Articulating injustice: Utilising the arts as a language for intercultural conflict transformation: An exploration of young people's experiences of participation in an 'arts for conflict transformation' programme in Plymouth UK.

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Abstract
The need to address intercultural conflict and build more peaceful integrated communities has become a national concern in the United Kingdom. Recent rioting across England has shown how quickly conflict can erupt when sparked by a perceived racist incident. Whilst the causes of the riots and possible resolution strategies are hotly contested, new creative solutions are called for to address contemporary conflicts. This paper reflects on an approach proposed by Lederach, whereby focus is moved away from resolving conflict issues and placed on dialogue and rebuilding human relationships. This research explores a method whereby the arts are utilised as a form of dialogue. It contributes to the paucity of research relating to the arts and their ability to contribute to conflict transformation. The study explores young people's engagement with the ARROW programme (Art a Resource for Reconciliation Over the World) the precursor to the INDRA Congress (International Development of the Arts for Reconciliation). Located within international universities, including UK, South Africa, Palestine, Kosovo and India, the programme utilises the arts as a language for sharing stories of conflict, oppression and injustice, to promote critical dialogue between academics, practitioners and young people growing up in divided communities. Data includes a focus group with 13 young people from the Plymouth UK centre and interviews with 5 practitioners; both exploring experiences and impact of ARROW involvement. It is proposed that the arts can act as a form of dialogue to encourage people to think critically and move to new places of understanding about their lives, humanity and the world.

Key words: Intercultural Conflict, Transformation, Peace Building, Dialogue, the Arts.

1. Introduction

The need to address intercultural conflict and build more peaceful integrated communities has become a national concern in the United Kingdom (UK). In recent weeks, rioting and looting erupted in a number of cities across England. A peaceful demonstration, following the fatal shooting of a man in London, by the police, turned into violent clashes with police. This was said to be caused by unrest due to police discrimination against local 'black'[1] communities. The subsequent riots that spread across the country led to a number of debates about other possible causes. These ranged from discrimination, disadvantage and poverty, to opportunism, to government public funding cuts for youth provision, to bad parenting and Prime Minister Cameron's notion of a "broken society". At the time of writing this paper the causes of the conflict and necessary solutions are hotly contested and unresolved. Prior to this 'race' had been a major factor in English riots; the Toxteth riots 1981, the Broadwater farm riot 1985 and the Northern riots 2001 (Connolly 2011). Each drew attention to the problem of racial discrimination in the UK and the issue of intercultural conflict within communities.

The summer of 2001 marked the start of a new era in community conflict resolution work. This followed the September 11th events in the USA, the Northern 'race riots' and a rise in racist incidents across the UK. The Cantle report (2001:9) highlighted the problem of different communities living parallel lives that do not cross or meet at any point thereby excluding opportunities for meaningful relationship building. The resultant community cohesion strategy prioritised the need to create opportunities for contact and respect between cultures that could lead to improved cohesion and reduce conflict within communities. Further policy initiatives have arisen to improve race relations, tackle growing extremism, within different community groups, and build integrated resilient communities. The Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) placed a duty on public organisations to actively work towards eliminating racial discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and good relations between all racial groups. The Prevent Strategy (2008) sought to challenge extremist ideologies and increase the resilience of communities to violent extremism. The more recent Equalities Act (2010) aims to create a more equal society by joining together and simplifying a range of equality laws.

Much has been achieved. However, breaking down hostilities between cultural groups and building peaceful cohesive communities remains a struggle. Recent rioting across England has shown how quickly conflict can erupt when sparked by a perceived racist incident. A number of complex components are found that make intercultural conflict difficult to resolve. It has been shown that individuals and groups can feel hostile towards or fearful of 'others' without being aware of the underlying nature of their beliefs and perceptions. Macpherson (1999) highlighted that people often discriminate against others through "ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping" yet remain unaware of their own prejudices. Raced, classed and gendered inequalities are said to be embedded in society and perpetuated through the British education system (Gilborn

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[1] In the UK the term 'black' has been used as a political term to refer to individuals and community groups who are not 'white' and who face disadvantage and discrimination.

2011). Class inequalities can intersect with racism. Cantle (2001) demonstrated that poverty and lack of resources can lead to mutual feelings of unfairness and a perception that somehow 'other' social or cultural groups are getting more and are therefore a threat. Many communities have struggled to adapt as neighbourhoods become more multicultural due to increased migration in a globalized world. This has led to a rise in intercultural conflict. Newly arriving families and individuals have been 'put at risk' after being met with hostility by those who perceive new groups as a threat to local resources and ways of life (Morris 2007).

New creative solutions have been called for to address the complexities of intercultural conflict. International conflict mediator John Paul Lederach (1997) argues that in divided societies there is no standardised formula for peacemaking. Conflicting communities often live near to one another; bound up in hostile interactions, grievance, animosity, fear and brutal stereotyping. Lederach (1997) proposes a need to address the human element of such contemporary conflicts. He advocates a dialogic approach that involves moving beyond traditional peace-building strategies, which focus on identifying and addressing conflict issues, to solutions that seek to renew and restructure fragile human relationships (Lederach 1997). Dialogue therefore becomes a medium for rebuilding relationships and developing critical awareness that can help communities move to new places of understanding about one another.

