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Faith and peacebuilding in UK community cohesion since 2001

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is faith and peacebuilding in UK community cohesion since 2001. The central feature is a presentation of action research findings set in a collaborative relationship between the researcher and an inter-faith community dialogue project established to address divisive right wing extremism in the fieldwork locality of South Yorkshire.

A decade of New Labour governance has seen community cohesion policy evolve from initial concerns regarding urban unrest to mainstream strategies targeted on violent religious extremism. Dialogue between ethnically diverse and white mono-cultural communities has been seen as the best way of helping people to get on better with each other. However community cohesion policy can be criticised for a significant failure to address issues of inequality and exclusion that are relevant to inter-community tensions.

Since 2001, faith has been an increasingly prominent, albeit ambivalent, presence in UK society. Protagonists, arguing faith should have little or no role in public life, contest bitter disputes with those who perceive that an encroaching tide of secularism is attacking their faith beliefs and identity. Against this background right wing extremists have made astute use of faith identity, embedding their presence in some communities by utilising extremist discourses of Islamophobia that frame Muslims as a threat to the indigenous culture and resources of white communities. However some writers have identified the positive contribution that faith can make to public life. A commitment to social justice and addressing exclusion are examples of the resources faith can bring to addressing societal issues. Peacebuilding methodologies are similarly concerned with such issues. Processes for addressing protracted

social conflict provide a framework within which faith and secular perspectives can cooperate to address these complex issues.

The study's action research found a strong relationship in the field work locality between electoral support of the extreme right wing BNP party and high levels of deprivation in white mono-cultural communities. Anger and resentment arising from industrial conflict and decline, and perceptions of being ignored by mainstream political parties, have been exploited by the BNP, opening a portal to hostile discourses of racism and Islamophobia. However the study's research found that faith and faith values can bring rich and positive resources to inter-faith activity that aims to challenge divisive extremism that targets ethnic minority communities in general and Muslims in particular. In such circumstances it is usual practice to reduce hostile perceptions by arranging programmes of community interaction. However this study found that in communities where this strategy is not feasible, implementation of an intra-community dialogue framework may be effective in reducing hostile prejudice and stereotyping on which extremism feeds.

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THESIS INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION, THE FIELD WORK LOCALITY AND COMMUNITY DIALOGUE PROJECT

This chapter sets out the justification, objectives, central questions and structure of the study. It provides an overview of the fieldwork research locality, and a description of the community dialogue project, within which the study is set and whose management, facilitators and participants were meaningful partners in the action research methodology.

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this thesis is community cohesion in the United Kingdom since 2001. The thesis is grounded in a peacebuilding perspective and has two aims.

- To explore the role of religion in promoting community cohesion
- To examine whether peacebuilding methodology, developed to address protracted social conflict arising from group identity, may be a helpful resource for promoting more peaceful coexistence between communal groups.

The study will address these aims through a literature review germane to the study's focus and aims, followed by discussion of related contemporary social theory. The consequent learning will be applied to an analysis of factors underpinning the rise of right wing extremism in the fieldwork setting of South Yorkshire in the United Kingdom (UK). The study progresses to give a detailed account of action research processes and findings that have resulted from collaboration with an inter-faith community dialogue project (CD project) established to challenge hostile and divisive right wing extremist narratives.

The hostility that concerns the thesis is that which circulates around right wing extremism emanating from the British National Party (BNP). Whilst this group has seen a growth in support across the UK, their progress has been particularly evident in South Yorkshire. It is important to stress that the BNP is not the only source of extremism operating in the research locality. Other right wing groups such as the English Defence League (EDL) are also active antagonists of peaceful coexistence between communities. Furthermore, three of the four bombers responsible for the 2005 London bombings had their homes in adjacent districts. However, whilst these other forms of extremism are equally corrosive for community cohesion, it is the BNP's position that is of most significance. The organisation has completed a successful passage from a history of racism, street disorder and direct violence to assuming an image of respectability, defending national values and Christian identity against the alien 'otherness' of Islam and Muslims. In doing so the BNP has made progress in local authority, parliamentary and European elections and has achieved a level of legitimacy for the extremist hostility of its views.

The background causes and implications of the rise of right wing extremism in the research locality is only part of the landscape explored in this research. Whilst peacebuilding requires an assessment of the causes of hostility, such processes only serve as an essential prelude to interventions that aim to resolve conflict and build peace. The study's action research methodology has given the opportunity to work closely with an organisation which exampled both assessment and intervention processes. Established against a background of inter-faith partnership working to counter the growth of right wing extremism, 'assessment' was evident in the CD project's inception that reflected both knowledge of and empathy with communities in the research locality. Interventions were apparent in processes providing opportunities for people to

engage in calm and reflective dialogue as an alternative to divisive and hostile extremist narratives.

These factors made the CD project's underpinning rationale and operating objectives co-terminus with the aims of this study. The study will explore the extent to which the CD project's inception provided a practical expression of the role of religion and faith values in promoting community cohesion, whilst the development of a process of community-based dialogue both consciously and coincidentally echoed important features of peacebuilding methodologies. In doing so, learning arose with the potential to be transferable to community cohesion and peacebuilding activity in localities beyond the setting of this research.

JUSTIFICATION

The aims of this thesis and the work of the CD project are important because across the UK and in the fieldwork research locality, some neighbourhoods are experiencing a growing antipathy towards people they see as different to themselves - outsiders. A decade of community cohesion policy and debate has seen a strong emphasis on promoting common values and integration with the expectation that communities will become more cohesive. The approach has been characterised by centrally driven policy and government initiatives designed to improve relationships between groups and individuals. The period has been strong on top-down strategy but weak on developing and implementing processes and methods which engage ordinary people, in ways that could help them get on better with each other. As to whether this approach has achieved any great impact on the daily lives of the critical mass of ordinary people, this study and other contemporary research suggest that this is not the case and that the hostility towards outsiders, on which extremism thrives, remains very much alive and well.

Why is it important to give people the chance to explore how they feel as they do towards outsiders? The thesis will discuss the concerns evident in some texts that communities live parallel lives marked by difference and lack of contact in public arenas such as religion, housing, education and recreation and that the divisions created by separateness are ones that extremists can exploit. However this study argues that this is not the whole story. Peacebuilding methodology suggests that a niche of individual and community grievance and resentment related to the extent to which people feel they can meet basic needs is also a necessary prerequisite if extremists are to encourage and nurture hostility towards the 'other'.

The roots of contemporary grievances in the fieldwork area are not hard to identify. In a locality already disabled by long term economic decline and a bitter legacy of industrial conflict, the 2008 global financial crisis saw the behaviour of distant banking entrepreneurs suddenly and directly affect the security of ordinary people. Their resulting anxiety, anger and defensiveness are common reactions to any threat perceived as affecting the capacity of individuals and groups to meet their basic needs. However these acute economic pressures, allied with industrial decay have provided right wing extremists with an opportunity to exploit the resulting discomfort through largely unchallenged narratives that blame alien outsiders for the daily experience of anxiety and insecurity. The 'other' is increasingly stereotyped through disparaging references largely to a homogenised religious identity - that of Muslims. Whilst overt expressions of biological and cultural racism have become increasingly unacceptable, a Western cultural history of Islamophobic discourses has re-emerged as a new form of contemporary racism - an acceptable way of identifying the threat to resources and identity posed by alien outsiders. Yet, as the thesis attempts to illustrate, although individuals and groups exploit religious

identity as a powerful force of exclusionary hostility, religion can also offer deep resources enabling peaceful coexistence. The study will consider the extent to which religious values are important for engaging believers and secularists in exploring and challenging the prejudice and stereotypes that extremists build on.

The thesis aims to contribute to the body of knowledge underpinning peacebuilding and community cohesion in two ways. Firstly, through its pursuit of theoretical and practical research outcomes, the study utilises contemporary social theory, socio-psychological processes of individual and group identity and peacebuilding methodology to identify drivers behind right wing extremism in the research locality. The study will aim to demonstrate that this holistic perspective offers new learning for the future development of policy and strategy. Secondly, the study employs action research methodology to identify, describe and evaluate practical processes that seek to address the influence of extremism in the lives of ordinary people. The processes are innovative and have the potential to contribute new methodology to cohesion and peacebuilding methods. Peacebuilding agencies aiming to resolve conflict and achieve reconciliation in the field of human security may also consider the study's findings useful in taking preventative action when interaction between hostile groups is difficult to achieve. Finally, the study is timely. New research considered in the thesis suggests that some right wing extremists see violent conflict in the UK between groups of different ethnicity as inevitable, and that plans and preparations should be made accordingly. This study's research findings represent a practical and transferrable approach that can lessen the likelihood of such an outcome.

THE ACTION RESEARCH LOCALITY AND THE BNP

The study is focused on ordinary people in the north of England, most of whom live in communities east of the M1 motorway and whose needs and perspectives may have been overlooked in the 21st-century environment of cosmopolitan high modernity. The study has strived to be anchored in <u>their</u> reality - the world from <u>their</u> point of view.

Ordinary People

The term 'ordinary people' is used throughout the thesis and merits some discussion. Despite its use in a spectrum of academic and policy publications, there is limited evidence of any definition of the expression or broader discussion of 'ordinariness'. Thorton et al's (2012) comparative study of social hierarchies in countries across the globe refers to the activities that occur as part of 'everyday life' as a means of providing clarification – by implication it is these diverse daily activities that constitute and define 'ordinariness'. Similarly, Dinham's discussion of faith and social capital (2012) argues that faith and other identity communities reflect much diversity, that this is indicative of 'ordinariness' and that the concept of 'ordinary people' can, in part, be understood through:

> "...ordinary everyday actions and outlooks of all people. It resides in the relationships between people living in communities." (2012:16)

Dinham's focus on relationships is helpful for this study's concept of 'ordinariness' - life is full of dynamic interaction and diversity that thrives beyond the often instrumentalist approach of social theory or policy. However, this researcher utilises an additional concept. In the context of this study 'ordinary people' can also be seen as the critical mass of citizens whose lives exist against a backcloth of uncertain security, limited influence and restricted autonomy. Their experiences contrast with those

of the minority who inhabit the realm of the elite and who, in Bourdieu's (1997) view are advantaged by ready access to the privilege-building resources and influence of cultural, economic and social capital. Whilst 'ordinary people' may engage in an continual round of complex interactions in order to meet their basic needs, they are distinguished from elite groups who can be characterised as enjoying ready access to the levers of discourse control (although contemporary access to social networking systems makes this less exclusive) and state influence.

The Research Locality

Figure 1 below shows the research locality of South Yorkshire in the context of the UK, England and Wales and the geographical relationship of the four localities to each other.

Figure 1. The Research Locality

i United Kingdom
Source. Met Office. UK n.d.

ii Location of South Yorkshire in England and Wales
Source. Freebase. n.d

iii South Yorkshire
Geographical relationship of the four locality towns
Source. Sheffield City Council. n.d.
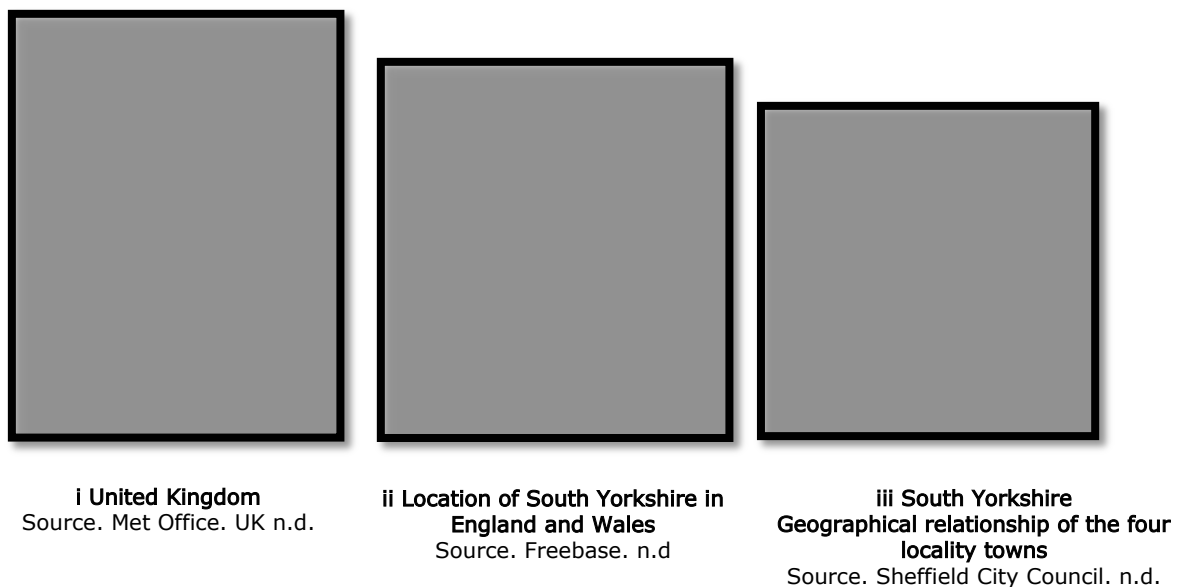
These three maps have been removed due to third party copyright. The unabridged version of the thesis can be viewed at the lanchester Library, Coventry University

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The South Yorkshire districts of Sheffield, Doncaster, Barnsley and Rotherham include communities scoring significantly above the UK national average in economic, social and health deprivation. With the exception of Sheffield, cultural and ethnic diversity is also well below the national average with long established, white mono-cultural working class communities typical of the area. Some research participants referred to their locality as ones with families living for many generations in the same community, with limited geographical mobility and little chance to encounter cultural or ethnic difference. In many ways the contrast with other urban conurbations in parts of the UK, where ethnic diversity is a constant feature of everyday life, is striking.

The once familiar landscapes, traditional cultures and way of life of many people in villages and towns across South Yorkshire have been profoundly affected by industrial decline and change. Some communities are marooned in surroundings dominated by the detritus and waste of mining or steel production. The research found that associated with the loss and absence of focus arising from change, are strong feelings of hurt and bitter resentment that centred on the strike by miners during 1984-1985. The hostile aftermath of this conflict continues to divide communities and over 25 years later had, as the research discovered, entered the cultural lives of some children and young people.

The decline of traditional heavy manufacturing and mining was accompanied by the decay of institutions such as trade unions and working men's clubs. These organisations traditionally linked white working class communities and the Labour Party and their decline has further disturbed communities. In the past, these organisations would have been able to provide a counter narrative to right wing extremism. In the present day, feelings of unwarranted change, powerlessness, loss

and bitterness and experience of class prejudice, which surfaced regularly during the research, struggle to find expression.

Articulating these feelings of resentment and of being ignored, allied with significant experience of deprivation, have been an effective strategy of right wing extremists. They point to neglect by mainstream political parties as an explanation for why communities are deprived of resources that have flowed instead to the 'other'. Extremist narratives of the BNP provide an explanation of what has gone wrong. They frame communities as ignored by the elite, defenceless in the face of competitive immigration and threatened by the influence of multiculturalism and Islam. The BNP state that in standing up for neglected communities and advocating a return to traditional British rather than multicultural values they are articulating a view felt by many. However, viewed through the lens of protracted social conflict theory (Azar 1990) the BNP can be seen to draw hostile boundaries around communal identity groups, framing malevolent out-groups as challenging disadvantaged white indigenous in-groups. Their aim is to create spiralling tensions between communities.

Industrial action that flared in the research locality during January 2009 exampled many of the pressures experienced in the locality and the BNP's opportunistic response. Employment opportunities, that some communities had thought rightfully theirs, vanished as an international energy conglomerate, unseen and without warning, commissioned multinational subcontractors to have work undertaken by non-UK nationals. Overnight, the 'other' was on the threshold, taking resources that individuals and communities saw as essential for meeting basic needs and future expectations. (Gillian and Sparrow 2009. Daily Mail 2009) Neighbourhoods in the research locality were already reeling from the effects of a globalised financial crisis. Now they suddenly faced a

new challenge. Globalised capitalism had made a further abrupt and unwelcome intrusion into their communities.[1]

The BNP with a history of racist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic cultural violence but now espousing a modernised post-millennial discourse of Islamophobia and protecting the white working class, was soon involved in the ensuing protests. Despite opposition to their presence from workers, politicians and trade unionists, the BNP was active both on picket lines and in operating a web site coordinating industrial action (Searchlight 2009). Although mainstream politicians echoed the BNP mantra of 'British jobs for British workers', they were powerless to act against migrants whose arrival was justified by EU employment regulation, but whose presence was perceived as a threat. Whilst the establishment appeared disconnected from the concerns of communities, the BNP were opportunistically articulating the anger, disappointment and betrayal felt by some. Building on a growing powerbase in the research locality, and preparing for the European elections to be held in the coming June, the BNP positioned itself so as to open a portal to an underpinning ideology of national values and resources being threatened by multiculturalism, ethnic diversity and Islam.

In a society commonly perceived as secular, the focus of BNP ideology on the threat posed by a religion was effective. It enabled the group to develop a counter narrative: standing up for Christianity and white Christians. Whilst in all likelihood the BNP anticipated this approach as having a broad appeal, the strategy was specifically useful in providing an opening for developing support for their views amongst church congregations and was of concern to the embryonic CD project.

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[1] The recently abolished Yorkshire Forward Development Agency estimated that in 2009 the Yorkshire and Humber economy shrank by 5.4% as a direct result of the 2008 banking crisis with employment contracting by 2.8% (Yorkshire Forward. 2010).

THE COMMUNITY DIALOGUE PROJECT

Established in March 2010, the CD project's inception and implementation built on a stand taken by local faith leaders during election periods in opposing the extreme right. Employing both public and charitable funding, the project describes its vision as:

"…a resilient, interconnected society which embraces diversity as normal, positive and enriching, and in which we share a real commitment to justice and equality for all." (CD project documentation 2010)

The project's key outcome is to work in such ways that:

"Communities in South Yorkshire are more resilient to racist politics and divisive ideologies and feel empowered to challenge racism and faith-based prejudice in themselves and others." (CD project documentation 2010)

The project was developed and managed by people with a spectrum of religious belief and led by a management committee with responsibility to oversee achievement of three core activities described in CD project documentation as follows.

1. The provision of 'safe spaces' dialogue sessions within which difficult conversations around the causes and implications of racism and faith-based prejudice could take place.
2. Supporting and encouraging interaction between groups and communities that do not ordinarily mix.
3. Developing a communications strategy to counter the effect of divisive reporting in the media.

The first activity of 'safe spaces' involves dialogue facilitators meeting with groups from across the locality prepared to become engaged with

CD project key outcomes. It is this 'safe spaces' activity that is the central feature of this study.

At commencement, the CD project prioritised working with Christian congregations, reflecting a concern that BNP support was growing within such groups. All dialogue groups were set in communities where the BNP had made political headway or where they were believed to be looking to increase their support.

From the outset, the CD project utilised a concept of non-judgmental dialogue in its work with communities that is explored in detail in chapter 6 of the thesis. The CD project's approach was not to deny the importance of mainstream anti-racist and anti-prejudice strategies and campaigns. Rather it reflected a belief amongst project founders that whilst campaigning strategies to challenge racism, usually enacted during election periods, may temper the expression of hostile behaviours and rhetoric and is rightly targeted on extremist groups such as the BNP, such strategies do not reach far into the lives of individuals and their communities. Indeed a significant factor behind establishing the CD project was the view that people found there was little time to talk about fears and experiences leading to prejudice, felt inhibited in doing so, and feared opening themselves up to accusations of racism (Slade 2010). By contrast, groups such as the BNP have had no compunction in encouraging such discussion, albeit from a perspective of fermenting hostility rather than promoting peaceful coexistence.

OPEN LISTENING

The CD project's approach to dialogue should not be misunderstood as one of 'open listening' - the acceptance of any view, no matter how pejorative - and avoiding challenge or disputation. Such an approach would have been well beyond the researcher's personal, ethical and professional boundaries. Similarly, 'open listening' would

have been entirely incongruent with the individual and collective values of CD project management committee members and staff, whose efforts where expressed in a common objective of actively challenging racism, prejudice and divisive discourses. Indeed, it should be argued that true 'opening listening' might be unachievable, if only because of the common duty to take action to protect others if information should arise indicating a threat to wellbeing. Rather, the CD project's approach was predicated on the basis of ensuring empathic interest in a dialogue participant's view, alongside clear strategies to encourage and sustain the development of alternative perspectives when hostility towards outsiders was evident in a dialogue participant's contribution. Chapter 6 explores the detail of how this dialogue strategy was developed and implemented.

THE STUDY'S OBJECTIVES, HYPOTHESIS, KEY QUESTIONS AND STRUCTURE

The thesis is in two parts. Part one provides a detailed investigation of relevant literature and theory. Part two builds on this underpinning framework through a description and analysis of the processes and outcomes of action research that forms the main focus of the thesis. Both parts aim to achieve the following objectives.

Objectives
The Study will:
1. Undertake a review of relevant literature
2. Apply protracted social conflict peacebuilding theory to assessing the causes and implications of tensions within and between communities in the research locality

3. Utilise theoretical positions found in relevant contemporary social theory and social-psychological processes of group identity as analytical tools that help to explain why right wing extremism is developing support in some white mono-cultural communities in South Yorkshire

4. Consider how faith and religious values have been applied in the research locality to address hostile prejudice and stereotypes

5. Report and analyse the outcomes of research describing a framework for facilitated intra-community dialogue, as an alternative to inter-community interaction, that can challenge the prejudice and stereotypes that feed hostility and extremism.

Hypothesis

The study will explore the following hypothesis.

'The UK is popularly seen as a largely secular society. However for some people and groups, faith identity continues to be an important artefact of cultural and ethnic identity. There is growing evidence that religious identity is being employed by right wing extremists to promote hostility between communities. By contrast, peacebuilding processes can utilise both faith and secular values as an opening for dialogue that can challenge the prejudice on which extremist hostility draws. These processes usually involve contact between different groups. However when interaction between groups is not feasible, dialogue within communities can be utilised as a method of countering extremist belligerence.'

Key Questions

The study's aim, objectives and hypothesis will be addressed through the following key questions.

1. How has community cohesion policy and strategy developed since 2001. What part has religion played? What resources can peacebuilding methods offer community cohesion initiatives?

2. How do relevant contemporary social theories and social-psychological processes of group identity explain intergroup hostility? In the context of this theory, what does the study's action research reveal about the development of group hostility towards outsiders?

3. What socio-economic factors lie behind the growth of BNP support in South Yorkshire? What does an analysis using social-psychological theory of group identity and protracted social conflict methodology reveal about the growth in BNP support?

4. What role did faith and faith values play in challenging hostile prejudice and stereotypes in the action research locality?

5. What is the role of community dialogue in challenging prejudice and stereotypes? How do people become involved? What do dialogue processes look like? What do people think about the experience of taking part?

6. How can community cohesion and peacebuilding activity be evaluated? How do people taking part in dialogue evaluate their participation?

Thesis Structure

Table 1 on the following two pages provides an outline of the study's structure by relating each chapter to more detailed objectives and the thesis key questions.

Table 1. Thesis Chapters, Objectives and Core Questions		
Part One	**Objective**	**Key Questions**
Introduction.	• Provide an overview of the thesis, the research locality and CD project.	• Introduction to fieldwork locality, CD project and right wing extremist BNP group. • Thesis justification, objectives, hypothesis, key questions and chapter structure.
Chapter 1. The action research methodology, and overview of contemporary social theory used in study.	• Describe the action research method that guided detailed aspects of data collection • Give an overview of the purpose of using specific contemporary social theory.	• Description of the fieldwork process for addressing the studies aims and objectives and key questions.
Chapter 2. Literature review. Community Cohesion. Religion in Community Cohesion. Religious and secular peacebuilding.	• Evidence of theoretical research methodology through undertaking a review of relevant literature.	• How has community cohesion policy and strategy developed since 2001? • What part has religion played? • What resources can peacebuilding methods offer community cohesion initiatives?
Chapter 3. Identifying the 'other' - individual and group identity in theory and in the research locality.	• Utilise theoretical positions found in relevant contemporary social theory and social-psychological processes of group identity as analytical tools that help to explain why right wing extremism is developing support in some white mono-cultural communities in S Yorkshire.	• How do relevant social-psychological processes of group identity explain intergroup hostility? • In the context of this theory, what does the study's action research reveal about the development of hostile group identity?

Part Two	Objective	Key Questions
Chapter 4.Community cohesion, right wing extremism and the new racism of Islamophobia in the research locality.	• Apply peacebuilding and social-psychological identity theories alongside quantative and qualitative data to assessing the causes and implications of tensions within and between communities in the research locality.	• What socio-economic factors lie behind the growth of BNP support in South Yorkshire? What does an analysis using social-psychological theory of group identity and protracted social conflict methodology reveal about the growth in BNP support?
Chapter 5. Faith and religion opposing right wing extremism.	• Consider how faith values have been applied in the research locality to address hostile prejudice and stereotypes.	• What role did faith and faith values play in challenging hostile prejudice and stereotypes in the action research locality?
Chapter 6. Intra-community dialogue. What is the role of intra community dialogue in these processes?	• Report the outcome of research describing a framework for facilitated intra-community dialogue, as an alternative to inter-community interaction, that can challenge the prejudice and stereotypes that feed hostility and extremism.	• What is the role of community dialogue in challenging prejudice and stereotypes? How do people become involved in dialogue? What does a framework for carrying out dialogue look like?
Chapter 7. Participant evaluation of dialogue.	• Assess the extent to which participants feel that community dialogue can challenge prejudice and stereotypes. Consider the scope for more extensive evaluation.	• How can community cohesion and peacebuilding activity be evaluated? How do people taking part in dialogue evaluate their participation?
Chapter 8. Conclusion.	• Review the effectiveness of the thesis in addressing central objectives and key questions. Provide recommendations for future action.	• Evaluate the study's effectiveness in addressing these key questions.

