peace through Partnership programme. This corresponds to Lederach’s approach and he writes that, “process matters more than outcome...At times of heated conflict too little attention is paid to how the issues are to be approached, discussed and decided. There is a push toward solution and outcome that skips the discipline of creating an adequate and clear process for achieving an acceptable result. Process, it is argued, is the key to the Kingdom”

In conclusion the programme is essentially a process that has stimulated change on the individual, relational, structural and cultural levels and from which a series of secondary peace building processes have evolved within our wider community network. These processes will be assessed independently at the close of this current stage of the programme.