A dialogic method, growing in popularity, involves the use of the arts. Mediums such as drama, dance and music have been used as a language to highlight people's struggles, raise awareness, tackle difficult community issues, and bring about social change. Evidence has been mounting of the benefits of arts projects, beyond aesthetic or economic value, and their ability to contribute to social gains (Newman et al 2003). However, a paucity of research evidence and theory exists relating specifically to the benefits of arts for conflict resolution and peace building. A few examples can be found including Liebmann's (1999) book 'Arts approaches to Conflict' and a PhD study regarding community drama following 'the troubles'in Northern Ireland (Jennings 2010) and Prentki's (2008) impact and evaluation study 'A mile in my shoes'. Nevertheless, whilst, numerous literature works have addressed conflict resolution and peace building across the globe, empirical studies relating specifically to the role of the arts in conflict transformation remains a relatively new area.

This research contributes to the field, through a qualitative study that explores the voices and experiences of young people and practitioners involved in the ARROW programme (Art a Resource for Reconciliation Over the World). ARROW was a global 'arts for conflict transformation' programme, based in universities and communities around the world. Centres included UK, South Africa, Palestine, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and India. It was the precursor to the current INDRA Congress (International Development of the Arts for Reconciliation). ARROW and the INDRA Congress are influenced by a Lederach approach to conflict resolution, based on the creative transformation of conflict through relationship building and promoting the principle of interdependence through shared dialogue. The dialogical approach involves using the arts as a language for sharing individual and collective stories of oppression, conflict

and injustice, to promote critical dialogue between academics, practitioners and young people, to challenge prejudices, overcome perceived barriers and build positive relationships amongst diverse communities around the world. Communities are brought together through international exchanges and congress events, to share their stories through the arts. The international communities involved are faced with a number of diverse challenges. This research focuses solely on a youth group that had been formed in the Plymouth UK context. Plymouth is a city that has undergone rapid changes in recent years, from a predominantly 'white'[2] area into an emerging multicultural environment[3]. High levels of intercultural conflict have been recorded (Rayner 2001). The research investigates how involvement in the ARROW programme impacted on participant's lives, in the Plymouth context. It questions whether the arts approach offers an effective medium and a language through which to bring people together to build relationships and transform conflict. The empirical study formed part of an undergraduate dissertation and acted as a pilot project that is being developed further through PhD research.

Sign posting

Section 2.1 begins by providing the background to the issue including the national political context. Section 2.2, outlines the local context in which the research takes place. In section 2.3 arts approaches to conflict transformation are introduced including the theoretical framework, the role of the arts as a narrative and ways in which the arts have historically been used in both conflict and conflict transformation processes. Section 3, provides the methodology and research design. In section 4 the interview findings are displayed and discussed. Section 5 summarises and concludes the research.

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[2] Literature on 'whiteness' argues 'white' skin affords people a privileged position in society. However, this position is expressed as the 'normality of 'whiteness'as opposed to superiority; privilege is rarely recognised (Reay et al 2007).
[3] Emerging multicultural contexts refers to the fast changing demographic climate of many regions of the UK and Europe, following increased immigration and new migration patterns.

2. Literature and policy context

2.1 Intercultural Conflict: A contested policy arena

In the UK a number of policy initiatives have sought to address the problem of intercultural conflict and find ways to build more peaceful integrated communities. In particular Community Cohesion (2001) sought to build more integrated communities, following the 2001 northern 'race' riots. Community cohesion is said to provide a framework for practitioners to create "meaningful direct contact" between communities and also across territorial feuds that divide communities of the same ethnic origin (Thomas 2006:48). However, the literature also questions whether community cohesion invites a holistic approach to resolving community conflict or conceals the more arduous task of tackling racism. Green & Pinto (2004:52) express that racism is increasingly featured in everyday lives of young people and this can make the delivery of Community Cohesion problematic. The Community Cohesion agenda has been criticised for its proposal that intercultural conflict is rooted in the breakdown of contact between diverse communities. This standpoint is said to "conceal a racism that does not emerge through cultural practice but through a politicised state discourse" (Burnett 2004:10). In other words, intercultural conflict is not caused by warring communities with equal status but by the prejudices and oppressions of unequal communities.

However, the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) aims to tackle racism. It placed a duty on public organisations to actively work to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different racial groups (DfE 2002). This included education settings, which are seen as prime sites to facilitate cultural integration to alleviate segregation found in neighbourhoods and work arenas (Merry 2011). Personal, Social and Health Education (PHSE) Citizenship classes and multicultural education are being taught in schools. These seek to teach respect for diversity and remedy conflict and hostilities between cultural groups and address disparities in academic achievement and economic attainment between social and cultural groups (Zembylas, 2010). However, much criticism exists. It is argued that the English education system operates along the lines of raced, classed and gendered inequalities (Gilborn 2011) and fails "to supply the social bases of self-respect for stigmatized minority groups" (Merry 2011:2). This can lead to voluntary educational segregation (Merry 2011) or classrooms becoming deeply divided places where contested histories and life experiences create complex challenges for teachers (Jansen 2009:258). Multicultural education has been accused of exacerbating and 'exoticising' 'otherness' and patronising pupils through a 'tourist curriculum' (Owen 2010). This is said to explore 'surface aspects' of people's cultures, such as celebrations and entertainment but fails to connect with real-life experiences and problems that different people face (ibid). Teachers are found to be caught up in harmful racial stereotyping that affects 'black' children's aspirations and school success rates (Crozier 2011) or resisting engaging in antiracist learning due to a belief that it is not relevant in predominantly 'white' areas (Gaine 1995, 2005). Whilst a good deal has been achieved, much criticism exists demonstrating that racism and racist structures

are very much alive, yet are often invisible to those who do not experience it. Transforming intercultural conflict, inevitably, remains a struggle.