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CHAPTER 1

ACTION RESEARCH AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL THEORY

This chapter describes the theory and method employed during the study's action research with the CD project and a justification for the choice of methodology. The chapter concludes with a discussion of contemporary social theory relevant to the thesis key questions and application to the fieldwork action research method.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The research processes described in this chapter received full ethical approval in January 2010. Data collection methods revised on the basis of fieldwork experience have received further approval as necessary. Fieldwork was underpinned by an agreement between the researcher and those responsible for CD project governance. In line with this agreement the CD project is not identified and in accordance with this agreement and ethical approval, all individuals and groups that took part in the research are anonymised.

INTRODUCTION

The CD project is an inter-faith organisation established in 2010 to resist the growing and divisive impact of right wing extremism in South Yorkshire. Developing a collaborative research partnership with the project provided the researcher with opportunities that were critical in addressing two of the study's central research questions. Firstly, exploring the background to the project's inter-faith inception was important in considering the role of faith in community cohesion and the part played by faith values in addressing extremism. Secondly, a key project activity involved providing opportunities for facilitated dialogue in communities

that are vulnerable to right wing extremism. Capturing the learning that emerged from this activity has been critical to addressing a core research task of assessing the role of community dialogue in challenging prejudice and hostility.

COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

From the outset, CD project founders and managers providing governance for the CD project have been central partners and stakeholders in a collaborative relationship with the researcher and the resulting action research processes. The research process was concerned to function at all times on the basis of collaboration and equality in a formal partnership with this group. This group were also key stakeholders because of the potential for the project to derive benefits or negative outcomes as a result of their participation in the research.

A central ingredient of the relationship between the researcher and the CD project, and a key task of the research method, has been to support and refine the project's provision of facilitated dialogue. The ethos of this activity is that of continual learning and improvement, focused on the work of dialogue facilitators who meet on a regular basis in a learning consortium for reflection and critical peer supervision. As a consequence, the CD project facilitators became the second group of partners and stakeholders in the action research methodology.

Participants who were currently, or had been, members of dialogue sessions could contribute much to learning. These dialogue participants constitute a third group of partners and stakeholders. Their views and experiences were captured and fed into the broader research processes, creating a dynamic link between their experiences and project development.

These collaborative relationships gave rise to a rich tapestry of insights into the daily experience and culture of groups within the locality. This provided a wealth of qualitative data that underpins the thesis research findings and reinforced the appropriateness of the choice of action research as the study's central methodology.

Clearly the roots of individual and group perspectives could have been considered through a study and analysis of the impact of media narratives. Indeed this would have been appropriate in communities lacking in social and geographical mobility, with a limited capacity to interact with outsiders and a tendency to depend on media narratives for forming views of minority communities. Alternatively, hostility towards outsiders could have been explored through a comparative study of the strengths and effectiveness of anti-Islamophobic or antiracist campaigning. However neither approach would have been consistent with the ethos of the CD project - that of combining learning and social change. Furthermore, whilst such alternative methodologies may have been useful in understanding the effect of external influences, it would have been less likely to reach, in any useful depth, into the culture of group experiences and beliefs on which extremists feed.

The following section explores the work of several significant action research practitioners that provided guidance for the development of the fieldwork process. A critical aim of these action research processes was to understand more about elements of individual and group culture, capture the learning outcomes of the CD project's attempts to work with these elements and support the development of the project's dialogue framework.

ACTION RESEARCH METHOD

Denscombe's (2010) discussion of good research practice includes an overview of the development of action research that traces the evolution of the process to the late 1940s and the work of researchers who argued for a closer relationship between theory and resolving social problems. Denscombe sees action research as having a practical focus on two objectives.

> "Research should not only be used to gain a better understanding of problems which arise in everyday practice but actually [to] set out to alter things - to do so as part of the research process rather than tag it on as an afterthought which follows the conclusion of the researcher."(2010:126)

He emphasises the good practice imperative of linking research findings, which includes drawing on existing knowledge and expertise, with developing practice in the real world. (2010:127) Gustaven's study of action research in Norwegian settings, where the process has been an important part of achieving organisational change and development, places a similar emphasis on combining theoretical and practical action in achieving change (2008:422).

McNiff and Whitehead (2006:7-10) whose work Denscombe identifies as being significant in the UK, see action research as a process that places the individual at the centre of enquiry. They believe that it is best used as a method when investigating how to improve learning and take social action and is thus less appropriate when the research task is primarily concerned with drawing comparisons or establishing cause and effect relationships. Montero's (2000) discussion of the participatory nature of action research brings an important dimension to McNiff and Whitehead's humanistic perspective. Set in action research processes concerning human rights in Latin America, Montero stresses the

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importance of participants being central to all aspects of the research process, not least because it is their knowledge and experience that forms the basis of research outcome (2000:134). Bowd, Ozerdem and Kassa (2010) are similarly concerned with participative research although with a practical focus on how this can be effective. Set in post-conflict and post-disaster settings, their work endorses the importance of "…harnessing the non-academic, local knowledge of the people themselves in order to act upon and solve local problems…"(2010:2). They were however concerned to stress that this is not necessarily a straightforward process. For example whilst participation aims to "... bridge the power relations that exist between researchers and the researched..."(2010:4) binary models of power are frequently evident in research activity which claims to be participatory. Furthermore, whilst relationships of equality are important between researcher and communities where they are engaged, the authors offer a cautionary note on defining communities. These are never homogenous and, drawing on local knowledge can reveal that some local actors are more vociferous and articulate, although not necessarily typical, of other citizens (2010:6-8). This latter cautionary note is usefully considered in light of this research experience. The exploration of community dialogue in Chapter 6 considers a number of different and contradictory ways in which people and organisations choose to define their community.

More broadly the learning described by these action research writers and practitioners usefully articulates positions that resonate with the study's research approach. The chosen research method was appropriate to the learning ethos of the CD project, particularly the requirement to achieve an immediate relationship between developing knowledge and improved practice in relation to facilitated dialogue. Indeed an important aspect of the researcher's role was to offer a

theoretical dimension to what was, in effect, an experimental project. This proved relevant to developing the CD project's processes.

Throughout the study the researcher aimed to work on the basis of equality and participation with all partners and stakeholders and remained conscious of the crucial value of their knowledge and experience in addressing the study's central questions. Bowd and Ozerdem's caution regarding power relations proved pertinent in ensuring that the rhetoric of participation became a reality of the research experience.

Stringer (1999) describes community based action research as:

"...a collaborative approach to enquiry or investigation that provides people with the means to take systematic action to resolve specific problems." (1999:17)

This position best reflects the researcher's approach to the study's fieldwork. In Stringer's view (1999:1-15) action research is consensual, participatory and encourages people to systematically investigate their problems and issues, formulate accounts of the situation and devise plans to deal with problems in hand. Stringer believes that action research differs from more traditional research approaches that can be seen to reflect an adversarial and authoritarian style, evident in an environment of academic competition. By contrast he suggests action research offers an approach that is neither competitive nor exploitative: rather it sets out to make progress on the basis of positive relationships and interactions, providing a methodology which takes into account "...people's history, culture, interaction, practices, and emotional lives..."(1999:17). These are precisely the areas this study identified as being relevant to developing an understanding of the perspectives of individuals and groups involved in the research.

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Stringer sees action research as one that takes into account the impact of life and activities on those people who are being investigated. In his view this contrasts with:

"Centrally devised and controlled programs and services [which] cannot take into account the multitude of factors that impinge on people's lives. Professional practitioners, despite their training, have only a rudimentary understanding of many subtle social influences..." (1999:20)

This perspective provided some important guidance for the study's fieldwork. Learning about and analysing the work that dialogue facilitators undertook in communities revealed complex networks of identities, relationships, loyalties and experiences. Analysis of facilitator consortium records of dialogue sessions found that exploring hostility towards outsiders disclosed personal experiences of prejudice often based on class identity or unkindness as a result of disability, alongside feelings of resentment and loss brought about by a legacy of industrial decline and sense of exclusion experienced in their community. These factors fed into the development of community dialogue process through the adoption of a non-judgemental and respectful approach to these influences and the way in which they framed perspectives that individual and communities formed of themselves and the outsider. This dynamic link between community influences, dialogue facilitator practice and learning and developing knowledge, exampled the positions of Stringer and other practitioners, and proved significant in identifying methods for talking about prejudice and stereotypes without alienating participants through arousing defensiveness or hostility.

According to Stringer (1999:23) the role of the researcher in action research is to act as a resource person working with grassroots, bottom up stakeholder groups. He sees action researchers enabling participants

to look at problems that confront them and be directly involved in processes to resolve them. Within these processes the role of the researcher "…is to facilitate and support these activities, rather than to determine their direction."(1999:35) This position was evident in the researcher's engagement with the CD project's overall strategic development and in developing a framework for facilitating dialogue. The former was easier for the researcher since the project had a clear vision of direction and purpose. The latter was more complex. The project's high level of engagement with a learning ethos created difficulties for those facilitating dialogue appreciating and being confident of the relevance of learning arising through dialogue facilitation. This position was addressed through the researcher adopting an evidenced based approach to progress through the provision and analysis of transcripts and analysis of facilitator's consortium meetings and workshop consolidation events where facilitator participants identified significant elements of learning. These are discussed in chapter 6 of this thesis.

ACTION RESEARCH PLANNING

Whilst themes of participation, engagement and learning are important components of high-quality action research, the approach must be no less rigorous than other qualitative methods. Planning and project management of fieldwork are vital elements to ensure effective progress. McNiff and Whitehead (2006:79-88)have developed an approach to research planning based on assessing the feasibility of the research project identified in a series of key stages. Table 2 below lists these key research stages in the left hand column alongside an assessment of how each stage corresponds to a concern in the research locality and evidence of the stage in thesis methodology and structure.

TABLE 2. ACTION RESEARCH KEY STAGES.		
Key stage	**Concern in research locality**	**Evidence**
What is the concern?	• Rise of divisive right wing extremism in the research locality.	CD project documentation. Voting trends across the locality & examples of media narratives (chapter 4).Interviews with project founders, managers, facilitators, dialogue participants. (Chapters 5, 6, 7).
Why is it a concern?	• Communities being encouraged by extremists to articulate hostility towards outsiders. • The danger of progression from cultural to direct violence.	Experiences of dialogue participants identified through interviews and facilitator records (Chapters 5, 6).
What experiences illustrate the concern?	• People don't have the opportunity to talk about racism and faith based prejudice.	Views of project founders and managers. Participant interviews and facilitator records. (Chapters 5, 6, 7).
What can / will be done about it?	• Provide communities with opportunities to take part in non-judgemental facilitated dialogue.	Presentation of findings and the process of community dialogue (Chapter 6).
How will learning influences be evident?	• Dialogue processes undergoing continual change on the basis of practical experience.	Transcripts and analysis of facilitator consortium meetings. CD project dialogue framework undergoing change and improvement (Chapter 6).

TABLE 2. ACTION RESEARCH KEY STAGES (CONTINUED)		
Key stage	**Concern in research locality**	**Evidence**
Will conclusions be reasonably fair and accurate: will there be any use of critical friends?	• Provide opportunities for committee, facilitators and participants to comment on transcripts. • Draft conclusions discussed with committee and facilitators. • Provide exposure to peer review in journals and critical evaluation at national and international conferences.	Formative and summative conclusions reported to CD Project Management Committee (Chapters 5,6,7) Thesis bibliography includes reference to conference papers and published articles.
How will the research evidence the use of criteria and standards against which to make judgements?	• Identifying and sharing with the CD project research knowledge against which judgements can be made. • Maintaining compliance with standards of ethics set out in ethical approval and research agreement.	Description of existing theory and research knowledge utilised in project processes and dialogue framework evident in Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7. Demonstrating compliance with ethical approval and research agreement throughout the thesis.
How will concerns, ideas and practice be modified in the light of evaluations?	• CD project management and facilitator responses to regular research verbal and written reports.	Chapter 6 includes a description of how the dialogue model was developed and modified through collaboration.

Slade 2012 adapted from Mcniff and Whitehead

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Using this staged approach brought an important perspective, not dissimilar to project management, which provided rigour to the action research process. The next section provides an overview of how the action research method was applied.

APPLYING THE ACTION RESEARCH METHOD

Building on previous experience of participative research and project management the researcher's first task was to develop a research agreement with the CD project. This was consistent with project objectives and with the study's key research questions. The agreement defined the researcher's role and responsibilities in relation to the CD project and the project's responsibilities in relation to the researcher. The agreement also outlined the collaborative working arrangements between the CD project and the dialogue facilitators, who included project staff and managers as well as externally commissioned practitioners and the researcher. This collaboration provided a unique opportunity to study the values underpinning the inception of the project and the development of community-based dialogue in ways that addressed the aims and purpose of this thesis. A pivotal element of collaboration was a cooperative enquiry group.

Heron and Reason (2001) emphasise the importance of cooperative enquiry as a process for conducting action research with, rather than on, people. Reason and McArdle (2008) develop the concept by defining cooperative enquiry groups as:

"...people who share a common concern for developing understanding and practice in a specific personal, professional or social arena... generating ideas, designing and managing the project, drawing conclusions from the experience, and also as co-

subjects, participating in activity which is being researched."
(2008:4)

In line with this advice, the CD project management committee acted as a cooperative enquiry group providing guidance and maintaining an overview of developing action research processes. A sub-group of the management committee played a critical role including reviewing, piloting and recommending improvements to semi-structured interview schedules used as part of data collection arrangements.

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection geared to the action research process focused on five sources.

1. Socio-economic and demographic data.
2. Project documentation.
3. Project founders and management committee members.
4. Facilitators.
5. Dialogue participants.

Table 3 sets out data collection objectives and methods.

TABLE 3 Data Sources, Objectives and Data Collection Method		
Data source	**Data Collection Objective**	**Data collection method**
Socio-economic and demographic quantative data	**To establish fieldwork, regional and national comparisons in relation to :** • Voting trends • Ethnicity • Religious belief • Social class by occupation • Employment and work related benefits • Patterns of migration • Health inequalities and levels of deprivation	**Interrogation of publicly available data from:** • Office of National Statistics • Census 2001 and updated reports • Public Health reports, Primary Care Trust data • Local Authorities • Regional migration support services • Anti-racist campaigning groups • Association of Directors of Public Health • Department for Communities and Local Government
Project documentation	**To identify:** • Background for founding the project • Partners and stakeholders • CD project objectives, work plan and activities • CD project governance arrangements • Project Publicity	**Analysis of project documentation:** • Statement of purpose and project plan • Memorandum of governance, financial planning • Initial and subsequent funding applications • Committee minutes and associated reports

Data source	Data Collection Objective	Data collection method
Project founders and management committee members	**Identifying within the CD project**: • The role of faith in project inception and activity • Perspectives of factors behind the growth of political extremism • Rationale for CD projects method of community dialogue. • Views on inter-faith and other partnership working and relationships with stakeholders • Future project development	• Audio recording of semi-structured interviews. • Analysis of interview transcripts.
Dialogue facilitators	**Identifying facilitator experience and observations regarding**: • Communities where dialogue sessions took place • Process for planning dialogue groups • Principles and skills required to provide a dialogue session • Processes for providing dialogue sessions • Evaluation of CD Project dialogue framework	• Analysis of facilitator records of dialogue sessions. • Audio recording and analysis of consortium meetings. • Workshops to explore and consolidate learning outcomes.
Dialogue participants	**Identifying with participants**: • Their experience of being invited to and taking part in dialogue sessions • Their perspective on relationships within and between their community and other communities • Their views on factors behind the growth of right-wing extremism	• Audio recording and analysis of semi-structured individual and group interviews.

Socio-economic and demographic quantative data

It was important to establish if the CD project's concern about right wing extremism was reflected in voting trends. This was achieved through an analysis of voting patterns in the research locality compared with regional and national data. Furthermore, the study applies the findings of a number of contemporary researchers who relate membership of extreme right wing groups, and voting support by non-members, to a range of factors. These include occupational class, living proximity to districts with high ethnic diversity, fears regarding migration, disillusionment with mainstream parties and concerns about resources such as employment. The researcher used a range of publicly available statistical sources in order to test whether these findings were transferable to the research locality.

Project documentation

CD project documentation provided a rich seam of data that informed the research process and findings. Examination and analysis of project records revealed much about partnership working, the complexities of funding, project governance and the rationale underpinning project activities and work plan.

Interviews with project founders and management committee members

The researcher was co-opted onto the CD project management committee during the planning and delivery of fieldwork that took place from October 2010 - December 2011. This allowed for relationship building and enabled a broad contribution to project development. This arrangement led to agreement to interview individual management committee members. These interviews were conducted using a semi structured interview process and modified Likert scoring scale to provide a range of qualitative and some quantitative data pertaining to the CD project's inception and development and the role of faith and religious

values within project activity. Interviews also focused on the rationale for embarking on what, from an external perspective, appeared to be the counter-intuitive process of intra-community dialogue.

Permission having been received, audio recordings were made of each interview giving approximately 25 hours of data. Each interview was transcribed and forwarded to interviewees for any amendment. Stamped addressed envelopes were provided for the return of the amended transcript and changes were made as necessary. Transcripts were subsequently analysed using a framework of categories and subcategories based around core research questions and project objectives.

Facilitators

The researcher was co-opted into membership of facilitator's consortium meetings. These meetings required facilitators to give written and verbal accounts of their work with specific dialogue groups and enabled them to access peer supervision and take part in reflective learning. Membership provided the researcher with an overview of work with each dialogue group and access to written records. This aspect of the action research employed two data collection methods. Having received written permission, the content of consortium meetings were captured using audio recordings. This method was applied to five consortium meetings, each of which lasted for between three and four hours, giving 20 hours of data. Four of these meetings took place at two monthly intervals during the period July 2010 and April 2011. This aspect of the research concluded with a half-day facilitator's workshop in September 2011 with the objective of consolidating learning that had arisen during the research period. This event was planned and structured so as to assess what had been achieved and to identify opportunities for further development of the dialogue process. The event was co-

facilitated by the researcher and the CD project manager and permission was given to audio record the session resulting in an additional five hours of recorded data.

Audio recordings were transcribed by the researcher and circulated to consortium members for comments and amendment. The researcher then used consortium meetings to discuss these documents so facilitators could identify and comment on key learning outcomes alongside categories and themes that were thought to be of use. The researcher then inculcated these categories and themes into the framework and process described in chapter 6. In order to chart progress, consolidate learning and support continuous development the researcher provided reports to the second and fourth meeting, summarising the current approach and suggesting future areas of development. As a result, dialogue methodology went through continuous revision and improvement, concluding in agreement from facilitators that they were able to commit themselves to the processes described as an accurate and useful reflection of their experience and expertise. One facilitator kindly described their involvement with the research as "…a huge extension of learning." (Slade 2011)

Participants

Identifying participants willing to be interviewed was not easy. The CD project's strict compliance with guarantees of anonymity meant only limited records of contact details were available. However, project networks eventually identified eight participants who were prepared to be interviewed, giving a sample of 9.5per cent of the overall number of participants of community dialogue sessions. Detailed information relevant to the sample is included in chapters 6 and 7.

Participants were interviewed using a semi-structured schedule that had been the subject of collaborative development with the

cooperative enquiry group. Each dialogue participant agreed that an audio recording of the interview could be made. A transcript of each interview was subsequently provided so participants could make any amendments or choose to withdraw from the research if they so wished. This method produced 16 hours of data. No participants withdrew from the research. The interview schedule included both open and closed questions as well as statements attached to a Likert scale regarding a participant's involvement with the project and their perspective on issues relevant to cohesion in their communities.

Developing Links with Existing Research

Denscombe's emphasis on action research methods linking existing research with developing practice was evident in a further aspect of the methodology (2010:127). This involved the researcher providing an overview to the facilitator's dialogue consortium and CD project management committee, of existing theoretical and research knowledge, considered by the researcher to be helpful in guiding and structuring the development of the CD project's dialogue processes. This overview embraced community cohesion strategies and peacebuilding dialogue learning, together with theory surrounding intercommunity contact. Providing an overview of these theoretical and strategic perspectives proved relevant in illustrating connections between the existing body of knowledge and the project's innovative methodology.

APPLYING CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL THEORY WITHIN THE ACTION RESEARCH METHOD

The study has utilised contemporary social theory as a lens through which the feelings, experiences and perspectives of people in the fieldwork locality could be understood. The aim being to achieve their participation, reference their views to theoretical concepts and thereby contribute to the work of the CD project. It was also the lens through

which the research was planned and conducted and the study's findings analysed.

A central aspect of the thesis is why and how groups move from peaceful coexistence towards hostility directed at those perceived as outsiders. This was important since the CD project had found that right wing extremists were encouraging this movement. The dialogue groups, who were the concern of the study, were not passive recipients of such discourses. Rather they were exposed to a range of external influences and internal mechanisms relevant to the extent to which they were receptive to divisive narratives. It was therefore important to understand how these influences and mechanisms operated. The application of contemporary social theory helped in understanding how these influences and mechanisms operated in the research locality. I

The external influences on the studies participants had largely centred on change that was often imposed, and media narratives that, in the absence of direct contact, provided information about outsiders. The researcher applied the following modernist and post-modernist perspectives in considering the role of these external influences.

- Globalisation and its impact on the local economy and group security.
- High modernity with its accompanying features of anxiety, change and discontinuity.
- Meta-identities of class and religion as resources of continuity and stability.
- Post-modernist social constructionism as a concept for understanding the crucial role played by a variety of media platforms in influencing group identity.

Alongside these external influences, internal group mechanisms were critical in understanding the way in which groups perceived outsiders. Building up knowledge of these mechanisms and how they functioned was important for the CD project in developing their dialogue framework. Given the action research method, it was also critical that learning was empathically related to the views of people with whom the CD project was currently, or had previously, worked.

These requirements suggested the relevance of positions such as those held by Gergen (1972). He argues from a social-psychological perspective that social life is continually changing, and that enquiries need to reach beyond the individual and consider the relevance of broader social, economic and political influences. The holistic perspectives that underpin contemporary social–psychological theories of group identity therefore provided the means by which group mechanisms could be explored. This 'real world' context helped the study's understanding of that which gives a human action its meaning.

Accordingly, each participant perspective was correlated with theoretical positions, with a twofold aim. Firstly, to demonstrate the relevance of an aspect of theory in understanding the complexities of group life and secondly, to underpin the validity of the research findings to the CD project's work. This has been achieved in the following way.

- Chapter 3 contains a detailed discussion of theoretical positions, interwoven with the views of research participants that evidence usefulness of theory.
- Chapter 4 applies contemporary social theory together with protracted conflict peacebuilding methodology to an examination of factors driving the progress of right wing extremism in South Yorkshire.

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CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW
COMMUNITY COHESION, FAITH
AND PEACEBUILDING

The thesis literature review provides a discussion of key texts that are central to the study's themes of community cohesion, religion and peace building. The chapter identifies learning relevant to addressing the study's key questions as well as opportunities to contribute to community cohesion knowledge and practice.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter makes a central contribution to addressing one of the study's key questions:

- How has community cohesion policy and strategy developed since 2001? What part has religion played within the development of this policy? What resources can peacebuilding methods offer community cohesion initiatives?

This literature review interprets and synthesises the key texts selected by the researcher and which were considered pertinent to the study's central themes of community cohesion, religion and peacebuilding. The chapter provides a context for the researcher's own work and highlights areas of relative underdevelopment. Evaluation of the source material guided the researcher's consideration of the value of pursuing the research question.

Owing to the nature of the study's chosen methodology, that of action research, elements of the review process were directly influenced by the primary relevance of participant perspectives that emerged in

the study. Thus the literature review was dynamic in nature and has continued throughout the study.

Texts are interrogated so as to explore two themes which arose across every aspect of the study's fieldwork and which, for the researcher, go to the heart of what makes society cohesive. Firstly, why do people fear outsiders, 'people who aren't like us', the 'other'? Secondly, where those fears exist within people what action can be taken to address such feelings being exploited by those who seek to move them towards hostility? Indeed dealing with strategies designed to stir up discontent is a task with which peacebuilding practitioners are familiar. For example, Brown's study of groups involved in ethnic conflict refers to situations where hostility circulating around culture and ethnicity is transformed into violence through, "... the pernicious effects of influential individuals..."(Brown 2001:220) who deliberately draw on individual discontent, antagonistic group histories and a culture of ethnic scapegoating, in order to build a power base (Brown 2001:222). This analysis contributes to an understanding of how the BNP has operated in South Yorkshire.

The chapter will address this task by considering five streams of work as follows.

- Firstly by reviewing the work of Cantle, whose role has been central in developing community cohesion policy in the UK.
- Secondly, through undertaking an analysis of resulting government policy.
- Thirdly by considering the usefulness of social capital theory in addressing the study's central questions and analysing the outcomes of research in the fieldwork locality.
- Fourthly, by utilising the work of Dinham and others, which explores the role of faith in community cohesion and public life.

- Lastly through providing an overview of religious and secular peacebuilding processes that represent potential peacebuilding resources that are relevant to UK community cohesion.

CONCEPTS OF COMMUNITY COHESION, EXTREMISM AND SECULARISM

Before embarking on the chapter's main task it is important to clarify the study's understanding and use of the term 'community cohesion'. Definitions of the concept have a brief but convoluted history and can be seen to reflect the shifting preoccupations of government thinking and policy. The focus of government policy has ranged from - people getting on with each other (Lynch 2001:69-75) through to integration and assimilation (Communities and Local Government. 2008(a):10) and preventing violent extremism (Communities and Local Government 2008(b):12). For the purposes of this thesis Cantle's description of "...people who live in a local area getting together to promote or defend some common local interest" (2001:14) is useful.

However this understanding should also be seen in the light of what is likely to promote such cooperation. Kearns and Forest's (2000) concept of domains of cohesion is important in this respect. They see a cohesive society drawing on common values, a civic culture, social order and social control, social solidarity, reductions in wealth disparities, social networks and attachment to places and identity (2000:2119).

Against this background, cohesion - people getting on with each other - is conceptualised in this study as communities with internal norms and values that promote positive group self-esteem and tolerant external perspectives of outsiders. It is also important that those domains described by Kearns and Forest operate to provide a balance to the divisive and exploitative narratives of extremists. As the study progresses the domains of wealth disparity and the pressure of inequalities, allied

with erosion of common values and social solidarity, will be seen to grow in relevance as a driver of equal importance to culture and ethnicity in generating community cohesion tensions. Such situations provided fertile ground for BNP extremism that undermined tolerance towards outsiders.

For this study, the counterpoint of tolerance is extremism. Although within the UK this phenomenon is manifest in the beliefs and conduct of a spectrum of religious and secular groups, it is the objectives and activity of the BNP, positioned at the extreme right of contemporary UK politics that concerns this thesis. Arguably it could be problematic to describe the BNP as extremist. It has sought to distance itself from a history of violence and conflict associated with its twentieth century National Front antecedence, by claiming the modernised legitimacy of a respectable political party. However, despite this post-millennium presentation, the group's islamophobic, anti-immigrant, anti-Semitic and homophobic narratives, combined with implicit and sometimes-overt acceptance of violence (Eatwell and Goodwin 2010:9-10. Goodwin and Evans 2011:24-27) argues a position at the extreme right wing of the political spectrum. Indeed the BNP can be seen to have more in common with the anti-Islamic street violence of groups such as the EDL – violence being phenomena commonly associated with extremism of all forms - than mainstream, consensual, UK political groupings.

Addressing the impact of extremism is frequently centre-stage in peacebuilding work and this thesis utilises a plurality of religious and secular peacebuilding concepts. Secularism, with its roots in enlightenment rationality, is commonly understood as a separation of religious organisations from the state, with the former belonging to private life and having no place in civil affairs. However such a clear distinction is seldom achieved in contemporary life. Scott-Appleby (2000) argues that resurgence of religion - and from his perspective, its growing

role in peacebuilding work - makes such divisions impossible to achieve, arguing instead for a concept of religious and secular cultural pluralism (2000:3-9). Similarly Taylor, in his introduction to Levey and Modood's examination of Secularism, Religion and Multicultural Citizenship (2009) urges the importance of developing a consensus between faith believers and secularists, and even suggests the enlightenment goals of equality, fraternity and liberty might provide appropriate common ground (2009:xi-xxii). For this researcher, secularism is not perceived as an excluding, anti-religious concept – a view evident in the narratives of some contemporary elite figures explored later in this chapter. From the researcher's peacebuilding standpoint, secularist perspectives can bring diverse resources and values that have capacity to work in partnership with faith groups to meet the pluralistic needs of contemporary societies.

COMMUNITY COHESION IN THE FIELDWORK LOCALITY

In the fieldwork locality, hostility towards outsiders - 'the other' - surfaced regularly in dialogue groups as a less than rational driver of behaviour and crystallised in an interview between the researcher and two members of a church dialogue group when they discussed their views on the causes of hostility towards other groups. One argued that in their community, where there were few chances to meet people from other cultures, people were drawn to BNP membership through a need for scapegoating:

> "...someone to hate." [The contemporary financial pressures meant that] "… the people at the bottom are upset and so we blame 'them'[outsiders]." (Slade 2011)

For this person the causes of racism and prejudice were bound up in a lack of opportunities to meet other people, financial pressures, the whole challenging business of inequality and being part of a poorer white

working class community - and that by implication, racism and prejudice should reduce as affluence increases. However a co-participant argued:

> "...but there are more people with secure jobs generally in [name of the participant's community]. I think there is a focus of feelings on the financial state of the country but it goes deeper than that - the fear factor which can't be justified, cannot be articulated. I pick that up in conversations. This person is talking not from a sort of financial defensiveness or cultural difference but a genuine fear... the stranger...anything that can be strange... By the time people say - 'I don't like them because they're going to take our jobs' - they have actually moved a stage in their prejudice. Because they found a justification for it rather than just - 'they're different'. That's why they are prejudiced against them." (Slade 2011)

The crucial impact of difference identified by this participant is discussed as a theme in a number of community cohesion texts considered in this chapter. In some government policy, difference is a source of tension leading to weakened concepts of citizenship. However for some writers, difference can provide an opportunity to develop common ground through dialogue that will make society more cohesive.

COMMUNITY COHESION POLICY SINCE 2001

Community Cohesion Policy Development and Cantle

The spring and summer of 2001 saw conflict between the BNP and Asian youths erupt on the streets of some towns in the North of England. The disturbances brought vitriolic government condemnation and subsequent harsh judicial penalties targeted particularly at the Asian community - whilst the behaviour of the BNP was dismissed as being typical of extremists - understandable because this is how such people

behave. The events resulted in a review and analysis conducted by the Community Cohesion Independent Review Team led by Cantle (2001). A central feature of his conclusions was the extent to which tensions between communities could be seen as arising through their separateness and difference. The review was particularly concerned by its finding of communities operating parallel lives which:

> "...do not seem to touch at any point, let alone overlap and promote any meaningful interchanges (2001:9)."

His recommendations called for extensive reviews of planning and strategy in each local authority area, focusing especially on education and housing, underpinned by a need to generate improved political and civic leadership.

A review of literature pertaining to the 2001 urban disturbances reveals that the unrest was unsettling for the government (McGhee 2005.Rhodes 2009). Possibly, civil disorder of this type was reminiscent of those which flared in the 1980's when they had been framed as a product of right wing Thatcherism and had no place in the world of New Labour. Whatever the case, the initial focus on race as problematic segued into the aftermath of the September 11th 2001 attacks and the ensuing 'war on terror'. As a result, community cohesion became understood almost from the outset as a concept framed by difference associated with multiculturalism and ethnicity. Against this, the danger was always likely to be that lack of contact and parallel lives arising because of issues such as class or inequalities would become increasingly overlooked. Community cohesion was increasingly seen as resting on the extent to which people of different ethnicity, generally living in more deprived areas, could be 'encouraged' to get on with each other.

Cantle (2008) returned to the recommendations of the 2001 Review Team in a later, penetrating and reflective study of community cohesion policy. This text explored prejudice, identities and future cohesion strategies, urging new perspectives regarding concepts of multiculturalism and cultural difference. Cantle argued that differences in multicultural societies are complex, multi-layered and are:

"...marked by segregated areas and separateness... these may relate to divisions based upon social class but ethnic and faith divisions are separable and even independent."(2008:76)

Cantle maintained that whilst preserving difference can perform an important function in helping to counter real or imagined threats to group identity - considered in chapter 3 - the resulting separation can also mean that groups and communities operate in parallel lives that seldom touch. These parallel lives are marked by layers of difference in language, faith and beliefs, education, leisure, employment, housing, lifestyle and social structure (for example gender, equality, and family roles). Within this separation faith boundaries can play a key role through limiting:

"...incidental and social contact between different groups and in terms of more fundamental beliefs and values."(2008:79)

A central concern of Cantle's approach was to develop strategies to address parallel lives and the extent to which communities have little or no meaningful contact with each other. Cantle argues that an essential step forward lies in assessing layers of difference that exist between communities. The aim should be to:

"...narrow those which perpetuate fundamental areas [of difference] whilst maintaining genuine cultural distinctions with the

aim of developing a common approach to the values that underpin citizenship."(2008:94)

The objective, Cantle suggests, should be neither assimilation nor separate coexistence but some agreement over what are acceptable and unacceptable differences. Building on this, he proposed a programme of dialogue for developing community cohesion which emphasised the importance of cross cultural contact alongside a framework of associational, social and structural contact opportunities which could bring people together (2008:188-233). Cantle anticipated that one of the principal outcomes could prove to be the development of relationships between people of different backgrounds as:

"...a means of countering parallel lives in which there is no contact between different groups and a real ignorance and lack of understanding between them that [can be]... easily exploited by racists and extremists who...spread false information, develop myths and demonise minority communities."(2008:188)

Clearly, for Cantle, the way forward should lie in contact and meaningful dialogue between people and communities in order to prevent the divisive hostility of extremists.

Some commentators have extensively critiqued Cantle's approach. Burnett (2004 and 2008), McGhee (2003), Flint and Robinson (2008), Cooper (2008), Finney and Simpson (2009) have assessed Cantle's earlier analysis and subsequent government policy as failing to fully acknowledge the implications of racism, inequality and wealth disparities as factors behind the disturbances, together with the pathologising of communities as being responsible for isolation that was perceived as negative. For some writers, including this researcher, cohesion strategies have seen 'community' become a conflictual

marker of separateness, with localities 'problematised' and targeted by contradictory 'top-down' policy. Such policy, they suggest, has been underpinned by assumptions about communities that fail to engage empathically with the diversity and relationships that exist between groups.

Commentators have been exercised by a perceived failure in community cohesion texts to acknowledge and address racism as a central factor in the cause of the disturbances. Burnett (2004) is typical of a number of writers in believing that whilst racist provocateurs were dismissed as ' extremists', the criminality of a minority of young Asians was constructed as being typical of a whole community – possibly an example of 'closed' views of Muslims, identified by a Runneymede Trust report as perspectives that underpin Islamophobia. (Runneymede Trust 1997) For Burnett this linking of community and criminality extends to faith in the stereotyping of Muslims and Islam. Burnett (2004:2) goes on to argue that this arises in part from community cohesion being conceptually influenced by Etzioni's (1993) North American model of communitarianism. This concept advocates balancing citizen's rights with delivering responsibilities towards others - an individual derives benefits from societal membership in relation to their contribution - rather than addressing structural inequalities and racist prejudice.

However, whilst a number of critics readily identified problems with Cantle's approach, solutions to the issues preoccupying Cantle were much harder to identify in these narratives. Nor is it accurate for commentators to argue that Cantle's work overlooked the significance of racism. For example his review of the 2001 disturbances found that:

> "Islamophobia...was... identified as a problem in the areas we visited and for some young people was part of their daily experience. They felt they were being socially excluded because

of their faith and this was not being recognised or dealt with."(2001:40)

This finding suggests that at an early stage in the development of community cohesion policy, faith identity and belief were identified by some citizens, and the Review Team, as both a source of hurt and a barrier to participation.

Assessment

Cantle's findings concerning the impact of Islamophobia are consistent with findings in the 1997 Runnymede Trust report which predated the post millennium eruption of violent jihadism in the west and a 2005 Runnymede Trust report on Islamophobia that found a close proximity between anti-Semitism, intolerance based on racial characteristics and the exclusion of and attacks on Muslims (2005:14-29). However, government response to the 2001 UK disturbances inevitably steered community cohesion strategies towards a focus on the multicultural environment of contact and relationships between communities. In doing so, attention was moved away from other pressures that are equally disruptive for community cohesion such as inequality or right wing extremism. Chapter 4 of this study will argue that such pressures, alongside changes in communities reflecting failed economic growth, recession and industrial decline, have proved to be just as significant in the extent to which communities perceive 'the other' with antipathy.

Nonetheless, Cantle's analysis can be seen as touching on the views of both dialogue participants that began this chapter. Lack of opportunity to meet people from other groups can lead to feelings of hostility and antipathy, the development of belligerent stereotypes and the perception that resources are unfairly allocated. The difficulty with Cantle's approach can be seen to lie in the underdevelopment of

methodologies that can narrow separateness and difference and develop the essential bedrock of common values. This is not to say that central and local government were not provided with the required guidance. Indeed the 2001 review report listed 69 recommendations considered essential in order to take forward a comprehensive programme. However it can be argued that in recommending the state takes the lead in "... bringing together and developing, for the first time, race equality and community cohesion strategies..."(2008:100) the scene was set for what became an increasingly top-down approach with insufficient attention being given to the practicalities of engaging communities themselves. Arguably it was appropriate the government should take the lead on such an important issue. However, the attacks of September 11th 2001, the subsequent 'war on terror' and the London bombings of 2005 represented a different community cohesion policy driver. Indeed a review of literature surrounding government community, cohesion strategies reveals a growing and contradictory muddle, significantly at odds with Cantle's work - but with the capacity to inflame fears of difference that one of the study's dialogue participants identified as a root cause of prejudice.

Government and Community Cohesion Policy

Cantle argues that policy surrounding multiculturalism has struggled to address inequality in ways which communities see as being fair and effective. He urges a re-examination of approaches to social policy and civic leadership and emphasises the need for dialogue between citizens to reduce tensions. His advice echoes processes of reconciliation that peacebuilding practitioners would warmly endorse. However, government community cohesion policy has developed in a significantly different direction from Cantle's earlier recommendations. By 2007 the concept had become expressed in a series of strategic objectives that formed part of central government's performance

management of local authorities (Communities and Local Government 2007). The extent to which people got on with each other was assessed through broad equality issues such as participation in civic society and the arts. Measures assessing 'integration' were confined to recording the numbers of legal migrants learning English. In general, the government's approach provided little evidence of action to address social and economic deprivation and inequality.

However, against a backcloth of international and domestic terrorism this approach was soon swamped by a different agenda. By 2007 Cantle's emphasis on dialogue and agreement was subsumed by policies that saw community cohesion expressed in an objective that aimed: "To develop communities that are cohesive, active and resilient to extremism."(2007:7) Earlier conceptual understanding that emphasised the importance of citizens having similar life opportunities, knowing their rights and responsibilities and trusting one another and local institutions to act fairly now encountered a parallel community cohesion discourse. The latter was more instrumentally focused on internal threat than equality and diversity. By July 2008, the government's position was that Muslim communities:

> "…must be at the centre of the response to violent extremism. We need to ensure we foster community cohesion… strong, organised and empowered communities are better equipped to effectively reject the ideology of violent extremism."(Communities and Local Government 2008(b):12)

Contradictions

From 2007, government policy can be seen to have become increasingly contradictory and had mastered a capacity to simultaneously face in opposite directions. 'Tackling Race Inequality: A Statement on Race' states unambiguously:

"We know that Islamophobia is a very significant challenge... fuelled by the false belief that Islam and terrorism is linked." (Communities and Local Government 2010:60)

However, cross- departmental strategies for countering terrorism required local authorities to achieve "Understanding of and engagement with Muslim communities,"(Communities and Local Government 2008 (a):2) as a key action in preventing violent extremism. This suggests that the juxtaposition of faith and violent behaviour, rather than that of violent behaviour and criminality, were linked in the minds of some elements of the establishment and had become homogenised as typical of an entire group rather than violent fringe extremists. It was noteworthy that comparable strategies to monitor other groups and communities where forms of extremism may be based, for example white racist violence, were not similarly pursued.

Given the violence perpetrated by Jihadists and the subsequent 'war on terror' it is possible to see how international and domestic circumstances helped develop a climate that saw these contradictions come about. However it is important to consider other influences that may have been at work. Vultee's (2009) analysis of Islamophobic narratives in Fox media outlets provides a potentially useful insight into how such other influences function. He suggests that parallel discourses are not uncommon in government and media practice. Information can be transmitted in one narrative whilst social context is provided through another. Unsaid suppositions and implications then connect these discourses in ways consistent with dominant group identity, values and interests and how one group stands with another. Applying Vultee's analysis to community cohesion texts sees one discourse emphasise integration that, it is argued by policy makers, will lead to trust and equality. However a parallel narrative contributes to a background

climate of fear and anxiety, heightened by visible security measures warning of the danger lurking within a separate and distinct community.

Beider's (2011) research identifying white working class views of community cohesion identifies a similar policy schism. Themes such as integration, equality, social exclusion and regeneration are contrasted with parallel initiatives that pathologise poor communities as requiring antisocial behaviour orders, stop and search policing, strategies to prevent terrorism and interventions which deal with a problematised white working class culture (2011:20-21). How relevant are these seemingly contradictory policy approaches for addressing those factors identified at the beginning of the millennium as instrumental in making society cohesive? Had the policy developed so far away from its original concept of 'people getting on with each other' as to mean that the causes of the 2001 disturbances had faded into the background?

A study by Becares et al (2011) provides a response, arguing that government policy had indeed strayed significantly from the conceptual roots of community cohesion. Their research, based on 2001 census data and citizenship surveys carried out in 2005 and 2007, explores the relationship between ethnicity - a constant government preoccupation, deprivation - less popular as an issue requiring state action - and perceptions of community cohesion. They found that positive perceptions of cohesion rise as an area's deprivation decreases and conclude that:

> "...it is not neighbourhood ethnic profile, but neighbourhood deprivation, which erodes social cohesion for ethnic minority and white British people in the UK."(2011:2783)

The authors believe that on the basis of their findings, a shift in focus for improving cohesion away from problematizing ethnicity and diversity and towards addressing deprivation is required (2011:2785).

Their conclusions resonate with the earlier work of Cheong et al (2007) who argue that a focus on integration directs attention away from structures and practices that create socio-economic inequalties. They see community cohesion as a:

"...movable feast, aligned with the political and ideological positions of policymakers, practitioners and academics."(2007:43)

However the long term underlying position appears to be one of a common national identity threatened by immigration, levels of diversity and increasingly, religion. Indeed Cheong et al see religion as:

"…the distinguishing characteristic of new immigrants and their position in the inclusive nation envisaged under New Labour policy making...Yet slippages in language within and around the discourse of community cohesion...highlight Asian minorities as a destructive force and a burden to the creation of positive social capital." (2007:32)

It is against this critical analysis of community cohesion development that a key issue as to whether government policy may have made it more or less likely that anxiety around inequality and prejudice, which concern many commentators and which preoccupied the dialogue participants quoted earlier, will be addressed. Chapter 4 explores factors underpinning the progress of the BNP in South Yorkshire in the context of levels of inequality that concern both Becares et al and Cheong et al. However the latter's reference to positive social capital alludes to a prominent sociological theory evident within much

community cohesion writing and of considerable interest to New Labour politicians. Cantle believes that:

> "...social capital is vital. Without a strong base, through which people can develop relationships, whether through associations or as individuals, barriers are unlikely to be broken down and tolerance and mutual trust are unlikely to be built."(2008:200)

The section below considers the relevance of social capital theory and its effectiveness as an analytical tool in addressing the study's key questions and objectives.

SOCIAL CAPITAL THEORY

Whilst conceptualised in its contemporary form by Bourdieu (1997) most utilisation of social capital theory can be seen to reflect the work of American sociologist Putman (1994. 2000. 2002) who traces the concept to early 20th century initiatives by Hanifan (1916) to nurture engagement in community development and democracy. Putman defines social capital as "...the features of social organisation, such as networks, norms and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation and mutual benefit."(1994:39) However in a post-millennium review of the development of the concept Putman (2002) refers to Woolcock and Narayan's (1999) fuller definition.

> "The basic idea of social capital is that a person's family, friends and associates constitute an important asset, one that can be called on in a crisis, enjoyed for its own sake, and leveraged for material gain. What is true for individuals, moreover, also holds for groups. Those communities endowed with a diverse stock of social networks and civic associations are in a stronger position to

confront poverty and vulnerability, resolve disputes, and take advantage of new opportunities."(1999:226)

There is broad agreement amongst those writing about or applying social capital theory that there are three main types of social capital.

- Bonding social capital, characterised by strong bonds or relationships amongst family members or members of the group.
- Bridging social capital, a key feature of which is weaker and less dense internal ties but more 'crosscutting' ties between groups including people of different ethnicity.
- Linking social capital, involving connections between people of different power or social status.

From the beginning of its contemporary development social capital theory appears as an increasingly utilitarian lens through which a range of issues can be understood. For example the concept has been applied to work with young people in the UK; the extent to which social capital may address urban decline in the USA; the role of government in distributing social capital in Europe; a variety of international work including an inventory of social capital development in different countries and the role of social capital in processes of cross-cultural management in New Zealand and Canada (Fahmy 2006. Glaeser and Redlick 2009. Hall 2002. Narayan and Cassidy 2001.Saber 2006). Social capital theory has also been the subject of two extensive reviews undertaken by government offices in the UK (Cabinet Office 2002. Office of National Statistics 2001). The theory of social capital has also made a recent entry into peacebuilding methodology and has been used to explore the role of religion in civic society. It is these two latter areas, together with the concept's use as a framework to understand community cohesion and ethnicity that concerns this study.

Social Capital in Peacebuilding, Religion and Community Cohesion

Bowd's (2011) peacebuilding perspective sees social capital as a useful concept in understanding how social networks function in ways that can lead to or prevent conflict. In his view social capital theory may also be useful in post-conflict reconstruction by helping to ensure that strategies are meaningful and purposeful to those whose needs they aim to reach and that due emphasis is given to developing institutions likely to promote bridging social capital in both the pre-and post-conflict stage. However within the UK, and closer to mainstream community cohesion, the concept has been utilised to develop an understanding of the role of faith in contemporary public life.

Furbey (2008) suggests that exploring faith as social capital finds religious organisations and their members to be associated with both bridging and bonding capital. He concludes that religious groups already contribute substantially to bridging social capital and could do more if misunderstandings, suspicions and other barriers around the role of religion did not challenge them. His view receives some implicit endorsement from the experience of the CD project whose work is central to this study. For the CD project, inter-faith engagement in civic partnership working was critical in project inception, with progress subsequently underpinned by extensive networks within and between faith groups, local governance and other civic society groups.

Baker (2009) develops the concept of social capital and religion further through a discussion of 'religious literacy'. He sees this as a way of understanding how religious groups can be involved in civic society both functionally and at the level of values and vision and suggests this may be achieved by developing religious and spiritual capital as subsets of social capital: religious capital comprises buildings, volunteers and other resources which could be used in a bridging context for the overall

community, with spiritual capital based on the beliefs and purpose of the faith organisation. This is a helpful way of understanding the resources that religious groups can bring to community cohesion. His position also suggests that in order to maintain some essential equilibrium between religiously sustained faith values and public expectations, a harmonious balance between bridging and bonding capital is required.

Furbey and Baker's contributions demonstrate how faith can encounter both barriers and opportunities when called on to contribute to community cohesion. Their discussion also begins to touch on different perspectives regarding the roles played by bridging and bonding capital. For example it is reasonable to suggest that religious groups have high levels of internal bonding capital in order to maintain essential values, yet both pieces of research suggest this does not prevent religious actors and their organisations engaging in fora where bridging capital is paramount. This argues that bonding <u>and</u> bridging capital can run alongside each other without one being detrimentally undermined by the other – indeed bonding social capital is likely to be essential for sustaining in-group harmony, without which there is unlikely to be a great deal of out-group cooperation utilising bridging capital.

However in a discussion of social capital and ethnic diversity Fieldhouse (2008) appears to contradict this position. He argues that:

> "...in terms of improving social cohesion, it is *bridging* capital [researcher's emphasis] that delivers the most benefits... Should specific forms of bonding or exclusivity become a focus for intergroup resentment, then this could potentially weaken bridging capital and become thought of as bad social capital."(2008:23)

Fieldhouse's concern with in-group resentment can be seen as echoing Azar's assessment that such feelings can fester and become a factor in

protracted social conflict (1990:15-16). Azar's position may also help to explain the rigid boundaries – the wariness of outsiders from the next village - that were features of some communities involved in the fieldwork action research. However it does not clarify why such a position might have developed and how it could be addressed, both of which are important concerns of this thesis.

Set against this brief review it appears that social capital theory may be utilised to understand the causes and rebuilding opportunities associated with conflict. It can also be used to illustrate the opportunities for, and barriers inhibiting, the contribution of religion to civic society and may explain why some groups maintain an exclusive demeanour to interacting with outsiders. However when the social capital focus moves to ethnic diversity and trust, the concept appears to be challenged. Fieldhouse's emphasis on bridging capital suggests some difficulties for the broader application of the theory in community cohesion. What happens in circumstances where groups cannot or do not want to engage in bridging activity?

Fieldhouse notes research in America that suggests social capital and trust decline as racial or ethnic diversity increases but concludes that in the UK the relationship between these factors is less clear. Whilst in his view diversity and deprivation are related and critically effect social capital and trust, he does not believe this prevents associational membership and political participation opportunities that create bridging social capital. He suggests that the way forward lies in encouraging the growth of bridging social capital in order to "... create a culture of respect, restore neighbourliness and build good relations."(2008:31) He also believes that societies with high levels of bonding capital, for example the British Asian community, should not be

seen as a threat to cohesion but rather as a group with a solid foundation for building bridging social capital.

Given this position, bonding capital can also be a positive asset for community cohesion – and must presumably work in parallel with bridging capital otherwise in social capital terms there would be no goal for the stimulus to work towards. However, irrespective of whether people are busily bridging or bonding with each other, what arguably counts most for the quality of community cohesion is a generalised sense of whether people get on with each other.

Fieldhouse, amongst other social capital and community cohesion theorists, sees trust as a key concept in establishing an environment where this sense of well-being can flourish. Given this, it is interesting to note research by Freitag and Buhlmann (2009) assessing the role of social capital, social networks and political institutions in generating trust. They find that differences between bridging and bonding do not play any role in creating any generalised sense of trust. Rather, they suggest this is related to individual perspectives, educational attainment and most importantly whether government and political institutions are seen to be fair, transparent, and even-handed. The extent to which social capital networks of relationships have any significant role in day-to-day trust is further challenged, by implication, in Goffman's (1971) discussion of trust in public spaces. In Goffman's view, the requirement for some form of public order arises when strangers come into contact with each other. During these interactions people make judgments about each other, and critically trust that people are who they appear to be. Arguably in such circumstances bridging and bonding networks are either unformed or so amorphous as to be irrelevant, yet public space functions on the basis of confidence and expectation that people will behave in a way that keeps others safe. Misplaced trust, for example when travellers

accepted that the identity roles of the 2005 London bombers was that of ordinary tube and bus passengers, leaves an aftermath of powerfully disruptive and enduring experiences.