2.2 Intercultural conflict in the South West of England

The research that informed this paper took place in the city of Plymouth in the county of Devon in the South West of England. The area has developed rapidly over the last decade from a predominantly 'white' area to a more multicultural environment. This is, in part, due to development and expansion of the university and medical hospital with increased recruitment from overseas. Plymouth also became part of the UK's Asylum Seeker dispersal programme that sought to disperse this group around the country to relive pressure on London and the South East of England. Many communities struggled to adapt, resulting in an alarming number of racist incidents. The Asylum Seeker dispersal programme was accused of sending people into "highly volatile environments" where they faced "a worrying level of spontaneous racial harassment and racial attacks" due to "entrenched views held by the host community against the incomers" (Cited in Morris 2007). This was especially high in Devon and Cornwall. The region was highlighted as the second most likely area in England to become a victim of racial crime (Rayner 2001).

Although the setting is a city, rural issues are important here with the city of Plymouth being located within a predominantly rural area. Rural areas are said to be faced with specific challenges that differ from more multicultural urban areas, due to minimal experience of cultural diversity. Local research has documented the unique complexities of racism in rural Devon (Magne 2003). These range from acts of 'ignorance' to institutionalised racism to overt race hate crimes. Acts of ignorance can be described as "unwitting racism" due to "lack of understanding, ignorance or mistaken beliefs" (Macpherson 1999). It can lead to unacknowledged racist stereotyping or patronising words or actions, regardless of an individual's good intentions (ibid). Institutionalised racism is described as,

> *The collective failure of an organisation to provide a professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people (Macpherson 1999).*

Considerable evidence of misconceptions, prejudice and racism are found to exist in rural areas and predominantly 'white' areas (Gaine 1987, 1995, 2005). This is coupled with a regular assumption from 'white' indigenous populations that racism is not a problem in such areas (Gaine, 1987, 1995, 2005). The belief that resolving racism and intercultural conflict are not relevant in predominantly 'white' areas is particularly problematic in the South West of England. This perhaps accounts for the reasons why 'white' populations find it problematic to engage with anti-racist training. 'White' students and teachers are said to resist learning about racism and systems of oppression (Evans-Winters & Twyman 2011). Resolving the problem becomes extremely difficult

when many people don't believe it exists or disengage from the necessary learning. This suggests a necessity to explore new creative methods to resolve intercultural conflict.

2.3 Arts Approaches to Conflict Transformation

2.3.1 Resolving intercultural conflict: A theoretical framework

New and creative measures have been called for to transform and work with the complexities of contemporary conflicts (Lederach 1997). Lederach (1997:16) argues that "we persist in relying on traditional statist diplomacy" to resolve conflict, yet warns of the inadequacy of this approach in today's world. Lederach argues that in divided societies there is no standardised formula for peacemaking. Conflicting communities often live near to one another; bound up in hostile interactions, grievance, animosity, fear and brutal stereotyping. What is needed, therefore, is recognition of the "uniquely human dimensions" of such conflict (Lederach 1997:23). This involves a paradigm shift in perception "away from a concern with the resolution of issues and towards a frame of reference that focuses on the restoration and rebuilding of relationships" (Lederach 1997:24).

Nevertheless, as demonstrated in the previous section, transforming conflict in rural areas can be especially problematic. Many communities hold a number of stereotypes and misconceptions about different social and cultural groups. People are often found to be unaware of their own hostility towards other social or cultural groups. This is compounded when people resist learning about diversity and intercultural conflict or believe it is not relevant to them or in their context. Under such conditions, an additional approach to conflict transformation is needed that transforms the ways in which culture and conflict are understood. The field of critical pedagogy for social transformation potentially provides such a framework. Paulo Friere, a prominent writer in the field, coined the term 'conscientisation' to refer to ways of raising the consciousness of communities and individuals, in order that they can reconceptualise perceptions that they have previously understood as 'normal' or inevitable (Friere 1996). The pedagogical approach is promoted through critical dialogue and serves to bring about social change. Both Friere and Lederach's approaches can be seen to complement one another through promoting the benefits of dialogue. In Friere's case critical dialogue is utilized to promote social change, whilst in Lederach's case dialogue serves to bring human beings in contact to transform conflict and division.

> *People need opportunity and space to express to and with one another the trauma of loss and their grief at that loss, and the anger than accompanies the pain and the memory of injustices experienced…Acknowledgement through hearing one another's stories validates experience and feelings and represents the first step towards restoration of the person and the relationship (Lederach 1997:26).*

Lederach (2005:160) puts forward the case for the peace builder as artist, theorising that "the artistic process initially breaks beyond what can be rationally understood and then returns to a place of understanding that may analyse, think it through, and attach meaning to it". Along with seeing peace building as an art, the arts themselves can be understood as a language and a form of dialogue. The arts can be utilized to share stories of pain and injustice and encourage dialogue around difficult and troublesome issues faced by young people growing up in divided communities.