The concept is not without harsh appraisal regarding both the role that social capital can play and as a concept for considering complex social issues such as trust and ethnicity. Whilst finite space precludes a comprehensive review of the many critiques contributing to what amounts to a social capital industry, it is important to highlight some perspectives. Portes (1998) suggests that social capital may not be wholly beneficial. Social connections mibight be advantageous for some individuals and groups but can produce detrimental results for others. Family and group support can enhance social control and, through associational networks, lead to financial advantages - although this suggests that if there are some 'winners' there must also be some 'losers'. Furthermore social control networks may also restrict opportunities for and the scope of independent action - as well as opening up obligations and expectations on an individual that might not always be welcomed. Indeed the extent to which people may be 'sandwiched' into unsought obligations raises the possibility that social capital and its associated networks may have both inherent advantages and disadvantages.

Research by Mirowsky and Ross (2009), referred to by Dube et al (2009) considering the impact of social capital on psychological health found that people who make up an individual's social networks can tip the balance between positive and negative social interactions. This can be instrumental to their well-being. Factors such as gender, age and socio-economic status can determine the people who comprise their social networks and consequently the benefits that might arise from these connections. Set against this analysis, social capital can be seen as a way of explaining limited social mobility and maintaining the status

quo. Further evaluation of the detrimental effects of social capital by Dube et al (2009) support such a conclusion through their findings that physical and psychological health is related to educational attainment that is in turn significantly affected by these networks. In the context of this study such a conclusion could mean that phenomena in the fieldwork locality such as childhood poverty may inhibit educational attainment which will in turn affect the type and usefulness of the social network resources that an individual has access to in later life. Indeed chapter 4 of this study considers how levels of poverty and other measures of deprivation are framed by social network resources that constrain social mobility and access to governance - and result in some people living shorter lives than those who enjoy more advantageous social capital resources.

So far, this discussion has veered in the direction of assessing the potential of social capital theory to generate a comprehensive and consistent understanding of societal issues that are relevant to this study. However Adkins (2005), writing from a feminist perspective, problematises social capital theory as a concept that is embedded in the language and ethos of industrial society. She argues that social capital theory and practice is underpinned by a "...gendered capitalist sub text operative..." (2005:206) that ignores the role of women and the family and as a result is a concept with which women should not engage. From a faith perspective, Dinham (2012) argues that social capital, when applied in the context of the role of faith groups, devalues and ignores their diversity and commitment to social justice by instrumentally framing faith communities as a conduit for delivering policy.

The criticisms of Adkins and Dinham reflect the concerns of this researcher in utilising the concept. Firstly, whilst social capital theory provides a descriptive framework for understanding the manifestation of

problematic societal issues, it is less useful as an analytical tool capable of understanding the causes of such concerns. Secondly the concept can be seen as an unwholesome extension of the capacity of capitalism to traffic in resources by including people's relationships and goodwill as commodities with a proxy monetary value that can be traded and accumulated. The concept can also be criticised as being fundamentally exclusionary. An individual with adequate social capital commodity can engage freely in, and profit from, bridging, bonding and linking dynamics. However those with little or no social capital - for example former offenders, people with enduring mental ill health, or unpaid carers, all of whom can be seen to have in common lives where supportive social networks are often completely or largely absent – will need to remain outside the social capital commodities market.

In the round, social capital theory may have suffered in so far as it can be perceived as being something of a 'truism'. People tend to do things for each other if they have good relationships with other members of their group, or in theoretical terms have high levels of social capital bonding. Furthermore, few would argue with the suggestion that society is likely to be more cohesive if people from different groups have contact with <u>and</u> get along with each other, thereby developing networks of bridging social capital. It is also hard to dispute an assertion that capital, linking people with different levels of power, influence and access to economic opportunities, would be positive in reducing community tensions related to inequality. Whilst the concept reflects the language of industrial capitalism and may be flawed because of an inherently exclusionary process, as this study argues, social capital theory is of some help in identifying the extent to which bridging, bonding and linking capital exists in communities. Given this, the concept can be seen as a descriptive tool that helps in understanding the extent to which communities face inwards or outwards. However for the purposes of this

study, understanding the causes and implications of <u>why</u> communities develop inward or outward perspectives and how hostility towards outsiders is generated, requires engagement with other contemporary social theory. Since the majority of dialogue groups with which the CD project were engaged were faith based, it is appropriate to move the review forward by considering key texts that investigate the role of religion in community cohesion.

FAITH IN COMMUNITY COHESION

The dialogue participants, whose views began the chapter, were part of a group whose exploration of prejudice included considering personal encounters with what they perceived as unfairness towards Christians. These experiences can be seen in the context of the longstanding and increasingly topical debate between secular and religious actors surrounding the role of faith in society and the broader setting of religion as a re-emerging global phenomenon. Micklethwaite and Wooldridge's (2009:12-27) analysis of the rise of American evangelism and capitalism argues that:

> "Almost everywhere you look, from the suburbs of Dallas to the slums of San Paulo to the back streets of Bradford, you can see religion returning to public life...however you look at it, faith is more likely to impinge on you than it once did, either because it is part of your life or because it is part of the lives of some of those around you - neighbours, colleagues at work, even your rulers or people trying to topple them."(2009:12)

They argue that western secularists, seeking the separation of religious and public life, are mistaken in seeing religion and modernity as incompatible. Irrespective of a European centred reluctance to accept and understand the role it plays, religion, they suggest, has become

increasingly dominant in the governance of countries, their foreign policy, their conflicts and the democratic choices made by its citizens (2009:253-373). Their analysis provides an international backcloth to exploring the role of faith from the perspective of the UK domestic environment. The latter can seem myopically preoccupied by contested debates involving religious and secular elites that seem a world away from the daily challenges of community cohesion and the concerns of the chapter's dialogue participants.

The Baroness Warsi, a Muslim, a member of the House of Lords and then co-chair of the Conservative party recently led a delegation to Pope Benedict Sixteenth which she described as being more than "...a Valentine's Day love in with Catholic neighbours."(2012:1) In an article for the Daily Telegraph, written to accompany her visit she stressed the importance of Europe being confident and comfortable in its Christianity, arguing that:

> "...to create a more just society, people needed to feel stronger in their religious identities and more confident in their creeds. In practice this means individuals not diluting their faiths and nations not denying their religious heritages."(2012:2)

She assured her readers that following:

> "...a second audience with the Holy Father...I will be giving him my absolute commitment to continue fighting for faith in today's society...I hope it reinforces this extraordinary relationship between the UK and the Holy See."(2012:2)

The Baroness appears to believe that what is needed is more religion. Her views contrast with the position set out by her party leader and Prime Minister David Cameron (2011) during his speech to the Munich Security Conference in which he stated he believes that being

devout was acceptable. However he continued with the view that if believers take action to address grievances then this can lead to radicalism and extremism. Cameron argued that in such circumstances religion (although he only refers to Islam) becomes a threat to cohesion and communal safety (2011:4-7). It seems that rather than the role of governance being to address grievances that fan the flames of extremism it is the individual who needs to dilute those values and identities which may lead them towards radicalisation, extremism and terrorism. Arguably in Cameron's view the issue is not having more religion, rather it is making sure that any religion people hold is of the right sort.

However a further narrative jostles for prominence. Richard Dawkins represents another voice in discourses of the elite. Dawkins (2006) proclaims his position as a religious atheist, in ways that may well personify the militant secularism that concerns Warsi referred to earlier. Dawkins admits that:

> "...I seem somehow to have acquired a reputation for pugnacity towards religion. Colleagues who agree that there is no God, who agree that we do not need religion to be moral...come back at me in gentle puzzlement. Why are you so hostile?"(2006:320)

Dawkins refutes accusations that he is an aggressive atheistic fundamentalist - although his arguments appear to deny any perspective that sees some value in religion. For him it is the very fact that people own and publicly practice religion that reveals a disappointing and irrationally frail aspect of humanity. The real issue for him is that there shouldn't be any religion at all. (2006:14-22)

Rather than these discourses of the elite, dialogue participants quoted earlier would probably be more drawn to Dinham, Furbey and Lowndes (2009) discussion of religion in public life that argues:

"...faith as a public category remains a source of great concern to many for whom religion is 'other'. A perceived threat to rationalism is paralleled by the fear of a public space being swamped by the religiously aggressive and doctrinaire who aspire perhaps to a religiousness that will undermine liberalism, oppress woman and minorities and result in intolerance and unpalatable certainties." (2009:233)

Even as groups of different ethnicity can be seen as outsiders, so faith believers can be seen with equal irrationality as stereotypical 'others'.

The approach of Dinham and colleagues is reminiscent of theory arising from inter community contact. (Allport 1954. Pettigrew 1998) Dinham, Furbey and Lowndes suggest that an important step in breaking this impasse lies in a mutual acceptance of the 'other', which may not be as challenging in reality as might be imagined. They see this as important since the range of competing interests, groups and realms in public life "...creates a demand for shared discourses across specific identities and interest" (2009:233) and that faith and non-faith actors may have more in common with each other than is generally supposed. This theme is important in later chapters of the study which considers how faith and secular perspectives in the research locality have found common cause in challenging right-wing extremism - and how fear of outsiders can be imagined or informed through media narratives alone, rather than founded through personal interaction or even their physical presence.

Like Cantle, Dinham, Furbey and Lowndes raise the familiar community cohesion issue of dialogue as an essential process if people are to find out what the common ground might be. However, whilst the question still remains as to how this is to be meaningfully achieved, starting points do exist that provide a stimulus or setting for dialogue. For example Weller sees inter-faith and multi-faith[2] dialogue as processes that offer opportunities for participation and communication with the potential to "...address the kind of destructive trends which undermine national and community cohesion."(2009:9)

Chapman and Lowndes (2008) review the roles that faith actors can play in local government. They suggest that even if the presence of faith actors can be a challenge for secular urban administrations, opportunities for participation may still arise. Their research suggests that the potential of a faith contribution to public life is evident in a commitment to a local community, a sense of continuity and the capacity to engage with socially excluded sections of the population. However their paper's conclusion is arguably of most significance for the theme of dialogue and participation. They suggest:

> "When councillors and cabinets sit down with Methodists and Mullahs they cannot (for better or worse) avoid a discussion of competing values and visions." (2008:73)

Their position implies the potential of groups with religious and secular membership for reducing the 'otherness' that can fraught relationships in public life. Arguably there is a danger that the sense of 'otherness' that rightly concerns Dinham and others, that were seen in the views of one of the dialogue participants quoted earlier, can become subsumed by other debates. What is important for community cohesion is the extent to

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[2] Weller sees multifaith work as involving a variety of religious groups-and inter-faith activity as being rooted in interactions between religious groups and those who belong to them.

which religious believers and secularists can find ways of reaching beyond the hostility of their perceptions of each other as an out-group.

However there can sometimes seem little chance of religious or secular leaders 'modelling' the required attitude. A recent high court ruling against prayers being a formal agenda item at a meeting of a district council saw its judgement described by Lord Carey (2012) a former Archbishop of Canterbury, as the latest example of growing anti-Christian discrimination. Despite the Church of England's status as the UK's established faith and its formal presence in governance providing opportunities to model tolerant and influential leadership, there appeared to be no attempt to see the court's decision as being anything other than what it was: little more exciting than an interpretation of local government legislation.[3] Furthermore, the possibility of compromise - prayers being held before a committee meeting rather than being an agenda item, was lost in discourses, which framed a judicial decision as an attack on religious identity.

Prioritising this kind of issue centre stage in a discussion concerning the part played by religion in public life, and constructing a narrative around a threat to religious identity, gives the appearance of trivialising debate. Surely, there must have been more important issues involving the role played by faith in UK contemporary society to worry about? This conclusion is supported by scanning other contemporaneous issues likely to have been of greater significance for the perspectives that believers and secularists have of each other. The events that were of such unease for Carey and others took place during the same period as the trial and imprisonment of violent jihadists who came together through faith to

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[3] "The saying of prayers as part of the formal meeting of the council is not lawful under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, and there is no statutory power permitting the practice to continue." Mr Justice Ouseley. High Court. London. 10 February 2012. Available at http/www.daily telegraph.co.uk.

plan the perpetration of violence in public spaces in the UK. At the same time, a campaign orchestrated by the '40 Days for Life' evangelical Christian campaigning group saw women attending appointments at an abortion clinic in the UK being harassed and intimidated by faith believers (Ditum 2012). Arguably the violence or harassment planned or perpetrated by these groups had more significant implications for harsh perspectives of 'otherness', held by religionists and secularists, than the etiquette of local government procedures. Nonetheless it was the latter which grabbed the headlines leading to the Community and Local Government Secretary of State promising an urgent change in legislation (Daily Telegraph 2012). Arguably a perceived attack on Christian identity was worthy of greater political attention than threats to personal safety and psychological well-being that saw no equivalent announcement. If nothing else, the furore of response to dry judicial decision making suggests a prominence of religious identity in the cultural psyche of the nation that might surprise some. Indeed chapter 4 will argue that Christian identity remains an important receptacle of values in the UK and that its defence has proved to be an effective tactic in right wing extremist strategy.

Billings (2009) and Howson (2011) offer contrasting insights into the role of religion in community cohesion that conclude this section. Howson's perspective in liberation theology sees religion as having a central place in the community, rightfully engaged in promoting civil liberties, addressing poverty and inequality, opposing fascism and right wing extremism and acting as a "…visible presence within movements to build a fairer and more just society." (2011:132) Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis give some practical examples of how such sentiments have been brought to life. Billings' review of community cohesion sees religion as having an ambivalent presence, encouraging people to see their neighbour as an enemy or motivating them to work for the good of the

community (2009:95-124). Little and Scott - Appleby (2004) argue from a peacebuilding perspective in similar terms that:

"Religion promotes both intolerance and hatred... tolerance of the strongest type - the willingness to live with, explore and honour difference...[and] the zeal that compels true believers to violate the rights of others and the zeal that compels them to defend those rights at any cost." (2004:2)

The next section considers the common ground reflected in these perspectives, in the extent that religion can be a divisive rallying point in community cohesion or ethnic conflict whilst also acting as a portal to faith based and secular peacebuilding resources.

FAITH, PEACEBUILDING AND COMMUNITY COHESION

Shortly after the attacks on the World Trade Centre Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (2002) wrote that:

"Great responsibility now lies with the world's religious communities. Against all expectations they have emerged in the 21st century as key forces in a global age. In conflict zones throughout the world they are at the cutting edge of confrontation... Religion can be a source of discord. It can also be a form of conflict resolution." (2002:2)

Sacks's view of religion as a potential source of discord is illustrated in Jueregensmeyer's (2001) case studies of members of the world's great religions that consider how personal theological perspectives enable the endorsement of indiscriminate terror and violence. Jueregensmeyer argues that religious militants of all persuasions frequently present the struggle they are embroiled with as a cosmic battle between good and evil. Although their motivation may arise through experiences of exclusion such as destitution, oppression and corruption, their

engagement in a conflict that expresses their understanding of the mind of God is a powerful and exhilarating experience. Jueregensmeyer concludes that individuals and groups typically arrive at such a position through believing that their culture and identity is under attack through the forces of modernity (2001:216-243). Although far removed from the cosmic realm of Jueregensmeyer's combatants, his assessment of the part played by exclusion and the forces of modernity leading to hostility has a resonance with the views of some dialogue participants explored in later chapters of this thesis.

Sacks's view of religion as a potential source of conflict and conflict resolution receives ample endorsement in texts exploring peacebuilding values within the Abrahamic faith traditions. Montville (2001) argues from a Christian peacebuilding perspective that much common ground exists between Abrahamic faiths, with shared perspectives for resolving conflict and achieving reconciliation through dialogue. Writing from a standpoint that sees identity as a source of conflict, Montville believes that peacebuilding and reconciliation requires justice to be seen as an essential ingredient of progress (2001:97-116). Haraka's (2001) position as an Orthodox Christian peacebuilding practitioner argues that justice should be restorative rather than punitive and is a necessary prelude to the forgiveness required in order to achieve reconciliation (2001:51-78). Botcharova's (2001) Christian perspective gives a practical example of peacebuilding between belligerent communities in Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia. She proposes a model of reconciliation based on facilitated interaction between adversarial groups rather than state led initiatives (2001:269-294).

Applying these perspectives to community cohesion in the UK suggests 'justice' might be interpreted as action to address local inequality, disadvantage and exclusion. In addition, established methods

of dialogue developed outside the UK could prove relevant to developing a 'bottom-up' facilitated process that can address any feelings of estrangement from main-stream political groups and the sense, evident in some communities, of change being done to rather than with them.

Clearly the challenges involved in addressing those elements of disadvantage that lead to hostility are intimidating. However the theory and practice of conflict resolution and peacebuilding is remarkable for being able to see opportunities in the direst circumstances. Lederach's (2005) Mennonite perspective argues that the attacks of September 11th and the subsequent 'War on Terror' are 'turning points':

> "...moments pregnant with enormous potential ...to constructively [have an] impact [on] the fundamental well-being of the human community."(2005:29)

For Lederach, capturing opportunities for transformation lies, in his term, through 'moral imagination':

> "...the capacity to imagine something rooted in the challenges of the real world yet capable of giving birth to that which does not yet exist."(2005:29)

His view resonates with the experience of a CD project dialogue facilitator described in chapter 6. This person's position saw external events as having the power to disturb and upset group equilibrium. Whilst this could drive them towards prejudice it is also possible, given an appropriate intervention, that disturbance could lead to transformative and positive outcomes.

Lederach believes that conflict is rooted in past experience that determines how the future is constructed. Reflecting on personal practitioner experience Lederach concludes:

"The past was alive and kept showing up on the doorstep of constructive social change."(2005:138)

He argues that imagination is required to see that future interaction with the 'other' may be different from the narratives that develop from the way in which people and groups understand historical relationships. Lederach's approach to achieving this different vision is expressed in a series of important practice elements. They include a focus on people and their experiences, avoiding quick fix results, reflecting carefully on contradictory voices, and securing ways to create 'spaces of connection', no matter how small, between parties. He urges that practitioners:

"...give it time. Authentic reconciliation will never be packaged and delivered at drive-through windows." (2001:193)

Lederach's approach may not fit comfortably with the top down strategic objectives and performance management processes that have surrounded community cohesion strategy in the UK. However, his perspective of finding ways of engaging with the critical mass of ordinary people does offer some valuable learning for domestic policy. His position reflects much of the learning that arose through the work of the CD project, discussed in chapters 5 and 6, where perspectives in many dialogue groups could be seen to be driven by experience, memory and local culture – and yet given the time and opportunity to reflect, people could consider alternative and less acrimonious perspectives of outsiders.

Scott-Appleby (2000:167-204) is typical of peacebuilding theorists and practitioners who emphasise that dialogue processes need to be driven by an understanding of the communities where such interventions are set. His discussion of Christian peacebuilding initiatives in Northern

Ireland involving people from Catholic and Protestant backgrounds illustrates how 'top-down' reconciliation faltered because of a failure to appreciate and build on grass roots social infrastructures. Recognising this, community activists developed an approach focused on small direct and indirect contact initiatives between communities. Appleby sees their practice as one that encouraged the rejection of historical discourses frequently based on religious and nationalist mythology and the development of alternative inter-community contacts that, whilst not undermining confessional ties, encourage a different religious expression with emphasis on "...forgiveness and reconciliation rather than revenge and the nourishing of grievances."(2000:173)

Appleby's position is important for this study in that it indicates the importance of building a dialogue method that empathises with the perspectives of communities where such activity takes place. However the ethnic complexity of the UK argues that community cohesion initiatives that utilise peacebuilding strategies need to have a broader theological base than Catholic and Protestant – especially when inter-faith work requires practitioners to example mutual respect of different religious identity. Faith-based, peacebuilding writers suggest that identifying common theological ground can be useful in underpinning this respect and in doing so lead to opportunities for inter-faith resources to be utilised.

Montville (2001:113-114) believes the Qur'an reveals core values supporting reconciliation similar to those identified in Christian theology. Indeed themes of justice and forgiveness are prominent Islamic peacebuilding processes and are described in the work of a number of writers. Salmi, Majul and Tanham's (1998) overview of the theological basis of Islamic peacebuilding processes and the extent to which they are embedded in Islamic cultural values is positioned in an

understanding of Islam as "...the religion of peace - a peace that results from submission to the will of God." (1998:22) Other Muslim peacebuilding practitioners including Mousalli (1997) Salem (1997) and Abu-Nimer (2003) highlight the conduct of the Prophet in initiating arbitration and mediation as a just process for avoiding or concluding hostility. These examples provide an important counter narrative to the discourses of violent Jihadists and could help to deconstruct homogenised stereotypical perceptions of Muslims as an alien and hostile 'other' harmful to UK community cohesion.

Abu-Nimer argues Islamic peacebuilding is not exclusionary in relation to other religions or secular positions. He suggests:

"Islamic scriptures can be interpreted to support many different types of peacebuilding activities, both among Muslims and between Muslims and other peoples."(2003:24)

Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana and Abu-Nimer's (2005) research of inter- faith peacebuilding in practice supports Abu-Nimer's view. Their research identifies themes that reveal that Muslim, Christian and other faith-actors have a common focus on advocacy, mediation, arbitration, monitoring and observing, education, transitional justice and inter-faith dialogue. Finally, Perera (2001:169-172) provides a further practical example of this common ground. Reflecting on inter-faith peacebuilding in Sri-Lanka, the author declares:

"...some of us who are in the forefront of peacebuilding realise that we need to transcend our religious differences and forge bonds of solidarity and pool our spiritual and material resources if we are to serve the people who have become victims..." (2001:173)

The range of commonality and practical experience illustrated in this review suggests peacebuilding experience has some capacity to

address the need for dialogue and understanding between groups of the 'other' advocated by Cantle, Dinham and others. Furthermore, peacebuilding processes offer both consistent values and practical resources able to reach into communities beyond the debates that preoccupy the UK - not enough religion: the wrong sort of religion: there should not be any public religion - by providing an underpinning substance to questions exploring the role of faith in supporting a more cohesive society. Sacks's Jewish perspective highlighted the need for religion to assert its presence as a focus for building peaceful coexistence rather than conflict. Christian perspectives emphasise listening to people and helping them imagine a future that is different from the past. Islamic approaches include a focus on mediation and restorative justice. Inter-faith peacebuilding sees advocacy, mediation and dialogue as important. Together, these faith-based approaches bring experience and resources able to steer dialogue in the direction of a realistic possibility rather than a policy or strategy aspiration. Most importantly there is unanimity regarding the importance of moving beyond the 'top down' strategies that aim to make people get on better with each other and that are a significant weakness of community cohesion policy. Rather, by emphasising the importance of working with ordinary people through a 'bottom up' approach, peacebuilding processes are able to fill a significant gap in community cohesion policy. They offer strategists answers to questions regarding the role of faith and provide practitioners with potentially useful methods that support the important task of dialogue.

What type of dialogue method might be useful in a UK setting? The dialogue participants whose concerns opened the chapter would be likely to appreciate a coherent and understandable framework within which their concerns could be addressed. Such a framework can be found in Edward Azar's (1990) model of peacebuilding in protracted

social conflict. His methodology, designed for ethnically diverse environments, where conflicts and tensions focus on ethnic and religious identity, provides a process for dialogue transferable to UK community cohesion work with potential to accommodate a variety of religious and secular perspectives. Just as importantly, the methodology aims to intervene beyond the realm of governance and the elites, engaging with the critical mass of ordinary people.

PEACEBUILDING AND PROTRACTED SOCIAL CONFLICT

Azar's framework for intervening in protracted social conflict was developed from experience in his birth country of Lebanon where faith divisions and complex societal structures, together with influential external linkages are powerful features of everyday life. The potential transferability of his work is argued by the variety of conflict settings and diverse ethnicity where the methodology was tested and developed. Identity based hostility in environments as varied as Lebanon, Sri-Lanka, and the Falklands/Malvinas were explored in a 'workshop' methodology were participants explored the implications of faith and nationalistic identity features to probe the causes of belligerence. (1990:38-103)

Founded in human need theory, Azar sees protracted social conflict as rooted in identity related hostility. Whilst eventual belligerence can be understood through competition for material or commercial advantage, the focus of protracted social conflict:

> "...is religious, cultural and ethnic communal identity, which in turn is dependent upon the satisfaction of basic needs such as those for security, communal recognition and distributive justice."(1990:2)

These factors can combine, leading to prolonged tensions between communal groups that may lie dormant for periods of time and suddenly

erupt into open violence. Azar is careful to distinguish between conflict management - stopping violence from getting worse and conflict resolution - addressing the causes of conflict. (1990:127-128)

Azar's approach (1990:7-17) is predicated on the view that individuals strive to meet basic identity needs individually and collectively through the formation of identity (or communal) groups. Individual grievances that arise from unmet needs, for example through structural inequalities or hostility from outsiders, become raised collectively by groups. Failure to address these grievances provides a niche for lingering resentment and anger that can erupt in protracted social conflict. In Azar's view, societies of diverse ethnicity are particularly vulnerable to such situations because they tend to be dominated by a single or coalition of groups. Azar found that given such factors a 'process dynamics' could develop leading to open violence. This process sees groups or coalitions ignore the needs of minority communal groups resulting in frustration, polarisation and a realisation of power inequalities. This accelerates a group's experience of marginalisation and exclusion. The position may become more complex through the pressure of external links and influences that interfere and exacerbate developing tensions for their own purposes. The result is an intractable situation that can linger in a latent stage before breaking out into open belligerence. Crucially, Azar believed that violent prejudicial behaviour is learnt and can be modified through independently facilitated dialogue and communication (1990:29-37). The processes he developed are underpinned by this conviction.

Resolving protracted social conflict

Azar stresses that these complex situations require careful monitoring of process dynamics and changing circumstances. Intervention requires close preparation and an imperative to work <u>with</u>

hostile parties to create, rather than impose, solutions. The starting point lies in working with the objectives and issues that parties identify as <u>their</u> priorities, rather than objectives defined by outside bodies. It is also important to realise action aimed at "…addressing the social, economic and political conditions that nurture conflict and violence." (1999:128)

In Azar's view, resolution of such situations lies in dialogue facilitated by panels of independent mediators and facilitators who interact with, and where necessary between, hostile groups. It is of critical importance to work with the issues identified as relevant by the parties involved, at a pace appropriate to their needs. The methodology employs twin track simultaneous communication. Track one dialogue involves official contact between parties to the conflict, for example civic and community leaders. Track two dialogue is designed to influence track one interaction dialogue, focussing on non-official, more informal, contacts and deliberately sets out to engage parties in ways that are acceptable to them.

Azar's methodology is not without its critics. Riemann (2002) argues that his approach, whilst opening opportunities for analysing and resolving conflict, could be improved with greater focus on gender and gender politics. Ramsbotham (2005) suggests that Azar's work has been overlooked because it failed (perhaps through his untimely death) to maintain development in line with the requirements of international relations and global concerns. Analysis of his texts also suggests that environmental concerns and the ramifications of a globalised political economy are not strong features. Arguably however, these weaknesses are compensated for by the potential of Azar's methodology to provide a platform for dialogue that is sufficiently flexible to enable a spectrum of issues such as, exclusion, disadvantage, or ethnic hostility to be addressed. Given this, Azar's approach could represent an important

community cohesion resource by offering a structured platform for dialogue on which religious and secular peacebuilders and participants could cooperate.

Azar believed:

"Protracted social conflict entails a vicious cycle of fear and hostile interactions among communal contestants. With the continued stress of conflict, attitudes, cognitive processes and perceptions become set and ossified...meaningful communication between or among conflicting parties dries up, and the ability to satisfy communal acceptance needs is severely diminished." (1990:17)

Whilst this view was formed from experience in settings of far greater violence than is found in the UK, his position does have some resonance with Cantle's assessment of the consequences of separate, parallel lives found in some UK localities. Cantle argues the urgency and importance of communication between groups:

"...before any vacuum is filled by racists and extremists seeking to exploit difference." (2008:100)

Cantle stresses the importance of dialogue as a key process able to address intergroup tensions in UK community cohesion (2008:87). Like Cantle, Azar believed that separateness and difference is associated with negative, hostile and stereotypical perceptions of 'the other' that circulate divisively around faith. He found these feelings could be addressed through processes of facilitated dialogue, filling the kind of vacuum that Cantle identifies as one that extremists can exploit - a view endorsed by this study's fieldwork experience described in chapter's 5, 6 and 7.

In conclusion, Azar's practice appears to have relevance for addressing a gap in community cohesion policy and strategy. The study will test this assertion in two ways. Firstly, through assessing whether protracted social conflict methodology can be a useful analytical framework to explore the causes of tensions within and between communities. This will be examined in chapter 4 of the study that provides an assessment of factors behind the progress of right wing extremism in the fieldwork locality. Secondly, Azar sees understanding group identity processes as critical in addressing the causes of tensions. Chapter's 5 and 6 of the study will discuss fieldwork research outcomes that explore the relevance of this view. The next chapter prepares the ground for this task through a discussion of contemporary social theory and social-psychological processes of identity that shape the way in which individuals and groups see themselves and outsiders.

CHAPTER CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has sought to consider the development of community cohesion policy and strategy since the millennium, the part played by religion, and the extent to which peacebuilding methods offer useful resources for community cohesion.

Community Cohesion Policy and Strategy

The initial focus of post millennium UK community cohesion was a series of strategies and policies designed to help and 'encourage' people from different communities to get on better with each other. These communities tend to be of different ethnicity and culture. Indeed as policy developed those factors, considered to be instrumental in making a society cohesive, became increasingly understood as related to multiculturalism and separateness rather than pressures such as inequality and exclusion. Concepts of community cohesion became confused with government strategies to prevent criminal behaviour such

as violent jihadism. None of this helped the development of clear and coherent policy. Government policy and community cohesion writers have rightly emphasised the importance of dialogue within and between communities. However the development of practical and transferable methodology has failed to keep pace with the growth and changing direction of the policy framework.

Social capital theory has become integrated into the language and conduct of community cohesion social theory. This may reflect the extent to which it is a utilitarian concept. The concept has been criticised for reflecting the language and processes of capitalism and can also be seen as exclusionary. Whilst it is a useful approach for describing <u>how</u> communities behave, for the purposes of this study it is less helpful in understanding <u>why</u> they behave in certain ways.

The Role Played by Religion in Community Cohesion

The role of faith in community cohesion is complex and ambivalent. It has the capacity to rally and focus hostility or act as a driver of reconciliation and dialogue. However, despite the strength of a position embedded in governance and cultural life, the conduct of some religious leaders seems preoccupied with defending faith identity rather than building relationships with secularists. Some community cohesion writers see religion as a much broader marker of difference, evident in the parallel lives of whole communities. Other commentators have focused on the importance of addressing the 'otherness' that arises in relationships between religionists and secularists. Both positions share an understanding of the importance of participation and dialogue in identifying and establishing common ground between individuals and groups who can face each other with hostility. Religious peacebuilders have much experience to draw on that could identify and build ground enabling dialogue to be taken forward.

Peacebuilding and Community Cohesion

Religious and secular peacebuilding methods have experience of processes that can help dialogue to take place and represent important resources for UK community cohesion. UK religious and secular pluralism make equality of involvement between religious and secular perspectives an imperative. Azar's framework for addressing protracted social conflict meets this requirement, and may provide transferrable resources for community cohesion in three ways.

- Firstly, the methodology provides a focus for exploring tensions relevant to communal identity, exclusion and the need for structural reform.
- Secondly, processes for intervening in protracted social conflict suggest a methodology that may be useful in analysing and responding to tensions within and between UK communities.
- Thirdly, an emphasis on facilitated dialogue, provided in ways which suit the needs of particular communal groups, provides an alternative to 'top-down' policy.

Later chapters of this study will explore how 'bottom up' dialogue was identified by the CD project as a process that addressed the needs, concerns and priorities of specific communities. These processes also offered additional insight that could be set beside the work of Dinham and others in exploring the role faith can play in community cohesion.

Finally, the two dialogue participants whose views prefaced this chapter were seeking a deeper understanding of tensions affecting their small community. They might be pleased that frameworks of the sort developed by Azar's could bring people together to reduce the hostility and scapegoating, since this was their prime concern. However, one participant saw fear of outsiders - as the real problem. What happens inside groups that see warm and cooperative in-group relations contrast

with hostile and antipathetic attitudes towards outsiders and out–groups? The dialogue participant pointed to understanding the causes of this fear as an important issue. The next chapter aims to take on this task.

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CHAPTER 3

WHAT MAKES THE OTHER? MODERNITY, GLOBALISATION, AND IDENTITY

The previous chapter saw community cohesion policy struggling to retain coherence in the face of the competing pressures arising from promoting interaction between groups and preventing violent extremism. At the same time religion has had an increasingly ambivalent prominence as a resource for community cohesion and a rallying point for divisive narratives. Peacebuilding resources have the potential to address community cohesion tensions, providing examples of inter-faith and secular cooperation and processes for facilitated dialogue. This chapter draws on contemporary social theory and emerging action research evidence to consider why identity groups develop hostility towards outsiders. It prepares the ground for the next chapter that explores how this hostility has developed in the fieldwork locality.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses theoretical positions and action research evidence that together help to explain why groups develop hostile perspectives towards outsiders. These are relevant to the second of the study's key questions:

- How does relevant contemporary social theory and social-psychological processes of group identity explain intergroup hostility? In the context of this theory, what does the study's action research reveal about the development of hostile group identity?

Group processes that construct hostile perspectives of outsiders have profound consequences for community cohesion. They reach beyond the arid realm of 'rational' policy and governance and interact with a

vibrant and dynamic environment that forms the day-to day lives of individuals and groups.

Action research found contradictions between the expression of positive norms of 'treating people properly' and expressed resentments and fears, focused on the lurking threat that seldom encountered 'outsiders' pose for the present and the future. A crucial issue for the chapter is to consider what tips the balance from one perspective to another and how right wing extremists exploit such a development. This chapter considers the external influences and internal mechanisms that shape individual and group identity with the aim of assessing the origins and significance of these contradictory feelings. They can position people in the direction of coexistence with, or act as drivers of hostility towards outsiders, that extremists can exploit. However, 'top down' community cohesion strategies have failed to sufficiently acknowledge the precipitating factors or implications of this dissonance. This study argues that, based on action research in the fieldwork locality, a new approach is required in order to respond empathically to the influence of external links, internal group histories and contemporary pressures.

A spectrum of contemporary social theory is drawn on to inform an analysis of the influences on group identity and processes that enable groups to operate. The work will draw on contemporary social theories of globalisation, high modernity, and social constructionism to consider external influences on group identity. Internal group mechanisms will be explored through social-psychological theory of group identity. Throughout the chapter these theoretical positions are considered alongside the perspectives of dialogue participants, facilitators and CD project founders and managers. The aim is to create an interlocution between theory and stakeholder perspectives, so that theoretical positions can inform analysis of research participant perspectives and

that the latter can, in turn, help to validate the usefulness of theory. This amalgam of theory and practice reflects the researcher's commitment to achieving evidence based practical and transferrable outcomes. The broad range of issues that surfaced in the action research requires an equally diverse analytical response that is structured around the following three themes.

1. External influences on group identity
2. Internal mechanisms utilised by groups to develop in-group and out-group identity.
3. The movement of groups from coexistence towards hostility directed at out-groups.

Consideration of external influences on group identity will draw on theoretical concepts of modernity and globalisation developed by Giddens (1991) Castells (2000) and Cooper (2008). These authors have in common an emphasis on globalised links and continual change, providing constant exposure to outside anxiety inducing influences that are disconcerting for group identity and stability. These influences are often encountered through the immediacy of media communications. The social constructionist perspectives of Burr (1995) and van Dijk (1998) are utilised to explore the effect of powerful images and narratives that are brought directly into people's homes, giving little time for adjustment and creating feelings of uncertainty, anxiety and threat.

This study sees this 'edge of your seat' environment of apprehension and change as being critical to how groups perform in-group and out-group functions and how these complex mechanisms can enable a group to move in the direction of hostility towards outsiders. This complexity will be explored utilising key social-psychological theory relevant to the development of in-group and out-group perspectives. Stett's (2006) paradigm of the formation of

contemporary identity is employed from an individualistic perspective to understand how people come to perceive others as being similar or dissimilar to themselves, leading them to join or identify with particular groups. The work of Hogg (2006) and Cast and Burke (2002) will be employed to consider how individuals are attracted to group membership in order to preserve self-esteem. The chapter will conclude with Reicher, Haslam and Rath's (2008) paradigm of collective hate that explores how in-group membership can coalesce around hard and fast boundaries of difference leading to tensions and hostility towards out-groups.

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES ON GROUPS: MODERNITY AND GLOBALISATION

For the purposes of this study a broad sociological concept of modernity has been used that signals the view that industrialisation and urbanisation are developments that occurred as part of a longer term process of modernisation. There is general agreement amongst commentators that a defining characteristic of modernity has been a belief that reason and science bring progress and improvement in the human condition. However those espousing post-modern approaches suggest a moving away from this belief as a result of a loss of confidence in reason and science.

The growth of modernity has been marked by an expansion of globalisation. Castells sociological-economist perspective suggests that alongside its more obvious economic, political and social characteristics, a truly globalised economy has an added dimension of connectivity.

> "...the capacity to work as a unit in real-time... on a planetary scale...characterised by relentless expansion provided by information and communication technologies and with the

decisive help of deregulation and liberalisation policies implemented by governments and international institutions."(2000:101)

Cooper explores the impact of this globalised infrastructure in a study of pressures affecting community cohesion and the extent to which people feel safe and secure. In his view, globalised neo-liberal economic policies have had a profoundly threatening impact on communities, through the powerful influence that distant decision-making has on local circumstances. He argues:

"The local and the global have become increasingly tangled, with social well-being at the local level increasingly dependent on decisions made by supranational institutions...and powerful international leaders at the global level." (2008:231)

These theoretical positions are useful in exploring the impact of globalisation as a powerful external influence on communities in the fieldwork locality. Whist global linkages have for some time generated commerce as an essential resource in meeting basic needs, their contemporary function has brought about anxiety and an unsettling juxtaposition of status. Britain's history of trade with the Indian subcontinent once included cutlery and steel manufactured in south Yorkshire. (House of Commons 1813:715) Today, some similar manufacturing, though much reduced in size, continues to have a presence in the research locality, however a globalised context has brought about a different power and decision making base. In 2006, Sheffield steel manufacturer Corus, a successor of British Steel, sold their business to Kolkota based Tata Steel (University of Sheffield:nd). Investment decisions that now originate in the Indian subcontinent bear directly on the capacity of individuals and groups to meet their basic needs. Furthermore, outsiders - people of different ethnicity - have some

significant control over the capacity of communities to live securely, disrupting traditional perspectives of in-group out-group power relationships, and undermining a sense of continuity with the past. This example of change and uncertainty was typical of issues that arose in CD project sessions. The study has found it useful to consider the impact of these unsettling external influences through social theory of high modernity

High Modernity

Giddens (1991) sees modernity as having climaxed in an era of high modernity that forms part of globalised connectivity and is characterised by constant change. He believes:

"To live in the world produced by high modernity has a feeling of riding a juggernaut. It is not just that more or less continuous and profound processes of change occur; rather, change does not consistently conform either to human expectation or to human control."(1991:28)

The individual's interaction with this globalised high modernity is fraught with risk and anxiety. In the contemporary social universe the future offers:

"...an indefinite range of potential causes of action (with attendant risks)....rather than simply implying a switch from an orientation to the past, characteristic of traditional cultures, towards an orientation to the future."(1991:28-29)

Applying Gidden's perspective to an analysis of records of dialogue sessions provides insight into the pressure on groups to maintain some coherent identity in the face of rapid change, range of choices and especially the unfamiliar nature of these choices. This theme was reflected in an exchange between two facilitators during a consortium

meeting, when discussing the milieu of change surrounding a group they had been working with. The facilitators were describing a conversation between group participants, discussing their experience of generational drift and popular youth culture.

> Facilitator. "Grandmothers were talking about their grandsons particularly and how they really identify with the Jamaican culture...one said 'my son plays merry hell with his son, for speaking in this pseudo-Jamaican accent, wearing low-cut trousers listening to rap music all day and his dad says to him you sound bloody ridiculous. You're white British'..." (Slade 2011 a)

This is just one of many references made by study participants of the intrusion of outside influences which provided a bewildering challenge to group equilibrium and traditional culture.

Giddens's view of high modernity, as disconnecting people from a future that is consistent with the past also proved relevant in analysing an effective BNP tactic. Recognising the pressures of change and consequent uncertainty in groups, extremist narratives could appear, to some, as offering a consistency, a clearly defined future that draws on the traditional culture of halcyon days. In the words of one dialogue participant:

> "They [the BNP] offer an image, maybe almost an image of the 1950s, where everything was wonderful...we'll cut out this vandalism and make this place a better place. You know, it's a complete pipedream. It's not going to happen. But people hark back to that."(Slade 2011 b)

Constructing and communicating such an image is not straight forward, if only because it competes with a plethora of other narratives. For the BNP, a unique feature of their presentation was anti-immigrant or

Islamophobic narratives that presented outsiders as a barrier to reviving happier days. The following section utilises a social constructionist perspective to explore their strategy.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM AND THE MEDIA

Social constructionism is set in the broader contemporary theory of postmodernism. Baudrillard (1988) a significant postmodernist theorist, sees the post-millennium world shaped by a 'hyper-reality', a series of endless media images accessible from across the globe, which serve as reality, erode the past, and create an empty, consumer led, contemporary world. This provides a lens through which an important aspect of demography in the fieldwork locality can be approached.

Low ethnic diversity gave limited opportunity for interaction with outsiders. This, in turn, meant that personal experience, allowing judgements for deciding who belongs and who does not belong, was not readily present. Given this, how could groups make decisions about outsiders? Social constructionist perspectives exploring the way in which in-group and out-group identity is constructed suggest media narratives are a crucial influence in shaping beliefs regarding outsiders. Burr (1995) suggests:

> "...we in the West are now living in a post-modern world, a world which can no longer be understood by appeal to one overarching system of knowledge such as religion...developments in technology, in media and mass communication mean that we are now living in a condition where there are available to us many different kinds of knowledge...which we can dip in and out of as we please." (1995:14)

Burrs analysis has proved helpful for this study. Analysis of facilitator's records and consortium meeting discussions found that

participants did indeed draw on the different kinds of knowledge referred to by Burr and were utilised to form views of outsiders. These views were gleaned from a variety of media platforms that described distant and often uncontextualised events, contributing to an atmosphere of change and anxiety. Muslims and Islam were a frequent focus of anxiety and 'otherness'.

Van Dijk's (1998) discussion of media and communications systems in contemporary life argues that knowledge resources of the sort referred to by Burr comprise, in his view, the very building blocks of group identity. Van Dijk sees the role of these systems as constructing in-group membership through a hostile competition for status and resources with outsiders. In-group identity is defined by the interests of the group in the following domains.

"Membership (who belongs to a group, who may be admitted?) Activities (what we do) Goals (why we do this) Values (how should we do this?) Position (where are we? What are our relations to other groups?) and Resources (what do we have? What do we not have?). "(1998:25)

However it is important not to overlook the impact of other cultural forces that operate beside media platforms in deciding on out-groups. For example, one dialogue participant placed the development of hostile perspectives towards outsiders in a familial context. They described a birth right of what amounted to antipathy towards anyone who does not come from their village or immediate neighbourhood -

"Fear of the outsider...people who aren't like us and don't come from round here...it's drummed into you at birth."(Slade 2011 b)

Sometimes the pretext for designating an individual as an 'outsider' appeared to arise from deeply embedded strategies. One dialogue

participant described how they had been involved in a discussion regarding an innocuous practical matter that led to a disagreement. Their antagonist rounded on them, accusing them of being an outsider - of not 'being from round here'. When the participant explained they had lived in the community for over forty years they were met with the riposte - 'there you are then - you're not from round here'. (Slade 2011 c)

Nonetheless, the language used by some participants left little doubt as to the critical role of the media in providing unsettling information about outsiders that some people absorbed and then shared with their group. Sometimes dialogue participant comments were brief:

> "...I read somewhere the other day there will soon be Muslims on the North Yorkshire moors." (Slade 2010 a)
>
> "...I was in [name of a locality town] and was in a lift with someone who was dressed like a terrorist." (Slade 2011 d)

Other comments conveyed a high level of fear. Two dialogue participants described the encounter of another group participant with an individual whom they assumed to be a Muslim. The incident took place in the public space of a department store and involved:

> "...somebody who she thought was like one of these troublemakers that you get on television. The appearance of the person was somebody that frightened her...and she was in a lift and couldn't get out, until she got to the top and then I think he went in the same direction she did, and she had this fear that he was going to molest her or...and it was totally unfounded. But it was a real fear that she had had. And she found it very painful to relate, partly, perhaps, because it was unfounded."(Slade 2011 c)

How does this kind of fear originate? This study suggests that media narratives and the capacity of groups to generate 'otherness', rather than geographical proximity to the other, underpinned this dialogue participants' experience leading to a reaction that could be described, with fairness, as Islamophobic.

Vultee's(2009) analysis of media discourses draws on the work of Said(1978) and van Dijk (1998) to explore how opinion shapers exampled in his research - which focused on Fox News - constructed out-groups through Islamophobic narratives. He found that the News Corporation organisation broadcast messages focused on:

"...the looming threat of Islam to everything the west holds dear... There is armed conflict...but there is also cultural danger..."(2009:623)

This kind of strategy is equally present in other contexts. Zeidan's (2001)review of violent Jihadist Islamic narratives identifies similar processes. His analysis illustrates discourses that present images and information portraying:

"...everything in the West, as well as non-fundamentalist regimes and society in Muslim states, as satanic and evil [enabling] extremists to turn them into legitimate targets for violent attacks."(2001:29)

Both Vultee and Zeidan's work implies that physical proximity between groups is not a prerequisite for tensions. Arguably this is not untypical. For some people in the UK, long-standing anti-German antipathy does not rely on any direct contact with Germans. Perhaps what is different in the contemporary environment is the speed and directness of communication. Murray's (2006) analysis of the role played by media platforms in a globalised context sees news providers construct

and broadcast their framing of events that arrive in' real-time' in homes and offices across the world. He believes that:

> "...the way that many of us experience the world is shifting in sometimes dizzying ways and that a revolution in technologies of interaction has played a central role in this."(2006:6)

This technological revolution is evident in the extent to which right wing extremist groups use internet based processes to communicate directly and rapidly with members and potential supporters. Atton's research (2006) found that these systems provide messages unfiltered by any alternative viewpoint, constrain the development of further views, are delivered to a group with high levels of 'virtual' social capital bonding and utilise a platform that enables instant sharing and development of unchallenged hostility and prejudice.

However mainstream media platforms are also conduits through which identity shaping information can be provided. Petley and Richardson's (2011) analysis of media presentations of Islam in the UK found that:

> "...the most frequent portrayals tend to fit within an orientalist framework. Like most forms of Orientalism, this stresses certain forms of difference and portrays Muslims as a problem or a threat..."(2011:64)

Eagleton's (2009) discussion of religion in contemporary life identifies a similar theme in mainstream media outlets and literature in the UK by linking these types of discourses with racism. These discourses become, in his view a:

> "...super civilised brand of cultural racism [that] is now much in fashion, not least among the literary intelligencia. Since branding others as inferior because of their race is no longer acceptable,

relegating them to the outer darkness because of their religion may serve instead." (2009:95-96)

Eagleton's suggestion that Islamophobia and racism occupy the same space is important for understanding how the BNP have utilised the processes considered in this section to make headway in the fieldwork locality. A critical element of the BNP's progress lies in the extent to which communities in the fieldwork locality turn to readily available media narratives to help them identify and understand outsiders. This was reflected in comments made by a dialogue participant, after an interaction arranged by the CD project with members of a Mosque:

> "I've only met one Muslim before. They're not like you read about in the Daily Mail." (Slade 2010 f)

This section of the chapter has attempted to explore some of the key external influences that shape the way in which groups see outsiders and themselves. Intrusive globalisation and an anxiety producing high modernist environment disrupt continuity and stability with ceaseless change. A third stream of influence involves continually updated media narratives that articulate the threat posed by outsiders. These influences play into a culture of 'otherness'. Not surprisingly, people look for measures of security and continuity. Analysis of facilitator's records and the researcher's interviews with dialogue participants found class and religion were evident as important internal group mechanisms for helping people to achieve some safety and stability in the face of an ever-changing and influential outside world. These mechanisms were expressed in working class sentiments such as 'this is our community: we treat people decently' or in religious values, expressed in generous and practical community activity. In contrast to hostility expressed towards outsiders these are healthy outcomes, suggesting positive experiences of group membership. Indeed, seeking these kinds of experiences is likely to

be significant in why people join groups – since they are unlikely to choose to seek membership of entities that fail to deliver rewarding outcomes. The next section addresses the chapter's second theme that of internal group mechanisms, by considering self-esteem as an important factor underpinning group membership.

INTERNAL GROUP MECHANISMS

Group Membership and Self Esteem

Cast and Burke (2002) believe that the need for positive self-esteem is part of each individual's desire to experience a positive self-evaluation – to feel good about whom they are. They believe that meeting this need is one of the most important parts of the self-concept and a key reason why people join groups. They reiterate a widely held view that raising an individual's self-esteem would benefit both the individual and society.

In their view, developing self-esteem through group membership is achieved through interaction with others that provides regular feedback and reassurance that the way an individual is performing a role, or behaving, is appropriate. The authors refer to this process as 'verification'. They believe people play multiple identity roles reflecting the different positions an individual occupies within a range of societal systems. These systems act as a resource that provides the individual with learning as to how a particular role should be performed. Role verification requires that an individual's performance of an identity role always aims to produce a match between their and the group's understanding of how the role should actually be performed. Such verification, they suggest, results in increased self-esteem through feelings of competency and worth and also confirms the individual's identity within, and acceptance by the group (2002:1043).

Cast and Burke suggest that positive experiences of group membership requires congruence between individual performance and group expectation - an essential nurturing group mechanism, enabling and sustaining people in feeling good about themselves. Conversely, dissonance in this mechanism will deprive a person of access to role verification. The resulting feelings of distress such as anxiety, anger or depression are powerful drivers for the individual to change, so as to realise some kind of harmony (2002:1043). Seen in this light, achieving and maintaining group membership is an essential requirement for individuals to feel good about themselves.

Applying this conclusion to the fieldwork locality suggests relevance to BNP progress. If group membership no longer provides positive self-esteem, perhaps through perceptions of exclusion, then an alternative group that offers acceptance and a consequent improved sense of well-being may be attractive. A succinct glimpse of how this process can work occurred in a dialogue group when members referred to their views about the BNP and the perceived futility of raising any concerns with mainstream organisations. One participant commented:

"What is the point? Nobody listens to us. But the BNP...He's a decent chap and listens to us..."(Slade 2010 a)

This perspective supports the theoretical position referred to, suggesting that a positive and accepting response is likely to lead to good self-esteem. However communities and individuals were by no means passive and empty vessels into which BNP narratives could be poured. Vulnerability to divisive extremism should also be understood through culture surrounding class and religious identity. Whilst both could be seen by dialogue participants as a source of healthy values, fieldwork research also found they provided a setting for hostility and conflict. The miner's strike can be seen as an identity based conflict, with working

class communities assaulted by capitalist elites, leaving an aftermath of bitterness and resentment. For some communities the conflict has had catastrophic consequences for group esteem and internal verification that in the view of some participant's, provided important opportunities for the BNP to make progress.