2.3.2 The Arts as a Narrative

The role of narrative is increasingly being recognised as an important tool for post-conflict peace building (Tint 2010). Understanding linkages between memory and conflict are said to be crucial to peace building. Human emotions are deeply affected by conflict, bound up in memories of pain and injustice, which in turn are connected to narrative (Tint 2010). This research proposes that narrative is not limited to verbal dialogue but is actively present in the arts. This is because the arts communicate structural and cultural norms and practices (Hall 2003). Matorasso (1997) expresses,

> *More than any other human activity, culture and art…is concerned with values and meanings…art as activity, process and object, is central to how people experience, understand and then shape the world (Matorasso 1997:84).*

The arts can provide non-verbal approaches to communication (Duggan 1999) offering the potential for creative ways to explore difficult issues. They can be used to express feelings of trauma, loss, grief and anger for those experiencing injustice. In turn they can be utilised to stimulate dialogue around these troublesome issues, for the purpose of education and learning to move to new positions of understanding. Jupp (2006, p.186) offers that narratives are 'storied ways of knowing and communicating'. They offer a process for sharing and listening to collective stories of oppression, conflict and injustice. Storytellers forge connections between past, present and future by drawing on memories and reimagining more positive lives and futures (Jupp, 2006, Lederach, 1997). The arts can be seen to have a powerful part to play in the relationship building aspect of conflict resolution, through promoting skills of co-operation, working and learning together and exploring new innovative solutions to problem solving.

Arts projects have been described as "an important part of community development strategies" (Newman et al 2003:310). They are said to assist with empowerment and social inclusiveness (Matarasso 1997) and provide meaning to individual and collective human experience, enhancing understanding of political and social conditions (Clinton 1993). Duggan (1999) proposes that the arts help to release creative possibilities in everyone, which is a necessary step for making changes and formulating new opinions. Matarasso's extensive report, 'The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts' (1997) offered,

> *The greatest social impacts of participation in the arts arise from their ability to help people think critically about and question their experiences and those of*

others, not in a discussion group but with all the excitement, danger, magic, colour, symbolism, feeling, metaphor and creativity that the arts offer. (matarasso 1997:84)

Consequently, with their colours, sounds and movements the arts can provide a medium for communication and expression. However, whilst the arts can promote dialogue, cooperation and learning between conflicting cultural groups, they can also have the opposite effect. Historically the arts have also been used in conflict process as the following section demonstrates.

2.3.3 The Arts in Conflict and Conflict transformation processes

The arts can be seen as both powerful and persuasive. They can be harnessed as a beneficial tool for bringing people together to explore issues, resolve problems and develop communities, or they can be exploited to divide communities, send messages of propaganda or promote elitism or exclusion (Clinton 1993:1). The latter has taken such forms as political propaganda, negative or positive media representations and promoting ideologies. In deeply divided or contested societies the arts have been used for political purposes. Loyalist and Republican Murals were used in the North of Ireland to, send political messages, mark out territories send warnings to opposing communities, recruit members and literally to 'draw support' (Rolston 2003). Paintings have been used to both to glorify war or depict the horrific reality of destruction and suffering (The Art of War 2010). Music has been used by 'white power' groups to recruit participants for extreme right wing racist political parties (Corte & Edwards 2008). Bergh & Sloboda (2010) illustrate a number of examples around the world that show how music has been used during conflict; to unite people, boost morale, create a national identity, and disseminate ideology, marching rhythms to marshal troops into battle, to torment and humiliate prisoners, praise soldiers and create hostile atmospheres.

Along with being used in conflict processes the arts have been utilised, around the world, to empower marginalised communities, promote integration and reconcile divided communities. Boal (1979:ix) expresses that the theatre is a powerful political tool that communities can regain control of for political purposes. The same can be said for many art forms,

> *Community arts can help challenge inequalities and oppressions such as experienced through ageism, ableism, sexism, homophobia and racism by explicit targeting and positive action through engaging with a variety of communities of interest and identity (Clinton & Glen 1993: 101).*

Community drama has a history of working with young people following 'the troubles' in Northern Ireland (Jennings 2010). Theatre has been used to depict the complexities and struggles of human lives and to work with oppressed communities to bring about social change in South America (Boal 1979) and to work with young people affected by the occupation in Palestine (Prentki 2008). Visual arts, music and drama have been used to explore reconciliation in divided communities, such as South Africa, Palestine

and Kosovo (Prentki 2008). Music has been used to promote multiculturalism, such as the Rock against Racism movement in the U.K. (Roberts & Moore 2009). The following sections outline the study that took place to explore the role of an arts programme that worked with young people to promote conflict transformation.

3. Methodology

This research explores an arts approach to intercultural conflict resolution. It investigates how involvement in the ARROW programme impacted on participant's lives. As previously mentioned, the ARROW programme, an acronym for 'Art a Resource for Reconciliation Over the World' was a global 'arts for conflict transformation' programme. It was based in universities and communities around the world. Centres included UK, South Africa, Palestine, Kosovo and Sierra Leone. The programme has since developed into the INDRA Congress; an acronym for 'International Development of the Arts for Reconciliation'. This research questions whether the programme's arts approach offers an effective medium and a new language through which to bring people together to build relationships and transform conflict. The empirical study formed part of an undergraduate dissertation and acted as a pilot project that is being developed further through PhD research.

The empirical study explored young people and practitioners' experiences of being involved with the ARROW youth group programme in the Plymouth UK hub. The research design was qualitative, with the intention of exploring in-depth detailed descriptions about participants' thoughts, feelings, perceptions and experiences of their involvement with the programme. The sample consisted of five arts practitioners and members of the Plymouth ARROW youth group who decided they wanted to be involved, following being informed about the nature and purpose of the research. This turned out to be all members of the group. Membership at the time consisted of thirteen young people. These were a group of predominantly 'white' young women aged between 14 and 19 along with two 'black' members, two young men, and two white young people with a 'black' stepparent. It is recognized that the research sample is specific to ARROW youth group members, rather than be representative of young people in the local Plymouth area or wider community. The results are therefore, to be understood within their context. They provide a starting point for further research that is currently being developed.

The study took a participatory ethnographic approach to provide rich and detailed descriptions of participants in real-life situations (Descombe 2007:67). A focus group research session was held at the regular venue, place and times of the standard youth group sessions to ensure continuity and a 'natural' and familiar environment. A follow up session was held to expand on some of the themes that had arisen during the research. This took the form of an informal discussion with the group to gain more insight, depth and clarity on certain issues raised during the focus group. Interviews were also held with arts practitioners who had been involved with the Plymouth programme and an ARROW programme in Burnley that had visited and engaged with the Plymouth group.

In keeping with ARROW ethos, the decision was made to incorporate the arts into the research process. Duggan (1999:341) states "When people start talking through their painted images they are more in touch with their inner feelings because they produced the images". The focus group session formed a blend between producing drawings of experiences of involvement in the ARROW project along with discussions about the images and what they represent in order to generate qualitative data that explored the experiences and impact of involvement with ARROW. The group were given sheets of paper and offered the choice to either write or draw in colour their experiences of being involved with the ARROW programme. Themes included why they joined, what they like about being involved, key moments and memories and why they were important and if they feel they have developed in any ways. The purpose being to understand key experiences and junction points that acted as moments of growth or change. Participants were then invited to feed back to the whole group and discuss their writing or images and what they represented, in order to generate qualitative data. This process was tape recorded for analysis purposes, with participants' informed consent. The data was analysed according to themes emerging from the young people and compared with interviews from the practitioners. Direct quotes have been included in the data discussion. However, all names have been changed to preserve anonymity of the participants.

4. Data Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This research explored the experiences of young people and practitioners involved in the Plymouth segment of an 'art for conflict transformation programme', located within international universities and communities. The research contributes to the paucity of evidence relating to the role of the arts in intercultural conflict resolution and peace building processes. It points out a number of policy initiatives that have arisen, in the UK, to tackle the problem and describes some of the criticisms of these approaches. In particular, resolving intercultural conflict is seen as problematic when initiatives are set within systems that are affected by racist structures.

The research is set within a rural context in the South West of England, in an area that has been recently emerging from a predominantly 'white' area into a more multicultural environment. Specific challenges are found to affect intercultural conflict resolution here, that differ from more multicultural urban areas, due to minimal experience of cultural diversity. A common assumption in the area is that racism is not a problem. On the contrary, however, racism and intercultural conflict are found to be one of the highest in the country (Rayner 2001). Resolving the problem becomes extremely difficult when many people are reluctant to learn about the issues because they don't believe it exists or believe it is not relevant to them. This suggests a necessity to explore new creative methods to resolve intercultural conflict.

This study explored a method that combines Lederach's (1997) dialogic approach for building human relationships, blended with Friere's (1996) notion of 'conscientisation' and critical pedagogy. Together these approaches utilise critical dialogue to raise the consciousness of communities and individuals, in order that they can reconceptualise perceptions that they have previously understood as 'normal' or inevitable (Friere 1996). The paper proposes the idea of the arts as a narrative that can be used to bring diverse communities together, to promote critical dialogue, to share stories of painful pasts, describe loss and injustices and tell stories of courage, resilience and forgiveness and therefore enable people to move to new positions of understanding. The empirical study was based on the voices of young people and practitioners involved with the ARROW programme in Plymouth. Interviews were also held with arts practitioners who had been involved with the Plymouth programme and an ARROW programme in Burnley that had visited and engaged with the Plymouth group.

4.2 Relationship building

Lederach (1997) argues that new creative measures are called for to address the complexities of contemporary conflicts; moving beyond traditional peace-building strategies, which focus on identifying and addressing conflict issues, to solutions that seek to renew and restructure fragile relationships. Providing opportunities for relationship building was a core feature within the ARROW programme. The method promotes creating a culture of peace through relationship building and shared dialogue. Arts and drama activities are used as tools to engage young people in a variety of forms of communication. "Communication is fundamental to any form of conflict resolution and non-verbal approaches to communication have a vital role to play" (Duggan 1999:339). Comments reflected positive progress and development within the relationship building aspect of the programme.

> *"Everyone is friendly and easygoing" (charlotte).*

> *"Fantastic people" (Abi).*

> *"I like coming to ARROW because I've made new friends and can get involved in things I believe in" (Roshelle).*

However relationship building was an achievement that had taken some time. When the programme was first set up membership and attendance fluctuated for the first few months. Individuals commented on how they felt fragmented, did not know each and theory found it difficult to work together as a team. In order to help build relationships and trust within the group a team building adventure day was held. It was evident that transformation took place on that day. The group began to form friendships and develop team-working skills.