Class

Marx, whose narrative is fixed around an enduring class struggle, was, in Giddens's opinion (2006:112-117) influential in shaping the modern world and understanding how it functions. Marx believed that capitalism could only survive and thrive through continual expansion, achieved by the economic exploitation of working people and that this exploitation gave rise to societal division and inequalities centred on the working class. This constant expansion rests on three essentials: innovation in technology, new markets and cheap labour.

For people in some dialogue groups in the fieldwork locality, working class identity was a source of stability and continuity. However for others it also led, as Marx predicted, to experiences of inequalities and prejudice. For example a dialogue facilitator, describing an aspect of their work with a group, reported:

"…then we had this whole discussion of how they see themselves, how they have been discriminated against…class discrimination because they lived in [name of locality]. There were some personal experiences that they cited. So they understood discrimination…" (Slade 2011 a)

Lingering under the surface in many discussions were powerful emotions that linked class with the industrial conflict of the miner's strike and wider industrial decline in their community. Several participants saw

a relationship between these factors and extremist support. One participant commented:

> "They won't vote Tory because the Tories are the enemy...I think there is an underlying apathy or anger. One of the things the [BNP] do is stir up anger, feelings of discontent, feelings that things aren't right for whatever reason, whether it's people on benefits or not getting your fair share or being put upon by those in authority." (Slade 2011 e)

Another participant had similarly observed a strategy, although this person linked class and the discontented aftermath of the miner's strike more directly with a BNP objective of inflaming prejudice against outsiders:

> "[Name of locality] is one of the places the BNP has particularly targeted to try to cause worries and try to get their votes there... it's like a lot of the working class communities around here, the former pit villages, where they do target and do propagate this kind of fear...we don't have that much experience of different racial groups. It's very mono ethnic."(Slade 2011 b)

In this participant's view, these experiences were allied with the legacy of a bitter conflict that saw communities divided and defeated with the occupants of mining communities feeling side-lined, angry and discontented. The narrative of one dialogue participant provided a view of how the miners' strike had led to harsh, divisive and enduring perspectives that, from a theoretical perspective, would have obliterated cohesive in-group membership and destroyed mechanisms that helped people to feel good about their group, and by association, themselves. The participant commented that their community was still

divided around those who stayed on strike and those who returned to work:

> Dialogue Participant. "It all stems back to 1984/85. There are people who don't speak to each other because they went back to work. And there are massive feuds between people because of that...it's really sad."

> Researcher. "So the village is still a bit divided around..."

> Dialogue Participant. "Yes. And people say to you, this village was wonderful until the miners' strike, and everything went downhill after that. It's pretty amazing how long a grudge can be held for but then, it was something that people fought for wasn't it?"(Slade 2011 b)

Later in the interview the participant described this culture of enmity becoming a group norm. Referring to events in a local school the person recalled that:

> "It's scary how the scab thing lingers on. At [reference to a school in the research locality] one of [the teachers] was from Nottingham, and the kids said to him 'where are you from?' and he said Nottingham and the kids went Scab! Scab! Scab! And these were kids who weren't even born in 1984." (Slade 2011 b)

For this participant the dispute can be seen as having profoundly changed meanings of identity and the way others were perceived. For many, previously held understandings of self and others that were gained through membership of a close working class mining community, disappeared in acrimony and conflict. The outcome was a new cultural influence of embedded hostility. Seen in the context of Cast and Burke's emphasis on group membership as a source of self-esteem, the

consequences for individual and community well-being must have been devastating.

A number of other identity related themes are evident in this dialogue participants' account. Arguably conflict that arises within identity groups is exceptionally bitter. This is especially so if the consequences are new in-group and out-group formations, that occupy the same geographical space, with anger and hostility becoming enshrined in local culture. Seen through the lens of Marx's meta-narrative it is possible to see those who took part in the miner's dispute to be vanquished casualties of an enduring struggle based on class identity. Indeed, there is validity in applying a broader Marxist perspective. Capitalism has 'moved on' in its quest for generating profit, leaving people who were previously deemed essential to its progress, ignored and forgotten. The 2009 anniversary of the dispute was marked by the BBC in a documentary that framed the conflict as one of historical interest (2009). However, a protracted social conflict assessment argues that such lingering anger is an example of the kind of feelings that can fester in a niche of resentment and erupt in an unpredictable way at the slightest pretext arising in the here and now.

The conflict continues to be a live and divisive presence within some of the fieldwork communities. Given these undercurrents it is not surprising that, for some, religion could provide a more peaceful source of identity, where membership brought sustaining and enduring stability.

Religious Identity

The role of religious identity in countering divisive right wing extremism was strongly evident in the CD project's inception and subsequent activity. A study by Yesseldyk, Matheson and Anisman (2010) of the impact of religious identity concurs with the work of other theorists that the need for positive self-esteem is fundamental in individuals

deciding which groups people join. They believe that religious identity is, in some senses, similar to other meta-identities, for example nationality or gender. In such groups people share common beliefs that are central to their self-concept, leading to positive self-esteem. Furthermore, the authors believe that this makes for positive intergroup comparisons - 'our group is better than the 'other' group'. The outcomes are feelings of superiority and increasingly high self and group esteem. The end result is a rewarding self-identity. For these authors, a key process of internal group mechanisms is to maintain an identity of group superiority.

However, in Yesseldyk, Matheson and Anisman's view, religious identity is different from other forms of social identity in the extent to which religion provides a dual function offering both a social identity and a belief system. The latter centres on an individual's religion as the 'truth' and can be sustained regardless of challenge. Furthermore, religious believers also receive high levels of support from their communities. Whilst this is true for other social groups, membership of religious communities is again different because of the accompaniment of strong levels of contact and ritual. In an adaptation of Putman's (2000) social capital metaphor, Yesseldyk, Matheson and Anisman suggest: "…praying together is better than bowling together and better than praying alone."(2010:63)

Arguably in the pressing climate of anxiety producing high modernity, individual and communal religious identity provides continuity, an explanation of the meaning of life and a social support system. Given this, religious identity might be expected to be a bulwark of stable cohesion. However, Yesseldyk, Matheson and Anisman believe that religious groups need to maintain clear boundaries around membership, both to prevent contamination of beliefs and preserve the exclusiveness of sustaining ritual and practice. In doing so, religious

identity can begin to operate, not as a source of peaceful coexistence but as a more ambivalent force – protecting the group from outsiders. However the causes of this ambivalence can be considered, not just as a product of religious identity, but also in the other identity roles that group members perform as they go about their daily lives.

INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP IDENTITIES

Goffman's (1971) sociological theory sees identity formed through an individual's continual interactions with external social conventions, structures and settings. These influences form a stage on which people are constantly engaged in the performance of roles in which the individual contrives to manage the impression they make on other people. Seen in the light of Giddens theory of high modernity and the constant pressure of change, Goffman's position conjures an image of people engaged in a level of frantic activity. One identity role follows another in an endless procession of performances and stages. For some this may reflect how 21st century life can feel. However Stets's (2006) social-psychological perspective provides a more apposite framework for exploring some of the key influences that build individual identity, thereby contributing to group identity.

Identity and Culture

Stets sees the family and community providing a formative setting from which most people begin a lifelong series of continual identity forming experiences. These revolve around how we see ourselves, how others see us and how we think other people see us. Stets believes these processes function through an individual's capacity to stand back and think of themselves as an object - 'this is who I am'. The perspective of those with whom a person interacts closely influences this self-assessment and shapes the way individuals look at themselves. As the

activity of seeing oneself through other people's perspectives develops, individuals adopt responses that are like that of others. In Stet's view:

"The self arises in social interactions within the larger context of a complex, organized, differentiated society. Since the larger context is complex, organized, and differentiated, so too must we characterize the self, thus the dictum that the self reflects society." (2006:89)

Stets suggests individuals move towards groups with similar perspectives so this essential process of identification of self, through interaction with others, can maintain continuity. Encountering a group where this feedback is suddenly and dramatically different could be highly disruptive to individual well-being. Seen in this light, the separateness and difference that concern some community cohesion commentators, can also be seen as bonding social capital, indicative of healthy and natural identity forming processes, common amongst all groups and designed to limit personal disruption and promote individual security. Such a conclusion is also consistent with previous discussion that group membership and positive self-esteem are symbiotic.

Stets also believes that an individual's search for self-worth, evident in their desire to interact with people who have similar identities, is closely influenced by culture.

"In social identities, people categorise themselves as similar to this, labelled the in-group and different to others, the out-group. When individuals take on a group based identity, there is uniformity of perception and action amongst group members. Culture defines the meanings of different group membership and the behaviour expected from those memberships…"(2006:89-90)

Applying Stets's position in the fieldwork locality, the researcher found that people were exposed to a variety of identity forming and cultural influences that came to bear on their concept of the meaning of 'self' and group membership. When facilitators asked dialogue group participants to talk about their group and community, strong homogenous identities were evident. 'Our community' - 'our church' were ways of describing a stable, well-established and robust group where a common identity brought people together and in which high levels of social capital bonding were evident. This gave rise to meanings of self that indicated people had much in common with each other. For example when interviewed by the researcher some participants confidently referred to their group by using language such as: 'this is what we think", or could comment, without prevarication, on how other dialogue participants viewed a particular event.

However, despite the frequent presentation of strong uniform group identity, other identities were also present – for example the grandmothers referred to earlier, bewildered by the cultural influences absorbed by younger members of their families. Furthermore, some people performed identity roles outside the group that appeared to be inconsistent with group norms and were potentially disruptive. The work of participants supporting asylum seekers or immigration detainees was not highly valued and did not appear to receive strong group endorsement or verification. This contrasted with the response to other participants engaged in development activity in Africa.

Nonetheless a uniformity of perspective could be observed if a group felt it was threatened. Internal mechanisms designed to preserve boundaries, maintain self-esteem and group superiority against outsiders were apparent. The relevance of theoretical positions considered in the chapter was evident in the views of a participant describing their

experience of a dialogue session set in a religious group in a white mono-cultural community. The participant described events after the first session in the following terms.

> "After the [first] meeting…two or three people said they didn't see why they should be involved…The people who ran it were at a disadvantage to us because they were strangers to us… some of the ones there [other participants] immediately thought there are no issues about racism and faith-based prejudice here so they immediately felt affronted by having to consider that there might be. [In our community] there is no outward prejudice at all…but when it comes down to the nitty-gritty like - Muslims, that's a sore point. People who don't believe the same that we do. It's more than race." (Slade 2011 c)

What group mechanisms could tip the balance of this seemingly defensive insularity and quiet hostility to outsiders moving to more active belligerence and extremism? Hogg's (2006) social-psychological analysis of intergroup perspectives suggests the answer lies in mechanisms adopted by groups that identify outsiders and enable groups to go to extreme lengths to protect themselves against the threat that they pose. For the researcher, this approach was particularly helpful in conducting an analysis of fieldwork activity.

FROM COEXISTENCE TO HOSTILITY BETWEEN GROUPS

Hogg's sees group boundaries defined through a process of categorisation that sets down what is characteristic, or in Hogg's terms 'prototypical', of the group and how it is different from others. He also concurs with the general acceptance that people are motivated to join a group on the basis of similarity with in-group members and difference from other group composition. In Hogg's view internal group processes

constantly ensure that in-group differences are minimal and out-group differences emphasised – indeed group processes constantly drive perceptions of in-group similarities and out-group differences. Hogg argues that these systems enhance self-esteem, not just by identifying with people who seem like ourselves, but also through seeking feelings of group superiority and dominance.

> "One of the most distinctive features of group life and intergroup relations is ethnocentrism, a positive distinctiveness - a belief that we are better than they are in every possible way." (2006:120)

Hogg believes that in-group dominance and out-group subordination is preserved by rejecting or limiting any attempt at social mobility by outsiders seeking to secure in-group membership. In Hogg's view, this would risk contamination. Furthermore any diehards who do attempt social mobility risk rejection by both the superior group, through failing to meet the attributes of prototype membership, and the subordinate group for having betrayed group identity. (2006:120)

Hogg suggests that fundamental group processes of categorising people as outsiders, can climax in depersonalisation. This is a concept familiar to peacebuilding practitioners dealing with intense and violent conflict, where a dehumanised perspective of the victims accompanies the perpetration of violence. (Wolff 2007:89 -122)

Hogg's conclusion corresponded with the views of a dialogue participant who was concerned about BNP Islamophobic narrative. This person remarked:

> "I suppose in a sense it's like what happened in Germany isn't it - with the Jewish issue. It's laying suspicion at people's doors - the reason why our country is like this now is because we let all these people in - and that's why your life is not as good as it was...We

could turn the clock back. That comes across an awful lot. And actually that has struck me. That's very scary. That's precisely what Hitler did and what they would do."(Slade 2011 b)

Hogg's concern regarding depersonalisation and this participant's view beg a critical question. Other than the need to maintain group integrity, what else drives the need to maintain group superiority - since there are many examples of hierarchical group relationships that do not lead to antipathy? Tajfel and Tuner (1979) whose early pioneering work underpins much thinking around identity theory, see these dominant and subordinate group hierarchies bound up with inequality. Perceived unfairness can result in anger, a negative self-image for the subordinate group and lower self-esteem for group members. However if the group rejects this position and attempts to move towards a more positive self-identity through addressing inequality, the dominant group can be seen to react by trying to justify the status quo or create new areas of difference. Consequently recognition of inequality is avoided, hierarchical difference is preserved, and more equitable sharing of resources circumvented (1979:38-40).

Bottero's (2009) analysis of white working class communities can be seen to parallel Tajfel and Tuner's position. She argues that such communities are now being seen as the new excluded group:

"...yet another cultural minority in a (dysfunctional) multicultural Britain[that]focuses on the distinctive cultural values of disadvantaged groups, rather than looking at the bigger picture of how systematic inequality generates disadvantage."(2009:7)

She argues that rather than tackling inequality through structural reform, the white working class have instead been redesignated as a minority community and, as a consequence, need to compete with other groups

for resources. Arguably, just as predicted by Tajfel and Turner, a new area of group difference has been created. Rather than action to address issues of social justice, dominant group status is maintained by encouraging subordinate groups to see a threat, not from intransigent dominance, but rather from their resources being threatened by even more inferior 'out-groups'.

A protracted social conflict analysis of this situation argues that unfair distribution of resources controlled by a dominant group can cause grievances to fester and that resentment will increasingly focus on group identity. However, Azar believes that conflict can be avoided if groups achieve effective participation in society and engage in dialogue about the issues that concern them (1990:9). However, what happens when there is a failure to recognise and address the needs of communities who feel alienated and unfairly treated? Reicher, Haslam and Rath's (2008) study of social identity and conflict sets out a five-stage model illustrating how group identity can develop in a way that reflects the concerns of the dialogue participant quoted earlier who saw a resonance between BNP strategy and the development of Nazism.

Reicher, Haslam and Rath suggest that identification and construction of an in-group is a crucial first step in defining group membership and determining the 'other'. A second stage sees groups moving to establish targets outside the group, identified on the basis of who are group members, for example nationality or ethnicity. A third step sees the out-group constructed as a danger to group identity. This may be through perceptions of a threat to employment or income or, as a presence that endangers cultural values and way of life. At this stage, the out-group is homogenized and outsiders can move from being victims of discrimination to perpetrators of a threat that will destroy the in-group. In these circumstances, attacks on the out-group may be seen

as legitimate. Step four sees the in-group representing itself as being uniquely good with elimination of the out-group, constructed as sinful and deviant, acceptable as a form of defence. Their analysis climaxes in step five. The in-group are good, the out-group evil and their destruction is an essential process for preserving in-group virtue.

Reicher, Haslam and Rath's model mirrors a core concern of the CD project, articulated by a founder when discussing motivation for starting the project and addressing far right extremist hostility:

> "…they really want to stir up riots…and how terrifying that would be if that were to happen, but my motivation is the holocaust, it's not the riots in Bradford and Burnley – that's where I'm coming from …those were my fears. I think we can cope with the EDL being ridiculous as long as people aren't hurt…but they are all related – along the same spectrum though the one is not really a problem until the other properly embeds itself and then lets the other one run loose…"(Slade 2010 b)

This is not to argue that the BNP and other extremist groups are in danger of ethnically cleansing Muslims from South Yorkshire. However Reicher, Haslam and Rath's study does illustrate the potential direction of travel. The fear of a progression of hostility, passing one threshold of animosity allowing a further step to be embarked on, is a common feature of violent behaviour and is evident in groups with a high tolerance of racism and cultural and direct violence of the sort found by Ray, Smith and Wastell (2004). Such a progression fits with rigid and vicious stereotyping and dehumanising commonly found in conflict between groups of different ethnicity (Brown 2001:126-163).

CHAPTER CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has applied contemporary social theory and social-psychological processes of group theory as a way of understanding why groups develop hostility to outsiders. These views have been applied in conjunction with those of research participants where possible in order to gain and relate a deeper understanding of why groups develop hostility in the fieldwork locality.

The capacity of groups to generate a negative perspective of outsiders was evident during the fieldwork. However this is a likely feature of many other areas, especially those outside multicultural cosmopolitan life. One of the localities distinguishing features is the lasting impact of the miners' strike. Allied with industrial decline, the conflict continues to generate significant consequences. Some communities remain divided by in-group and out-group hostility specific to the event. People continue to feel angry and resentful about the strike and its aftermath.

External influences on group identity

It is against this legacy that groups within the fieldwork locality have experienced a range of other key internal influences. These have added to existing discomfort through anxiety inducing changes and uncertainty that fills the contemporary world of high modernity. For many, globalised connections have all but obliterated continuity with the past, clouded the certainty of the present and the likely direction of the future. Media narratives have provided information about external threats that add to the growing discomfort. In this and later chapters participant judgements about outsiders appear to be largely informed by these narratives, adding to the discomfort. These external influences poured into internal group mechanisms shaping their individual and group identity processes.

Internal mechanisms utilised by groups to develop in-group and out-group identity

Group membership brings important processes of self-esteem. Choices as to group membership were, in part, determined by factors such as class, religion and geography. However, evidence gleaned through fieldwork suggests other systems designed to preserve relationships of dominance over subordinate outsiders were also important sources of positive self-esteem. Groups were watchful of any attempts at infiltration by subordinate individuals and of any strategies that would threaten resources that were felt to be rightfully theirs.

The movement of groups from coexistence towards hostility directed at out-groups

As the study progressed, hostility towards outsiders could be seen to develop around the interface of dominant and subordinate identity and the relevance of inequality for the development of belligerent group perspectives became evident. Set against this background it was possible to see the potential for dehumanising processes developing that could lead to violence. Although the research locality is far from such a scenario at present, the theoretical positions utilised in this chapter indicate the potential for such a situation. The next chapter will apply these positions in the context of socio-economic factors to assess why BNP extremism has made significant progress in some parts of South Yorkshire.

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CHAPTER 4

RIGHT WING EXTREMISM IN THE RESEARCH LOCALITY

The last chapter explored theories of high modernity, social constructionism and psycho-social processes of group identity. This built on the study's literature review that discussed the application of protracted social conflict methodology to UK community cohesion. This chapter utilises these theoretical frameworks to understand why the BNP have gained support in the research locality.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses the study's third key question.

- What socio-economic factors lie behind the growth of BNP support in South Yorkshire? What does an analysis using social-psychological theory of group identity and protracted social conflict methodology reveal about the growth in BNP support?

Several studies suggest that right-wing extremist parties draw significant levels of support from working class communities in the UK (Bottero 2009. Eatwell and Goodwin 2010). Whilst this appears to be a nationwide phenomenon, analysis of UK voting patterns over the last decade reveal that BNP electoral support has been greater in the fieldwork locality than in other parts of the UK. Why is this the case?

Social theory and protracted social conflict perspectives provide the context for a discussion of quantative data and existing research findings that address this question. They provide a framework for this study's action research findings that captured the perspectives of dialogue participants and CD project founders and managers as to why the BNP had made progress in South Yorkshire.

APPLYING PROTRACTED SOCIAL CONFLICT METHODOLOGY AND SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL IDENTITY THEORY

Azar's (1990) analysis of protracted social conflict focuses on the relationship between deprivation of basic needs, group identity and the likelihood of conflict. Drawing on human need theory developed by Maslow (1970) Azar's research led him to conclude that communal identity groups could be seen to engage in prolonged, violent struggles over basic needs such as security, recognition, acceptance, access to political institutions and economic participation. The likelihood and intensity of conflict depended on the interaction of four variables.

Protracted social conflict variables in group identity processes

Firstly, Azar (1990) described how communal identity groups, which may be racial, religious, or ethnic, exist to meet the individual's 'societal' needs for security, identity and recognition (1990:7). This assertion can be seen as equivalent to group mechanisms seen by social-psychological theorists as related to self-esteem and identity verification. In the research locality, rigid boundaries formed by religious, ethnic and class identity were evident. Whilst these boundaries provided groups with continuity and stability, they were also the setting for hostile perspectives towards outsiders to be formed. Azar also found that the likelihood of tensions between identity groups erupting in violence was related to in-group resentment arising from perceptions of previous injustice and unfairness. In the research locality, the continuing legacy of the miners' strike, industrial decline and sense of 'not being listened' to, were identified by research participants as a source of resentment that that can be seen to correspond to predictors of conflict that concerned Azar.

Secondly, Azar found that the extent to which individual and communal needs are met is central in determining whether harmony or grievance becomes embedded in the consciousness of an identity group. A key factor in meeting need is a group's 'right of entry' to governance and their effective participation in society, thereby giving access to levers that control the allocation of resources (1990:9). This variable has further relevance to group identity processes that deal with self-esteem and verification. Feelings of exclusion and being treated with indifference emerged as regular themes in dialogue groups. Such feelings are unlikely to promote positive self-esteem and were particularly evident when participants described experience of class prejudice.

Thirdly, Azar found that the quality of governance and the role of the state are pivotal in determining the likelihood of protracted social conflict. Incompetent and authoritarian governance fails to satisfy basic human need and becomes monopolised by a dominant identity group or a coalition of hegemonic groups (1990:10). This variable is relevant to group mechanisms that maintain their hierarchical position through perpetuating inequalities. In the fieldwork locality, members of some groups articulated themes of being disengaged in governance - of 'nobody listening'. Participants also made reference to inequalities arising from industrial conflict and decline that had created a niche of resentment arising from feelings of being treated unfairly.

Finally, Azar believed that although sources of conflict are primarily within states, external linkages have a direct impact. He found that domestic and political institutions were strongly influenced by 'patterns of links' with wider systems (1990:10). For social-psychological theorists, these links comprise external influences that interact with in-group mechanisms. These mechanisms identify 'outsiders' who threaten the

cultural and physical resources the group identifies as theirs. Within the fieldwork setting these influences were powerful forces, generating 'otherness' as a way of identifying those outsiders whom they perceived as a threat.

Table 4 below illustrates in the left hand and middle column's how protracted social conflict (PSC) and social-psychological group identity processes (SPI) can be related to each other.

Table 4 PSC and PSI links with fieldwork concerns and issues		
Azar's PSC Variable	Link with SPI Processes	Fieldwork concerns/issues
Communal identity Groups	Group identity and self esteem	History of industrial decline and conflict Class, religion and ethnicity
Ability to meet basic needs	Group identity and self-esteem, Group dominance	Levels of deprivation and inequality
Governance	Group dominance and subordination around prototypical group identities	Meaningful access to and engagement with governance
External Linkages	External influences threatening group culture and capacity to meet basic needs	Global and local economic connections Media connections Islamophobic discourses Ethnicity and Migration

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The right-hand common relates these to concerns and issues identified through the action research that provide some practical insight into the kinds of issues that were ripe for exploitation by the BNP. These theoretical frameworks feed into the researcher's analysis of why the BNP have found parts of South Yorkshire to be fertile ground in which to sow their ideology. This analysis will be undertaken through the following themes.

1. What do <u>voting patterns</u> in the fieldwork parliamentary constituencies reveal about trends in BNP support?

2. To what extent are the external influences of <u>migration and ethnicity</u> constructed to represent a threat to the culture and resources of white mono-cultural communities, as some action research participants seemed to think?

3. What part do further external influences of <u>Islamophobic</u> discourses play in BNP support in fieldwork communities?

4. Protracted social conflict and <u>social-psychological processes of group identity</u> argue that in some circumstances groups will move towards hostility to outsiders. How does the BNP interact with relevant group mechanisms in ways that enable the organisation to make progress?

VOTING FOR THE BNP

The 'run-up' to the UK general election of May 2010 saw the BNP aiming to build on its success in the recent 2009 European parliamentary elections that had seen two of the party's candidates, one representing Yorkshire and Humberside, elected to the European Parliament. The BNP were confident of making progress.

The BNP chair, Nick Griffin, stood in a high-profile campaign in the London Borough of Dagenham and Barking, an area in which the group had made significant progress in previous local elections, and where the sitting candidate, Margaret Hodge, was a senior Labour politician. (Harris 2010) Griffin came a very poor third, prompting Hodge to declare:

> "On behalf of all the people in Britain, we in Barking have not just beaten but we have smashed extremist outsiders. The message of Barking to the BNP is clear, get out and stay out. You are not

wanted here and your vile politics have no place in British democracy." (Hodge 2010)

Hodge's response articulated a wider sense of triumph. The website of the antiracist organisation Unite against Fascism announced: "Multicultural Barking defeats the BNP - a victory for the whole country."(Unite against Fascism 2010) Hope not Hate, an alternative antiracist campaigning group, announced in their magazine Searchlight that following the election:

> "BNP leader Nick Griffin is battling for his political future amid growing disquiet over his leadership, a disastrous electoral campaign and the overall running of the party. This comes after the BNP spectacularly failed in its bid to win control of Barking & Dagenham council, lost all but two of the 28 council wards it was defending and was humiliated in Stoke-on-Trent, a city recently described by Griffin as it's "jewel in the crown."(Lowles 2010)

However a report published by the Institute of Community Cohesion (iCoCo 2011) took a more studied view. It found that since 2001, the number of votes cast for the BNP in general elections had grown from under 50,000 in 2001 to over 550,00 by 2010. The party had also won two European seats in 2009 and seemed positioned to achieve a prominent role in mainstream politics. Although it had failed to build on this success - it won no parliamentary seats and lost over half of its existing council seats in 2010 - other factors needed to be considered.