> *"That day was interesting if we look at you now together and you look at everybody then in their small little friendship groups" (John.)*

"I was too scared to speak to 'Riana" (Charlotte).

"The adventure day, we all bonded" (Roshelle).

"I have drawn the adventure day… and put words around it…wicked, I got to know everyone on that day. It was great fun and it was like the best day I think we have had as a group" (Charlotte) (explaining drawings done in the focus group activity.)

4.3 Inclusion: Feeling important and having a 'voice'

Many participants stated that belonging to ARROW made them feel important. Feeling important arose from a collection of aspects. Including being involved in a project where they felt listened to and valued along with feeling they belonged to a prestigious community project. Providing a safe space where young people can explore issues and be given a voice set the backdrop for participation in the programme. This involved bringing young people together from a variety of backgrounds, to engage in dialogue and have a part to play in initiating and carrying out resolution strategies in their communities. Numerous comments reflected the importance of having safe spaces where the young people could feel respected and listened to.

"I felt important…I feel really involved and integral" (Riana).

"I find myself really interested in everyone and everything they say. I usually don't like to speak out in front of people. Here I know I'll get respect and I will be listened to when I say my thoughts" (Abi).

"At ARROW it is like a safe place where you can be yourself and say things that you would not normally be able to say because people here will understand you" (Hazel).

"It's just getting to know other people that share your opinions as well and being part of something bigger" (Sarah).

The focus on creating safe space for critical dialogue formed the under pinning philosophy for the ARROW programme. However, participants' comments potentially draw attention to lack a lack of opportunity for 'safe spaces' where young voices can be heard, opinions shared, difficult issues discussed and debated safely.

4.4 The role of the arts in transforming boundaries

The arts were found to make dealing with difficult issues more fun. Young people were able to explore serious issues in a playful way that was non-threatening and thereby enabled individuals to transcend inhibitions. In youth group sessions, some participants were initially separated through fears, inhibitions, stereotypes and misunderstandings about one another's social or cultural heritage (see section 4.7), whilst others stated that

they had felt scared of other group member at first yet now felt able to speak out in from of other people (see section 4.3). However, young people were able to connect through the arts. The arts approach provided a non-verbal medium for engagement.

> *"It doesn't put the audience on the spot because they can just sit there and watch and think in their own minds, and with the forum theatre instead of just standing there saying what do you guys think, rather say how would you like to have changed what you just saw" (Roshelle).*

Taking part in activities such as drama, dance and voice workshops broke down barriers and personal inhibitions and led to dialogue across those boundaries. Liebmann (1999) makes links between internal and external conflicts, offering that the arts help people to resolve both.

> *The arts can help "develop strategies for handling external conflicts, this is intimately connected with internal conflict…much of the work undertaken is to resolve inner conflicts and thus influence external events" (Liebmann 1999:5)*

Young people described various ways in which the arts helped with conflict transformation. The arts were found to help people think creatively and provide a medium for getting people's attention and engaging them in non-threatening ways that promote critical thinking about conflict issues.

> *"Drama is really good at engaging everyone" (Riana).*

> *"It helps you think outside the box about what's going on outside, not just in your little box but in the entire world" (Charlotte).*

> *"[The arts are] things that they are gonna actually be interested in, not just people standing up at the front of an assembly talking to them about how they shouldn't be racist" (Roshelle).*

One participant stated that a drama approach provided a way to imagine seeing things from the view of the person whom you are in conflict with.

> *"I think the role play helps. There is nothing that can change your opinion more than being the person that you're against" (Sarah).*

However, whilst the arts had their part to play, the context and environment in which they took place was also found to be influential, as the following section demonstrates.

4.5 The impact of large-scale community events

The ARROW project ran a weekly session that offered conflict resolution workshops. These included sessions and workshops including drama, painting and dance workshops along with discussions, awareness raising and a conflict resolution course.

In addition, the youth group planned and took part in large-scale community events. Events included taking part in a team building adventure day, organising and running a community arts banner project at a local multi-cultural festival (the Respect festival), working on arts and drama projects together during a visit from the Arrow South Africa youth group, the opening of the 'Desmond Tutu' centre; a prestigious promotion event to mark the opening of a centre for conflict transformation. These appeared to have had a big impact on the lives of participants. Reflecting on experiences of project involvement generated enthusiasm amongst the group.

> *"Experiences that I remember were the adventure day and Respect festival and meeting the South Africans which was amazing and the conflict training…It was really good for bonding and then when the South Africa group came I felt the whole world was getting the arrow vibe" (Riana).*

> *"The key moment was when I did the Desmond Tutu centre thingy…that was pretty good. I remember it because it is pretty hard to forget to be honest" (young person who represented the ARROW youth group addressing a full lecture theatre of invited people, community workers, university lecturers, politicians, global reps, etc)(Sarah).*

> *"Desmond Tutu centre opening. Everybody all stood up crying. Just that moment meant so much to me. Everyone was joined by the same emotion. This showed me what ARROW really meant to people" (Abi).*

Responses reflected the importance of participation that extended beyond the weekly youth group art and drama actives and workshop sessions, including putting acquired skills and learning into practice.

4.6 Expanding Horizons, widening understanding

Along with making a difference in their communities the global structure of the ARROW programme was a prominent factor in making people feel important to belong both to the programme and to imagine themselves belonging to the wider world.

> *"Being part of a bigger group. It's a worldwide group so I feel like I'm part of something greater than just my little community; it's the world community. It helps me get in touch…we have our small community in Plymouth and there is also the wider community that is the world" (Joe).*

> *"It was just the whole cultural thing it just felt really nice being there that you knew you were part of something that was about to take off (Charlotte).*

> *"It was quite cool walking around in your ARROW T-shirt because people would come to the ARROW stall. Kind of like recognised you in a way …when I was walking around with some of my friends who weren't in ARROW it just kinda felt*

quite good cos I was a part of it" (Speaking about involvement with a community banner project at the Respect Festival) (Sarah).

Interviews with arts practitioners, who were involved with the project, confirmed the importance of the bigger events that brought young people together from different communities. These were said to enable young people to experience new places and new communities outside of their normal lived experiences and context, which in turn promoted wider thinking and a shared vision that incorporated thinking about other people from around the world.

"I like the concept and idea about ARROW I think it's really good and the fact that it has got an international focus is really positive as well. It's a shared vision and shared values with other young people from across the world" (ARROW Practitioner).

"I think it's a good way of people really learning about different cultures and it's quite exciting. It makes you feel part of something bigger. It encourages young people to look outwards and to look at themselves like citizens of the world" (ARROW Practitioner).

"The message and the vision that you are trying to achieve is global. It really kind of harnesses that thing about young people from across the world who have shared purpose…it helps young people to think outside their local area" (ARROW Practitioner).

Creating 'global vision' and building the idea of global interdependence can be seen to create a shift in focus from 'ourselves' in our small-scale communities to how our communities and ourselves fit into the bigger picture. Danesh (2006:55) describes the concept of a 'unity paradigm' that respects the "fundamental oneness and interrelatedness of all humanity".

4.7 Dispelling myths: 'You're just like us'!

The ARROW programme created spaces for critical dialogue around issues of conflict and also provided opportunities for human contact. Lederach discusses building relationships between those living in close proximity engaged in conflict. However the principle can be applied across geographical distance, "reconciliation must envision the future in a way that enhances interdependence…opportunity must be give for people to look forward and envision their shared future (Lederach 1997:27). Creating visions of shared global futures amongst different peoples across the world can impact on shared local relationships between people from different heritage and backgrounds.

When speaking about the impact of meeting the South African ARROW youth group, responses were animated and enthusiastic. Experiences was expressed as being very different to how they had perceived it would be, due to pre held stereotypes and media representations about 'Africans'. Having the opportunity to spend time with each other

taking part in various arts and drama activities had allowed dialogue to take place, barriers to be broken down, stereotypes to be challenged and relationships to be forged. This mirrored Lederach's theory of conflict transformation through relationship building.

> *"It was completely different to how I thought it would be, I thought they would not be able to speak English well, but that was their first language" (Roshelle).*

> *"They were so similar to us but they had a different life to us" (Charlotte).*

> *"They read all the same magazines as us, they knew all the same bands as us, it was like oh!!" (Sarah).*

> *"That day I made lots of friends. Before that day I was like apprehensive because I thought oh I hope we don't have segregation, not me because I would just go and talk to anyone…but it was like so friendly as soon as we were there we were like talking and it was like whoosh! At lunch there was no majority in the groups of the tables because everyone wanted to talk to all the different people and were really interested. I have still actually kept in touch with Ndai to find out what's going on and everything." (Joe).*

Providing opportunities for contact with other communities, including both national and global contact was seen to help break down fear of other cultures. This is especially relevant in areas such as the Southwest and isolated communities where young people have not had opportunities to travel outside of the immediate communities.

One practitioner brought a group of young people from Burnley to work with young people in Plymouth. This involved using the medium of drama to examine issues of conflict relating to misinformation, myths and stereotypes relating to asylum seekers. A number of benefits were expressed that exceeded the conflict transformation purpose, yet also enhanced it.

> *"One of the things that we were very keen to do was get young people out of Burnley seeing other places and meeting other young people from other places. A lot of the young people that we work with just don't go out of the town… It's just a really small town. Your aspirations are really low if you don't go out of a 10 mile radius" (ARROW Practitioner).*

This served a number of purposes, including meeting new people, raising aspirations, broadening horizon, though having new experiences and developing a sense of shared purpose with other groups and communities who had both similar and diverse experiences. This also reflected Friere's (1996) notion of 'conscientisation' whereby group members were able to reconceptualise perceptions that they had previously understood as 'normal' and develop a new understanding of themselves, their communities and other communities around the world.

4.8 Personal Transformation

Along with developing relationships, many members described positive personal developments. Being involved with the programme provided a 'safe space' to explore issues, thoughts and opinions. Hopkins (1999:295) states that "developing self-esteem, learning how to express needs and feelings confidently and working cooperatively are transforming experiences". Such skills are said to be crucial for working to transform conflict, "without such skills people cannot look at conflict in a creative way" (Hopkins 1999:295). ARROW conflict resolution training workshops included techniques such as storytelling, opinion debate lines, role-play and forum theatre - rehearsing difficult situations and practicing for life in a supported group context. Activities with visiting groups included theatre presentations, voice workshops, dance, drama and mural paintings. The degree of positive reporting of personal developments within the group supported claims that such techniques can be used to develop skills including listening, communication, co-operation, understanding others, what it feels to be left out, problem solving and confidence building. This reflected Hopkins idea that people need to develop their own skills of understanding and confidence before engaging effectively in transforming conflict.