The report argued that the basis of extreme right wing support had broadened. Groups such as the anti-Muslim English Defence League, with a reputation for street violence, had made recent significant and disruptive progress. The report concluded that on the basis of the 2010 figures, a system of proportional representation - a referendum for such a

system was planned to be held in the UK in 2011 - would have given the BNP 12 parliamentary seats (2011:10).

This study's findings concur with the iCoCo perspective. Despite the sense of national triumphalism, voting patterns in South Yorkshire suggests that reports of the BNP's demise, at least in the fieldwork locality, may have been premature.

Voting for the BNP in South Yorkshire

Table 5 below illustrates how the BNP share of the vote has changed on a constituency basis in the 2010 and 2005 general elections.

Table 5 BNP percentage share of vote in Fieldwork Parliamentary Constituencies 2005- 2010				
FIELDWORK LOCALITY CONSTITUENCY	**BNP share of constituency vote.2010**	**BNP share of UK vote 2010**	**BNP share of constituency vote.2005**	**BNP share of UK vote 2005**
Barnsley Central	8.9%	1.9%	4.9%	0.7%
Barnsley East	8.6%		n/a*	
Don Valley	4.9%		n/a*	
Doncaster Central	2.2%		4.2%	
Doncaster North	6.8%		4.8%	
Sheffield South East	5.7%		3.9%	
Sheffield Penistone and Stockbridge	7.8%		6.2%	
Sheffield Central	2.2%		1.8%	
Sheffield Heeley	5.5%		3.8%	
Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough	7.8%		n/a*	
Sheffield Hallam	n/a*		0.9%	
Rotherham	10.4%		6.6%	
Rother Valley	7.7%		5.1%	

* No BNP candidate
Sources. ICoCo 2011. *Far Right Electoral and Other Activity. The Challenge for Community Cohesion.* Coventry. Institute for Community Cohesion.
BBC.2010. Election Results Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/

The data indicates a stronger groundswell of BNP support in the fieldwork parliamentary constituencies than that found in the UK. Nationally the group achieved 1.9% of votes. In the fieldwork locality this figure was exceeded in every constituency where a candidate stood, ranging from

2.2 per cent in the urban multicultural constituency of Sheffield Central to 10.4 per cent in the white mono-cultural urban and rural constituency of Rotherham.

The data is subject to a number of variables. Parliamentary constituency boundaries changed between 2005 and 2010, moving voters into and out of parliamentary constituencies. Sheffield Brightside, where the BNP achieved a 7.8 per cent share of the vote was just such a constituency. BNP performance may reflect boundary adjustment alongside their campaigning. High-profile politicians represented some constituencies – for example the leader of the Labour Party in Doncaster North, and the leader of the Liberal Democrat party in Sheffield Hallam. The BNP performed well in Doncaster North (6.8 per cent) perhaps reflecting the kudos of challenging a senior politician. However, the BNP did not have a candidate in Sheffield Hallam. This constituency includes two universities, suggesting a population likely to include a significant group of younger people in full-time education. Goodwin (2010:195-203) suggests that this type of demographic group is less likely to vote for the BNP, than communities with older members of the population engaged in skilled or unskilled employment. The BNP would have been aware of such factors when deciding constituencies on which to target limited resources.

The iCoCo report suggests that looking to the 2011 local elections for a further assessment of the presence and strength of right wing extremism may be useful. Reliable analysis of data arising at ward level is complicated by a number of variables that include the strength of local campaigning by mainstream parties and the number and location of wards holding elections. However, voting patterns can be discerned that reflect the 2010 South Yorkshire parliamentary election results. (Hope not

Hate 2011. Sheffield Star 2011) The percentage of voting support for the BNP in wards where elections were held ranged from:

- Barnsley -   5 per cent to 16 per cent share of the vote
- Doncaster -   4 per cent to 17.4 per cent share of the vote
- Rotherham -   10.4 per cent to 19.5 per cent share of the vote
- Sheffield -   4.3 per cent to 6.2 per cent share of the vote.

Whilst these results did not see the BNP gain any new councillors, and in line with national patterns the group lost some seats, the 2011 local election data help to support the conclusion drawn from analysis of voting at the last two general elections. In South Yorkshire, BNP support expressed in share of the vote shows an increase that significantly bucks the national trend. Why is this the case?

MIGRATION AND ETHNICITY

The study has already referred to the disruptive connections that exist between globalised economic forces and communities in South Yorkshire that can precipitate change and insecurity with little warning and preparation. However, alongside these disturbing influences, fieldwork dialogue groups and interviews with research participants saw consistent reference to the 'other' - migrants generally and Muslims in particular - as a source of threat and anxiety. A protracted social conflict assessment, applied from the perspective of local people, would see these 'out-groups' as an external and destabilising linkage. Social-psychological group identity theorists would identify them as external threats to in-group culture and resources, resulting in a need to create more rigid boundaries and assertion of dominant group positions. An interview with one dialogue participant gave a typical voice to these concerns.

Participant. "People who are so generous in some areas of life and may well give very generously to projects abroad, but [these projects] are abroad, and they are detached. They are not staring them in the face. [Then followed a reference to circumstances of a recent conversation and name of a person] was there...and so untypically of the rest of the conversation they said - 'well, of course, there's the Pakis', you know, and their attitude, in a significant way, towards other people was - you know…."

Researcher. "But presumably, there are other groups about whom [name of person] is ignorant as well? What is it about that group [Pakistanis] which makes them...?"

Participant. "Within the press, they are presented as a threat. You know they take our jobs, they cost a fortune, they live in luxury etc."

Researcher. "Is that the line? About taking our jobs? Is that something that worries people?"

Participant. "Almost certainly. That's quoted quite regularly."(Slade 2011 a)

How rationally based and justified are these fears in relation to data concerning migration and ethnicity in the research locality?

Migration

Reliable data concerning migration is difficult to access. 'Migration Yorkshire', established by local authorities to support councils and partner agencies in tackling migration issues holds extensive locally based data, although only provides the full detail of this information to partner agencies. However the agency does provide some limited 'profile' information for the four fieldwork localities as set out in table 6.

TABLE 6 Migration in South Yorkshire 2010					
Category	Doncaster	Rotherham	Sheffield	Barnsley	York's and Humber
Population estimate 2010	297,100	252,100	541,300	229,200	5,400,300
Population born outside UK	6%	5%	11%	4%	8%
No of registered asylum seekers 2010	110	293	364	275	Not available
Estimate new long term arrivals 2010	1100-1400	1050-1100	5400-9900	650-700	Not available
Pupils without English as first Language Primary	4%	8%	18%	3%	15%
Pupils without English as first Language Secondary	4%	8%	14%	2%	10%
Registrations with GP's of people born outside the UK per 1000 population	4 per 1000	4 per 1000	13 per 1000	2 per 1000	8 per 1000

Source. Yorkshire and Humber Public Health Observatory. Population Projection. 2010
http://www.yhpho.org.uk/resource/item.aspx? RID=92140

Source Migration Yorkshire available at http://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk-november 2011. (Accessed 4 Januray2012)

The table provides information for the following groups.

- The number of registered asylum seekers.
- People born outside the UK - this includes UK nationals who were born abroad, for example members of the Armed Forces.
- New arrivals who register for work and plan to stay at least 12 months. This does not include arrivals from EU accession countries who are no longer required to register for work, or people using student visas.
- School age children without English as their first language.
- People registering with a GP (family doctor) born outside the UK- again this includes UK nationals who were born abroad and will also include people already in the UK and changing doctors.

The data does not impress as comprehensive, indeed accurate and reliable information regarding migration specific to the fieldwork locality is difficult to obtain, and makes time line analysis of trends almost meaningless. However even with this caveat the table does suggest that, with the exception of Sheffield where BNP support is lowest, the number of people born outside the UK, coming to live in three of the fieldwork locality districts is significantly below the Yorkshire and Humberside average. Overall, although just a snapshot of the situation in 2010, the data does not suggest a strong factual basis for fears regarding migration – although factual rationality is not always a driver of fear.

Ethnicity

The study has made reference to low levels of ethnic diversity in the fieldwork locality. Table 7 sets out data for each of the fieldwork towns.

	Rotherham	Barnsley	Doncaster	Sheffield	York's & Hum average	Eng Average
TABLE 7 **Ethnic Diversity in South Yorkshire**						
Total population	254,605	227,610	290,593	555,500	5,301,300	52,234,000
% White population	93.8	96.6	95.0	85.9	89.6	87.5
% Ethnic diversity	6.3	3.3	4	14.2	10.5	12.4
% Asian/ British Asian	3.5	1.4	2.1	7.1	6.2	6.0

Source: Office for National Statistics. 2001 Census updated June 2010

This data suggests that with the exception of Sheffield, where higher levels of diversity may account for lower BNP support - on the basis that people who are not white will be less likely to vote for the BNP - ethnic diversity in South Yorkshire is well below both the Yorkshire and Humberside and England average. Of this limited ethnic diversity the percentage of Asian/British Asian represented approximately half of the total although in some dialogue groups there was a clear suggestion that 'Muslims' served as a proxy identity for all outsiders who were not white, especially those with an Indian sub – continent heritage.

However this limited diversity did not prevent participants in the research making regular reference to the extent that Muslims were seen as a threat. One dialogue participant told the researcher:

"They want to take over and have Shari'ah law everywhere. They won't be happy until they have a Muslim prime minister." (Slade 2010 a)

To what extent do BNP strategies interact with and develop such fears? Research by Goodwin et al (2010:191-210) examining the basis of extreme right wing support in the post millennium UK, found that BNP campaigns are targeted at concerns experienced by local people. Their research also suggested that these campaigns include strategies focused on people who live in wards with close proximity to localities with high levels of Muslim citizens. BNP campaigns are constructed so that immigrants and minority ethnic communities are seen as responsible for adverse conditions suffered by white citizens, with geographical proximity representing a danger of 'contamination' for largely white mono-cultural districts.

However, in the fieldwork locality, beyond the multicultural environment comprising parts of Sheffield, this co-terminosity is largely absent, providing a counter balance to the 'proximity' aspect of Goodwin et al's findings. For example in Barnsley, despite very low levels of ethnic diversity and inward migration, and no close proximity to ethnically diverse areas, the BNP achieved just under 9 per cent share of the vote in the 2010 general election and between 5 per cent – 16 per cent in 2011 local elections (Hope not Hate 2011).

In the fieldwork locality, where the Muslim 'other' is largely geographically remote from and numerically dwarfed by the majority community, external narratives are crucial in the growth of right wing extremism in South Yorkshire.

ISLAMOPHOBIA

During the study's action research, the researcher had the opportunity to become engaged in an aspect of the CD project designed to investigate the power of media narratives and Islamophobia in South Yorkshire (Miah 2012). This media project included

focus group discussions that identified hostile discourses towards ethnic minorities in general and Muslims in particular. The following quotes reflect a view expressed in these forums.

> "...the BME[4] community...were not correctly portrayed in the local press. They also felt that the letters column [in local papers] often sensationalised local stories and portrayed minority communities in a negative light..." (2012:29)

> "You ask any BME community member what they think about ...even the two local papers...they will say that media is biased and anti-Muslim." (2012:29)

The perception of anti-Muslim media positions, seen together with views expressed in CD project dialogue groups or shared with the researcher by dialogue participants, argues the relevance of Islamophobic narratives in generating fear of Muslims. In the face of low ethnicity and consequent lack of interaction between communities such narratives played a crucial role in BNP strategy. However Islamophobia is a frequently used expression and merits some definition beyond its framing as a phobia - an irrational fear of all people who are followers of Islam. It is clearly possible to disagree with aspects of Islam, for example theological tenets, or cultural features such as the treatment of some women in some Muslim countries and communities, without being Islamophobic. Given this, how should Islamophobia be understood?

Fekete's (2009) study of right wing extremism and Islamophobia across Europe places the phenomena in a contemporary European context and describes the ideology in straightforward terms as anti-Muslim racism. However, a seminal Runnymede Trust report (1997:4-5) paints a more complex picture, arguing a link between 'closed' views of

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[4] Black and Minority Ethnic

Islam and irrational fears of Muslims. Closed views typically include Islam being constructed as monolithically homogeneous - what happens in Saudi Arabia will also happen in Bradford: all Muslims are terrorists, tyrants and sexist oppressors. The report suggests that a cause and effect of these closed views is to maintain subordinate and dominant relationships between groups, evident in Western views that see Islam as in some way inferior.

> "...We are superior. We are civilised, reasonable, generous, efficient, sophisticated, enlightened, non-sexist. 'They' are primitive, violent, irrational, scheming, disorganised, and oppressive." (1997:7)

This conclusion resonates with social psychological positions that see group mechanism of self-esteem maintained through rigid hierarchical boundaries. The report argues that Islamophobia is rooted in cultural and biological racism and is evident in:

> "...crude colour racism, since most Muslims are perceived to have black or brown skins; and also an anti-immigrant prejudice since Muslims in Britain are perceived to have alien customs, specifically Asian customs." (1997:9)

The positions adopted by Fekete and the Runneymede Trust emphasise the importance of understanding the BNP's post millennium Islamophobic platform in the context of their tradition of crude biological racism. However the BNP's contemporary position should also be considered in the context of powerful external drivers of anti-Muslim hostility that are increasingly evident across the West and Europe in general and that are conveyed through a number of media platforms. In the absence of opportunities for direct and significant contact with people of different ethnicity, that may temper negative stereotyping,

these external influences provide an anxiety-inducing backcloth to the lives and perspectives of people and groups in the fieldwork locality.

Fekete's study argues that Muslims and Islam are constructed as a threat to culture, resources and safety. A dramatic example of her analysis can be seen in the slaughter of 77 people in July 2011 by Norwegian Anders Breivik, described by the perpetrator as the punishment of:

"...traitors, responsible for the Islamic colonisation of Norway."(The Guardian 2012)

However whilst Breivik's conduct may or may not be the work of a lone individual, there is some evidence of groups uniting in a coordinated pan European strategy of Islamophobia. Karpf's (2012) report for the Guardian newspaper found that the EDL organised a rally in Denmark in March 2012 with the objective of setting up a European anti-Muslim movement. She comments that:

"For Europe's far right parties, the rally coming soon after the murders in south-west France by a self-professed Al Qaeda following Muslim marks a moment rich with potential political capital."(2012:2)

What matters for this thesis are connections between events of the sort that occurred in Norway, the seemingly al-Qaeda related violent incident in France referred to by Karpf, and the extent to which subsequent narratives construct a disturbing and intrusive environment for fieldwork communities against which fear and apprehension of outsiders can be understood and articulated.

The historical and contemporary European homogenisation of Islam as a threat to western values and security provides a context within which the BNP construct powerful and targeted discourses - threatening

outsiders, looming on the periphery of 'decent' communities, with the potential to threaten both the safety and culture of ordinary people. The BNP's treatment of the 2012 French killings serves as a useful example of the organisation's ability to make connections between such events and a threat to the security of communities in the UK.

> "Mohammed Merah's mercifully brief spree as a cowardly multiple child killer and murderer of unarmed off-duty soldiers provokes, in Westerners like us, nothing but revulsion. But to the Muslim teenagers who hang around our streets or play pool in taxpayer funded youth clubs, he is a hero and role model."(BNP 2012)

Of the fatalities perpetrated by Merah, two of the off-duty soldiers were black and Muslim whilst the children, killed with their parent, were Jewish. However the BNP's history of biological racism and anti-Semitism is overlooked as the group seeks to rally citizens behind the banner of Westerners. In doing so, the BNP's intention ensures that connections are made between distant events and a real threat, lurking in the local community. The above quote paints a vivid picture of dangerous, feckless and aggressive young Muslims, who are not Westerners like us and who are, at this very moment, abusing hard earned tax payer's income whilst looking for opportunities to perpetrate violence of the sort that occurred in Toulouse.

This type of narrative is one that the BNP have steadily utilised. Goodwin (2010:178-179) found that rather than biological and cultural racism Muslims are portrayed by the BNP as a source of criminality, intolerance, and, in general terms, a threat to the national community. The attacks of the 11th of September and the Madrid and London bombings are used to homogenize terrorist violence as behaviour typical of an entire religion (BNP 2009). Within the fieldwork locality, the danger posed by Muslims to safety and resources was particularly evident in two

dialogue groups. A facilitator described the experience of a dialogue participant who had been on a recent excursion to a Yorkshire town. The context of the discussion was a conversation about Muslims.

> "He and his wife were sitting opposite a 'foreigner' on the tram who, in their opinion, behaved very strangely, looking anxious and over his shoulder...He [the dialogue participant] was convinced this person may be a terrorist trying to gather information about how best to commit an act of atrocity and later phoned up the police to report it. He spoke passionately about people not being safe in this country anymore and the need for everyone to be vigilant." (Slade 2010.b)

It is temptingly easy to dismiss the participant's experience as an example of Islamophobic views of Muslims and Islam. Whilst this may be true, a fairer conclusion would take also into account anxieties about security arising from terrorist incidents arising beyond the small, safe and white monocultural community where the dialogue session took place. Clearly, a perception of anxiety had woven itself into the participant's viewpoint. This is not to suggest that this anxiety was a direct consequence of BNP strategies linking external events with in-group safety and well–being. Widely available mainstream media narratives provide texts and images of violent Islamic zealots, perpetrating violence against defenceless Muslims, non-Muslims, women and children that will doubtless inform the participant's 'real-life' and 'real-time' sense of the danger and threat such people represent. Nonetheless, the participant's position does correspond with the both Runnymede Trust assessment of Islamophobic perceptions, and Eatwell and Goodwin's analysis of BNP strategies that homogenise all Muslims as terrorists.

However another dialogue participant also observed BNP activity that evidenced the kind of locally targeted strategies observed by

Eatwell and Goodwin. In this context the objective was to generate anxiety-producing connections between outsiders, and their threat to local resources. This participant commented:

> "...where I come from in [name of locality] the communities have lost their employment and a lot of the men particularly have lost their purpose. That sounds awful but they haven't got the work down the colliery. Their purpose seems to have gone. I think that the BNP play on this kind of fear of them coming from abroad, nicking our jobs, and taking everything and trying to take over. I think that rumour is propagated round an awful lot...and people just act on that fear."(Slade 2011 b)

Both participant accounts example strong images of individuals and groups struggling to deal with debilitating anxiety arising from external threats. Traditional group positions, the safety of a calm and ordered life and the stability of cultural values are disturbed by 'outsiders', seeking to acquire what rightfully belongs to indigenous groups – even though such outsiders are demographically insignificant. Given these pressures, stalwart group identities of class and religion appear to become significant. The BNP have not been slow to realise that these identities also provide a portal for their ideology that reaches to heart of group internal group mechanisms.

GROUP IDENTITY

In the face of change and uncertainty, groups in the fieldwork locality gave the appearance of clinging to class and religious identity as measures of security and stability. BNP strategies that are specifically tailored to these identities were evident in the fieldwork locality.

Religion

Since the millennium the BNP have been seen to embrace a strategy where religion has proved to be a more populist and acceptable discourse with which to demonise and stereotype the 'other'. Goodwin and Evans's (2011) recent research of BNP supporters reveals intense concerns about Muslims, fearing that the religion of the latter poses a threat to indigenous culture:

"Large majorities in our sample appear absolutely convinced that Islam is threatening Western civilisation." (2011:19)

In addressing this fear, the BNP have adopted a counter identity in the form of affirming a commitment to taking a stand for Christian values. Cutts, Ford and Goodwin (2010) describe such strategies as a:

"Reputational shield...designed to present a plausible defence against accusations of crude racism and antidemocratic positions." (2010:24)

However the BNP's strategy also interacts with in-group processes. Firstly, it enables people to recognise similarity, in effect they say - ' we believe what you believe' - exampled in image 1 below. Secondly, BNP strategies exploit group needs for protective boundaries, reinforcing hostile differences – suggested in image 2 below - 'we are standing up for your culture and beliefs, these outsiders threaten your religion, culture and status.'

Image 1   Image 2

Source. http://www.bnp.org.uk
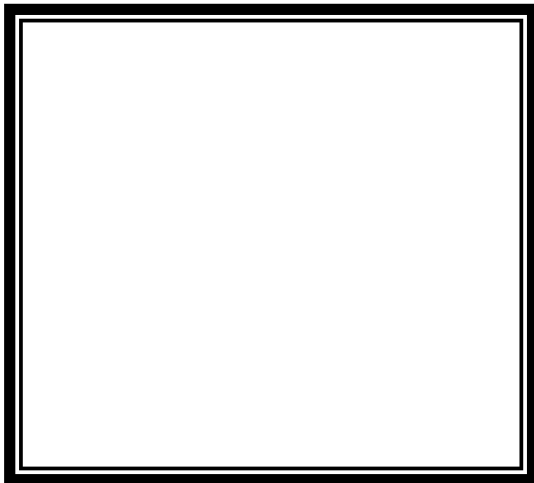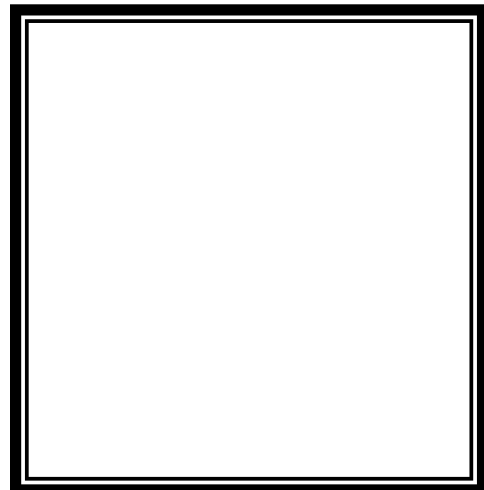
Both images were used during the BNP 2009 European election campaign. Image 1, a billboard poster, was accompanied by an Internet blog credited to BNP Chair Nick Griffin.

> "The British National Party is the only political party which genuinely supports Britain's Christian heritage. It is the only party which will defend our ancient faith and nation from the threat of Islamification. It's not racist to support British jobs for British workers or to be opposed to militant Islam, it's just common sense and in line with the teachings of Jesus Christ."(Griffin 2009)

The group's alignment with Christianity is an astute one. Its effectiveness was evident in concerns voiced by CD project founders who had observed the organisation to be making some headway amongst congregations in the fieldwork locality. Viewed through the lens of group process, Image 1 chimes with the traditional identity and cultural history of Christian groups. It links Islam and Muslims with a threat both to national and community security, and the capacity of ordinary people to meet their basic safety needs, exampled in image 2. A tactically similar BNP strategy, claiming they are the only party prepared to stand up for traditional identity and cultural history was evident when targeting communities with a working class identity.

Class

Azar (1990) sees communal identity groups such as those based on class as a focal point of protracted social conflict. Group identity theory finds that such identities are also framed by dominant or inferior status that can lead to feelings of, and resentment arising from, inequality. In the fieldwork locality, class affiliation, like religion, could provide security and continuity. However it also served as a context for internal hostility and exclusion exploited by extremists. Bottero's (2009) discussion of white working class support for the BNP leads her to conclude that:

"…their voiceless status and…increasing social marginalisation... [and] feelings of betrayal (by liberal elites and, more pointedly, the Labour Party) might drive the white working class into the arms of the BNP." (2009:7)

Given this, how significant was the relationship in the four fieldwork towns between class and BNP support. Data for each town in the fieldwork locality by employment and occupation (Rose 1995) is set out in table 8 below.

TABLE 8 Employment by Occupation						
Occupational employment group	Doncaster	Rotherham	Barnsley	Sheffield	Regional	GB *
Major Group 1-3 Managers, directors, senior officials, professional occupations, associate professional, technical	32.4	32.1	32.1	43.3	38.5	43.2
Major Group 4-5 Administrative, secretarial, skilled trades and	20.9	20.2	24.4	17.9	22.3	22.0
Major Group 6-7 Caring, leisure, service occupations, sales, customer service	21.0	22.3	20.2	19.7	18.0	17.3
Major Group 8- Process plant, machine operatives, elementary occupations	25.6	25.4	23.3	19.1	21.2	17.5

*Great Britain
Source: NOMIS. Official Labour Market Statistics. Office for National Statistics. Available at http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/

Major Group 1-3 sees three of the four localities below the regional average and national average, whilst Group 4-5 is broadly in line with the regional and national average. Groups 6-8, largely semiskilled and unskilled occupations that are typically associated with working class status, are higher in the research locality then the regional or Great Britain average.

These figures are significant for Bottero's assessment of working class vulnerability to BNP support. Her view can be correlated with Ford and Goodwin's (2010:1-25) investigation that found BNP support is evenly distributed amongst skilled workers, unskilled workers and those dependent on state benefits. Goodwin and Evans's (2011:10-15) research provides further endorsement of the link between working class status and BNP support. Two thirds of their sample of 2,152 far right supporters was classified as involved in skilled manual, semiskilled manual, or non-manual working class employment occupations.

Given these findings it could be argued that levels of support for the BNP in the fieldwork locality are explained by a higher than average number of working class people. This would also be consistent with group identity processes that see people aligning themselves with the similarity evident in meta-group identities. This study's action research findings that support, in part, such a conclusion also argue that it is a mistake to homogenise identity groups through broad identities of class, and for that matter religion.