> *"I feel like really happy about ARROW now, being involved in it and I think I've become more confident because of it" (Sahara).*

> *"I'm a better listener now" (Riana).*

> *"Started sharing my opinions and more confidence" (Gully).*

> *"Speaking out in confidence" (Tamara)*

> *"My confidence has grown in difficult 'conficty' situations. Makes me happy" (Emma).*

It was evident through observations that significant changes and developments within the group had occurred. Quiet members, who rarely spoke in the early days, now expressed enthusiasm and played more prominent role in debates and activities. During recent sessions and workshops the group showed a more sophisticated understanding of conflict and conflict resolution methods and in particular of anti-racism and global concepts compared to earlier sessions. Although some change in membership may account for a more socially aware group, and these members will have influenced others, data suggested that the programmes dialogical methods had contributed to development, knowledge and understanding of participants.

Satisfaction levels with ARROW were high. Nine out of thirteen participants included an image of a 'happy face' within their pictorial data or the words 'great', 'happy', 'very happy' and 'makes me happy'. The data showed overwhelming positive experiences from being involved with ARROW; group members issued little criticism. However it is important to recognise that the programme is a voluntary youth project. When a

positive environment is created that young people chose to participate in, it may be expected that positive remarks will follow, due to participants having a vested interest in the project. Data did not include interviewing those members who had been involved with the project and left. Nevertheless the fact that a positive environment had been collectively created, where young people felt engaged and optimistic about creating transformation within their communities suggests that ARROW is potentially an effective working model for conflict resolution.

5. Conclusions

The need to address intercultural conflict and build more peaceful integrated communities has become a national concern. A number of policy approaches have arisen to address the issue. Alongside such policy initiatives, community groups have sought ways to transform conflict. This research explored the experiences of young people involved in the Plymouth segment of a global art for conflict transformation programme. The arts were utilised as a language for intercultural conflict resolution and peace building. This involved using the arts to bring individuals and groups together to share stories, challenge stereotypes, promote critical dialogue around issues of conflict and build bridges between diverse community groups. Providing opportunities for relationship building was a core feature within the programme. The data revealed that building relationships was an achievement that had took time and effort. Some participants described initially not trusting one another or fearing each other. However, ultimately participants described each other using terms such as 'friendly', 'easygoing' and 'fantastic people'.

Providing opportunities for actual human contact with people from different contexts was found to be crucial for breaking down barriers and challenging stereotypes. The arts were used as the medium to bring individuals and groups together. Creating an environment where young people felt safe respected and listened to contributed to members feeling important and valued. From this, relationships were forged and a collective desire to become more involved in both local community and global issues developed. Although understanding of certain global issues was initially low, having the opportunity to engage with global communities sparked an interest in wanting to engage more with other communities and wanting to help make a difference. The ongoing process of development is key here. It was evident that members had expanded their knowledge and understanding and began journeys of personal and group development. Heuristic benefits occurred as participants both locally and globally learned from one another's knowledge and experiences, thus breaking down barriers and building a network of local and global friendships.

The perception of being part of a global project contributed to participants feeling important and having a sense of belonging to a movement that was doing something important by helping make changes in their communities. In turn this supported the programmes ability to promote a sense of interdependence, breaking down barriers and stereotypes and building bridges between different members of local and global communities. In addition, large-scale community arts events appeared to have had a

big impact on the lives of participants. These included events where the group came in contact with other community groups both in their local area and from around the world. These events utilized the arts as a tool for engaging young people around issues of intercultural conflict. Whilst the arts as a narrative approach provided a medium for exploring issues of conflict and division in communities, the global aspects of the programme, including human contact with young people from diverse cultures, can be seen as key to participants' engagement and development.

This research is specific to the Plymouth ARROW youth group context. Further study would be needed to understand the effect of its methods in other contexts. However in terms of utilising the arts to raise awareness of issues, develop knowledge and understanding and increase skills the data concludes that the ARROW approach is beneficial in the context studied. This potentially means that providing opportunities for young people to conceptualise their relevance and place in a united global world and build relationships across nations as well as within them is a crucial and fundamental requirement for intercultural conflict resolution. The data suggests that the structures in which the arts approach took place are an important part of the process.

This research concludes that arts approaches to conflict transformation show potential. It is proposed that the arts have unique power to touch the imagination and provide a medium for expressing emotions provoked through conflict, oppression and injustice. The arts can therefore be utilised to 'articulate injustice' and in doing so promote critical dialogue, thereby, encouraging people to think critically and move to new places of understanding about their lives, humanity and the world. Various arts projects exist around the world that seek to address intercultural conflict. However projects are not always documented. A paucity of research evidence exists in this area. This research offers an insight into the potential of such projects. However, further research is necessary to explore in greater depth more specific impacts of the arts and the contexts in which these take place. Further study is also recommended to explore experiences of young people involved in diverse community contexts across the world and to evaluate the use of arts as a medium for conflict resolution in a variety of community contexts.

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