Community Identity

Analysis of data arising from the work of CD project facilitators, and the researcher's interviews with dialogue participants, found that, beyond class or religion, people articulated a strong sense of local communal identity. These appeared to be deeply embedded – almost tangible and vitally important for the way in which people understood

and coped with the pressures of daily life. These identities were sometimes defined as '...our village...our estate...our church'. Some saw their community, which might comprise their village or a few streets on an estate, as a protective entity against threats posed by outsiders. However the source of much anxiety was often locally based - hoodies, young people, 'druggies'. People also described communities within communities, with boundaries of similarity based around age, length of tenure, behaviour and dress as well as an individual's position on a spectrum of faith belief ranging from liberal to evangelical. These locally framed identities seemed to be at least as meaningful and important as class or organised religion in shaping perspectives.

This study's action research found that within small groups, based on church membership or recreational activity, rich and diverse mechanisms were evident that shaped in-group belonging and out-group perspectives. The variety of perspectives emerged in dialogue sessions when facilitators asked participants to describe their community and how they saw people from 'outside'. One dialogue facilitator summarised a conversation between participants of a recreational group, set in a white mono-cultural community with high levels of deprivation but a strong culture amongst participants of being concerned to be seen as 'treating people decently'. The facilitator recorded participants describing their community in the following terms.

"Collectively the group had a lot of good things to say about [name of locality] – people were seen as generous hearted, kindly natured and all present felt that there was a well-developed sense of community. [Name of participant] said that people 'looked after each other' and that they would 'call on you.' Generally people felt that nothing was too much trouble and there were a lot

of fund raising activities that helped the ill or disadvantaged."(Slade 2011 c)

In this group the important issue was the extent to which outsiders 'fitted in.' However, in a group set in a church congregation in a similarly white mono-cultural community, dialogue facilitators reported that people complained about a range of issues in which they saw themselves and their community disadvantaged by outsiders. For example:

"It's not fair that our local chemist puts up a 'Closed for Prayers' sign for several hours as he has to get a bus to the mosque in [name of locality]. I am sure there are lots of Christians and others, who would like to stop work for prayers or to attend a service, but we don't and it causes us a lot of inconvenience." (Slade 2011 d)

At the same dialogue group another person commented

"I know an elderly lady who has been waiting for years for a council house, [in a particular development for elderly people] she has paid all her rates and taxes all her life and now an Afghan girl has been put in before her." (Slade 2011 d)

These contrasting perspectives provide a glimpse of the potential variety of in-group identities – caring in the first situation – discontented in the second example. Both suggest that groups are alive with negative and positive values. Some group processes reflect a strong community ethos - of looking after each other. Others work to build up prejudice against outsiders. Possibly the likelihood of a 'turning point' in the direction of hostility could be observed more clearly in the latter quote from a dialogue conversation describing perceptions of in-group disadvantage, than in the former example of positive in-group views. However both situations suggest that what happens within groups is at

least as relevant, for the propensity of a group to move towards or away from hostility, as the class identity of group members. Whilst to the outside observer, class could represent the most convenient way of framing and understanding a driver of BNP progress, this homogenising overlooks the relevance of other factors.

Governance and Exclusion

Azar (1990) believed that in protracted social conflict settings the extent to which groups have interaction with governance has a critical relationship with the extent to which their needs are met. Alongside this, social – psychological theory suggests that meaningful interaction with a dominant group - one that embodies systems of governance – is also critical for self-esteem mechanisms that seek to address inequality. Bottero (2009) found that disillusionment with and exclusion from mainstream politics was a significant factor underpinning BNP support. To what extent do these positions shed further light on factors behind BNP progress in South Yorkshire?

Within the fieldwork locality there is evidence of disillusionment in and a sense of betrayal by the Labour Party, traditionally expected to look after the needs and expectations of working class people. The roots of this perceived betrayal could be seen to lie in the ambivalent position taken by the Labour Party leadership during the miners' strike of 1984 - 1985 and reinforced later by New Labour narratives.

These feelings surfaced in Barnsley during the 2009 European elections that saw the BNP return an MEP to represent Yorkshire and Humberside in the European Parliamentary Elections. The Barnsley European constituency saw the BNP gather 16.7% of votes - the highest in Yorkshire and Humberside, and the 4th highest in the UK - sufficient in a system of proportional representation, to send an MEP to Brussels. (Kirkup 2009)

Broomby (2009) a BBC journalist investigated the reasons behind this support. His account revealed comments from local citizens that Bottero and others might well identify as precisely those feelings of disillusionment and exclusion that can lead to the support of right-wing extremism. Broomby's account described a sense of betrayal felt by people in 'old' Labour territory.

> "New Labour with its once slick presentation and free market language left some here feeling cold and neglected. This was after all, the stamping ground of the former miner's leader Arthur Scargill....but the pungent cocktail of grievances could see voters here shifting to the fringe parties, even the anti-immigration British National Party (BNP)."I don't understand Labour at all now," says [name of voter] who lost his job a few weeks ago, "Labour was supposed to be for the working people." He feels the party has lost its roots. Now he is considering voting for the UK Independence Party (UKIP) or the BNP." (2009:2)

The result of this sense of disillusionment – of not being valued and needs being ignored – was evident in Broomby's interview with a National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) official.

> "In Barnsley's Miner's Hall, emblazoned with Union banners from conflicts past, Chris Skidmore, chairman of the Yorkshire area NUM says the NUM's "repeated warnings" about the BNP have been ignored by MPs. The BNP "feeds on despair" and "abandonment," he says in doom-laden tones."(2009:2)

Based on Broomby's account of one town in the fieldwork locality, working class identity, when married with disillusionment with the political establishment, begins to make BNP support more likely. Arguably the crucial issue is the extent to which disillusionment begins to interfere with

a sense to which individuals and communities feel they have meaningful influence on governance - or in other words whether there is any point in engaging with a system that individuals and the group believe has let them down.

Disillusionment with governance in the fieldwork locality is difficult to assess other than on a qualitative basis. However voter turnout may serve as a useful proxy. Table 9 below records this data for fieldwork constituencies alongside the UK average and the BNP share of the vote in the last parliamentary election.

TABLE 9 BNP share of vote in fieldwork parliamentary constituencies alongside percentage turnout			
FIELDWORK CONSTITUENCY	BNP % share of vote 2010	%Turnout	% UK Turn out
Barnsley Central	8.9%	56.5%	65.1%
Barnsley East	8.6%	56.1%	
Don Valley	4.9%	59.3%	
Doncaster Central	2.2%	55.5%	
Doncaster North	6.8%	57.3%	
Sheffield South East	5.7%	61.5%	
Sheffield Penistone and Stockbridge	7.8%	67.9%	
Sheffield Central	2.2%	59.6%	
Sheffield Heeley	5.5%	62.0%	
Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough	7.8%	57.1%	
Sheffield Hallam	n/a	73.7%	
Rotherham	10.4%	59.0%	
Rother Valley	7.7%	64.2%	

Sources. iCoCo. *Far Right Electoral and Other Activity. The Challenge for Community Cohesion.* 2011
UK Polling Report http://ukpollingreport.co.uk/guide/seats-yorkshire/
Sheffield Star http://www.thestar.co.uk/news/gen_election_results
BBC 2010 election. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/election_2010/8672976.stm

In 8 of the 12 parliamentary constituencies, in which the BNP fielded a candidate, voter turnout was significantly below the national average. Whilst this is not necessarily a predictor of support for the BNP, it may be an indicator of voter disillusionment with mainstream politics – a prerequisite of conditions favourable to BNP progress. Goodwin and Evans's (2011:20-21) research suggest such a link. They found that well

over three quarters of BNP supporters are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with democracy and that levels of trust in political institutions amongst membership is low. Azar found that:

> "The process of protracted conflict deforms and retards the effective operation of political institutions. It reinforces and strengthens pessimism [and makes it] difficult to initiate the search for answers to...problems and grievances."(1990:16)

Azar's analysis is not confined to situations that see an eruption of open violence. He is also concerned with processes leading up to hostility, where access to governance may become a crucial issue. Seen in this light, low turnout figures suggest disengagement from mainstream politics and by implication access to influence and the control of resources. This detachment can be seen, in part, as self-imposed, and in part, a failure of mainstream parties to reach out to some communities. However, what counts is the sense of exclusion which people feel.

The BNP have not been slow to exploit this situation, aligning their contemporary identity with that of Old Labour whose presence was rooted in the former industrial communities and embedded in trade union and recreational structures. The BNP's 2005 election slogan "We are the Labour Party your grandfathers voted for" (Collins 2006) is a succinct expression of a strategy tailored to meet local perceptions, of people feeling forgotten or ignored. However the consequences are likely to be more than just that of disillusionment. Declining engagement with mainstream political parties will limit the ability of communities to control or influence resources they require to meet their basic needs. This will add to resentment that communities are not getting their 'fair share', providing further ground for the BNP to exploit.

Meeting needs

Azar believed that conflict grows from perceptions that basic needs for security and physical well-being are not adequately met. Social–psychological theory finds that circumstances in which groups feel threatened, rigid boundaries of hostility are erected. Dialogue group participants referred to frequently espoused views in their communities that reflected a threat to basic well-being. They saw 'outsiders' – migrants, Muslims - taking resources, especially employment, and participants felt that BNP strategies were targeted on such fears. However, as this chapter evidences, migration and ethnicity, is demographically low. Given this, is there any other evidence base for such group perspectives?

Data concerning employment opportunities and levels of unemployment provide some 'benchmark' of the capacity of communities to meet a fundamental need relevant to well-being – that of securing income. Table 10 sets out the percentage of the population of working age in the fieldwork towns receiving out of work benefits.

TABLE 10 PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION RECEIVING OUT OF WORK BENEFITS. FEBRUARY 2012					
Barnsley	Rotherham	Doncaster	Sheffield	Yorks/Humb average	GB average
5.3%	5.5%	6.1%	4.9%	5.0%	4.1%

Source: NOMIS. Official Labour Market Statistics. Office for National Statistics.
Data refers to individuals eligible for jobseekers allowance. This is less than the total number of unemployed or economically inactive people.

Table 11 sets out the 'job density' for the working age population.

TABLE 11 JOB DENSITY 2010						
	Barnsley	Rotherham	Doncaster	Sheffield	Yorks/ Humb average	GB average
Job Density 16-65	0.55	0.64	0.68	0.71	0.72	0.77

'Job density' refers to the number of jobs available for each resident aged 16- 64. A density of 1.0 means that there is one job for every resident in the working age population.

With the exception of Sheffield, table 10 indicates higher levels of people receiving out of work benefits across the fieldwork locality than the regional and national average. Table 11 indicates that the number of jobs available to each member of the working age population in all fieldwork localities is less than the regional and national average. Job density is significantly less in Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham, were the BNP has made most progress.

Set against this data, this study argues that resentment focused on competition for jobs, and directed towards outsiders may arise, in part, not from the <u>numbers</u> of outsiders, but rather that <u>any</u> outsiders threaten resources that are significantly scarcer, and under greater pressure than in other areas. However in some fieldwork communities, perceptions of threat posed by outsiders are formed in a wider context of multiple deprivation that further undermines the ability of individuals and communities to meet their basic needs.

MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION

For Azar, the capacity to meet basic needs is fundamental and that individual and communal physical survival and well-being are contingent upon the satisfaction of material needs. He asserts:

"In the world of physical scarcity, these basic needs are seldom evenly or justly met....Grievances resulting from deprivation are usually expressed collectively. Failure to address these grievances by the authority cultivates a niche for protracted social conflict."(1990:9)

Azar's position highlights the relevance of deprivation, both as a barrier to meeting essential needs and as a driver of identity fuelled conflict. Social-psychological group theorists might argue that inequalities - embedded in an inferior status in hierarchical group relationships – are

likely to lead to poor group esteem. Given this, alongside scarce employment resources, levels of deprivation in the fieldwork locality may be a significant factor in tipping people towards support for the BNP.

In order to establish levels of deprivation in the fieldwork areas the researcher utilised 2007 indices of multiple deprivation allowing local, regional and national (England) comparisons to be made (Communities and Local Government 2007). These indices of multiple deprivation are obtained by combining data from the following domains.

- Income deprivation and employment deprivation.

- Health and disability deprivation.

- Education skills and training deprivation.

- Barriers to housing and services deprivation.

- Crime deprivation.

- Living environment deprivation.

The resulting levels of multiple deprivation in a locality are expressed on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the least deprived and 5 being the most deprived quintile. This can be set against quintiles of multiple deprivation for Yorkshire and Humberside, and England. The accompanying maps show the geographic distribution of residents falling into each of the five deprivation quintiles, allowing comparisons to be made within towns and with regional and national deprivation levels. Applying these measures to the fieldwork locality brings forward a revealing picture of multiple deprivation, shown in figures 2-5 below.

Figure 2 Multiple Deprivation in Sheffield
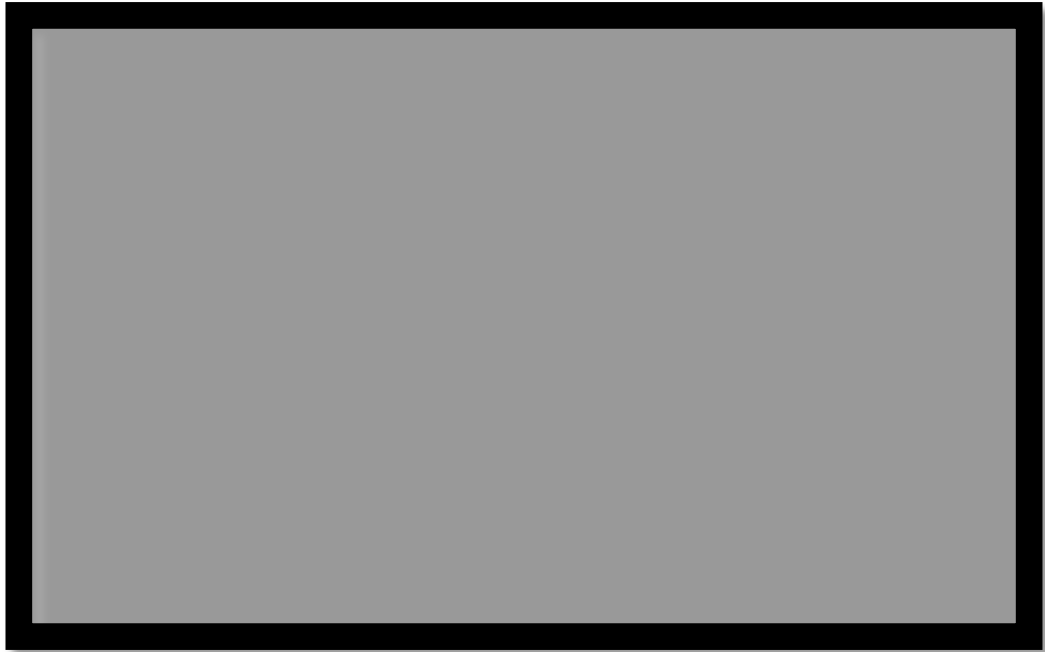
Source 2011. Health Profile Sheffield. Department of Health. 2011

Figure 3 Multiple Deprivation in Barnsley

Source Health Profile 2011. Barnsley. Department of Health .2011.

Figure 4 Multiple Deprivation in Doncaster

Source Health Profile 2011. Doncaster. Department of Health .2011.

Figure 5 Multiple Deprivation in Rotherham

Source Health Profile 2011. Rotherham. Department of Health. 2011.

Figures 2- 5 allow the following conclusions to be drawn.

- In Sheffield, over 50 per cent of the population live in the two most deprived quintiles, compared to 45 per cent regionally and 40 per cent nationally. 17 per cent of the population live in the least deprived quintile. This compares favourably with the regional figure of 15 per cent, but less favourably with the national figure of 20 per cent.
- In Barnsley, 65 per cent of the population live in the two most deprived quintiles. Only 2 per cent of the population live in the least deprived quintile,
- In Doncaster, 64 per cent of the population live in the two most deprived quintiles. 2 per cent of the population live in the least deprived quintile.
- In Rotherham, just over 55 per cent of the population live in the two most deprived quintiles. 5 per cent of the population live in the least deprived quintile.

When compared to regional and national figure, levels of deprivation within some areas of the four fieldwork towns are shockingly high. In three of the fieldwork towns, between 50 per cent and 65 per cent of the population live in the two most deprived quintiles compared with 45 per cent regionally and 40 per cent nationally. The small proportion of the populations of Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham who live in least deprived area is also significant. It is a reasonable assumption that it is from this population grouping that income is likely to be available to stimulate the local economy. The post-millennium New Labour economic boom appears to have left many communities in South Yorkshire untouched and poorly resourced to cope with the demands of contemporary economic recession.

These levels of deprivation will profoundly affect the ability of individuals and communities to meet their basic needs. They are most acutely expressed in health inequalities, and can be summarised through levels of poverty in children and reduced life expectancy in adults as follows.

- In Barnsley nearly 11,500 children live in poverty. In some areas of the town, life expectancy is 8.8 years less for men and 7.7 years less for women, than in the more prosperous areas of the town. (Department of Health 2011a:1)

- In Doncaster 14,825 children live in poverty. Life expectancy is 10.0 years lower for men and 7.1 for women in the most deprived areas than in prosperous parts of the town. (Department of Health 2011b:1)

- In Rotherham 12,745 children live in poverty. In the most deprived areas, life expectancy is 9.9 years lower for men and 7.1 for women than in more prosperous parts of the town. (Department of Health 2011c:1)

- In Sheffield 26,415 children live in poverty. Life expectancy for men is 10.9 years lower, and for women 7 years lower in the least deprived areas than in prosperous areas. (Department of Health 2011 d:1)

A generational cycle of inequality is evident. People living in some areas of the fieldwork locality will encounter a greater chance of their children living in poverty than in other districts - and as adults they are likely to experience significantly shorter lives. Furthermore, whilst figures 2-5 reveal significant unmet needs in communities, this is not a universal picture across all areas in the fieldwork towns. Rather, pockets of deprivation co-exist with areas less, or much less, deprived. Given group identity processes, this situation is likely to give residents of deprived areas a steady reinforcement of feelings of subordination, exclusion, and injustice through readily available comparisons with adjoining

neighbourhoods. The sense of injustice, the reality of which is borne out by the evidence presented here, is of fundamental significance – and it is only the BNP, the group would have some communities believe, that is prepared to address this unfairness.

FUTURE BNP PROGRESS

The triumphalist narratives announcing the defeat of BNP extremism that followed the 2010 general election have not proved to be as well founded as might have been hoped. Certainly, the group has been hamstrung by a financial crisis and internal divisions. However, in the fieldwork locality there is little evidence of any robust strategy or activity that will fundamentally address factors, outlined in this chapter, that move people towards BNP support. These factors remain a live and destabilising influence on communities.

However, meta identities such as class should not be seen as automatically predisposing groups towards right wing extremism. Sveinsson contests conceptions of 'white working class' identity and its role in BNP support (2009:3-7). He points to the relevance of underlying factors such as inequalities, establishment antipathy to meaningful equality based reform, strategies that develop a sense of disadvantage between already disadvantaged groups and media narratives of a feckless underclass. In Sveinsson's view establishment concerns focused on 'working class' identity, can in reality, mask an unwillingness to carry out structural reform that would benefit all disadvantaged communities.

This study found that homogenising group identity within a category of class, and then arguing a greater propensity to right wing extremist support, failed to meaningfully capture the relevance of group identity. Groups are more complex and draw on the experience of belonging to communities and neighbourhoods with rich positive values

that have the capacity to resist extremism. Beider's (2011) research in communities not entirely dissimilar to those in South Yorkshire, found that the BNP was associated, by some people, as having too extremist a viewpoint on race and immigration. Some people involved in his research -

"...did not want to be associated as individuals or groups with such a label. They regarded it [the BNP]…as unrepresentative and something that stigmatises communities."(2011:50)

Some of the community dialogue participants involved in this research articulated similar views, one commenting that:

"The BNP won't take control here. We know what they are about; we wouldn't let that take hold." (Slade 2011 b)

Yet set against these views is the extent to which the BNP provide a focus for articulating concerns and hostility - a number of this study's research participants described the group's capacity to stir up discontent and trouble. Factors precipitating this discontent continue to be alive and thrive, fanned by a contemporary globalised economic crisis. Given this, Goodwin and Evan's (2011:24-27) research findings are of concern. They found disillusionment amongst BNP members, arising from the organisation's failure to make a significant breakthrough into established governance. A number of its supporters, they found, now believe that violence between different ethnic groups is inevitable and that action to prepare for armed conflict is justifiable.

Whilst this may be the case, this scenario is by no means a certainty. South Yorkshire is not in imminent danger of erupting into ethnic violence, however there is a need for action to prevent the BNP

continuing to establish and embed a support base. Beider reveals that amongst his research participants:

"There was little support found, among those interviewed, for the BNP or indeed other far right organisations. On the contrary, residents wanted local government and politicians to listen to their views and develop solutions that would resolve deep-seated grievances." (2011:56)

Such findings resonate strongly with views expressed within dialogue groups in this study - people want to talk, and be listened to. The next chapter will explore how an inter-faith initiative went about the complex task of encouraging people to articulate their feelings in a process not dissimilar to the empathic and sympathetic stance towards communities and people adopted by the BNP.

CHAPTER CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has discussed socio-economic factors behind the growth of BNP support in South Yorkshire, through an analysis using social-psychological theory, protracted social conflict methodology and the views of action research participants. Conclusions are structured around the broad themes utilised, those of trends in BNP electoral support, the influences of migration and ethnicity, Islamophobic discourses and group identity.

BNP support in the fieldwork locality parliamentary constituencies, measured by percentage share of voting, has exceeded their national average performance in the last two general elections. The BNP's share of the vote in national, local and European elections since 2005 indicates an upward trend in electoral support. Yet there is a paradox. Whilst their overall share of the vote has increased, this is at odds with a significant loss of seats in local elections.

The BNP's general failure to retain ward seats in local elections may be indicative of their lack of interest in, and patience with, the grind of day-to-day politics that makes up the work of elected members of local authorities. Furthermore, the BNP can be seen as a largely single-issue group. Their membership, electoral candidates and councillors may be more suited to direct action than the formal etiquette of governance. It is also possible that elements of the electorate are prepared to vote for the BNP because the group most reflects their discontent. However, the actual experience of having a BNP councillor may prove to be disappointing - immigration remains as an issue and there is no evidence that action to tackle injustice and unfairness is in hand.

The second theme considered the extent to which external influences of migration and ethnicity are constructed to represent a threat to the culture and resources of white mono-cultural communities. External linkages of migration and ethnicity are seen by some as a threat to group material resources. People fear a loss of employment resources to migrants and identify people of different ethnicity as a danger to group culture. However, ethnic diversity is lower in the fieldwork locality than the regional and national average. Allied to this, migration data, albeit unreliable, argues that pressure resulting from new arrivals is less in the fieldwork locality than in other parts of Yorkshire and Humberside and the UK.

Ethnicity and migration data suggests that neither diversity, nor new arrivals, represent a realistic threat to community resources. However, this has not prevented the BNP from articulating that such groups are a danger to community well-being. The group opportunistically exploited a dispute about migrant workers - that was real - and then wove the resulting concerns into wider racist and Islamophobic narratives of 'we are being overrun' by foreigners, that was

far from reality. The single issue became a divisive generalisation, in a powerful example of the use of the 'single narrative'.

Arguably this strategy builds on a community's awareness that they have fewer resources, and therefore less to share with new arrivals, than other parts of the region and the UK. Low ethnic diversity means that perspectives of outsiders are less likely to be formed through direct interaction, pointing to the relevance of Islamophobic narratives in shaping group views of Muslims and Islam

Conclusions regarding the third theme - the part played within the fieldwork locality by European and UK discourses of Islamophobia - suggest an important aspect of BNP strategy is to identify outsiders and especially Muslims as threats to group culture and resources. Low levels of ethnic diversity in the fieldwork locality could make this more difficult to achieve. However Islamophobic and divisive media narratives fill this gap with texts and images that are unfiltered by positive personal and group experience of interaction, commonly found in more cosmopolitan environments. Such narratives provide an anxiety-laden backcloth to BNP strategies. The BNP has also made astute adoption and use of Christian religious belief that has both helped distance the group from their now unacceptable roots in biological racism and anti-Semitism and opened a portal for engagement with church congregations. The researcher argues that this attempt at engagement with Christian communities is not an example of the role of faith in community cohesion. Rather, the strategy is an example of pernicious individuals and groups adopting an identity enabling them to build support and influence.

In the final theme of this chapter's analytical framework, protracted social conflict variables were married with social psychological group processes to explore drivers of BNP support.

Analysis of the evidence presented suggests an aspect of BNP strategy is to target working class communities with an empathic narrative that interacts with feelings of resentment, exclusion and injustice. The BNP offer a sense of continuity and a return to halcyon days of security, with citizens living comfortably in communities within a protective identity of dominant national and white Christian values. This BNP strategy establishes similarity with in-group identity, and reinforces narratives of hostile outsiders, thereby strengthening boundaries around group identity that, in protracted social conflict settings, can become the focus of hostility.

Strategies that establish similarity with in-group identity are reflected in the BNP's most significant support coming from a cohort of working class communities. However it is mistaken to homogenise this identity as a predictor of extreme right wing support. Other factors come in to play, related to the unique circumstances of individual groups and communities, where group identity processes work to preserve self-esteem. These can draw on positive group values that could either promote coexistence with 'outsiders' - or serve to move a group towards hostility.

In the fieldwork locality, establishing similarity with in-group identity appears to have been helped by the extent to which some communities appear to be estranged from mainstream political parties and especially the Labour Party, who have been perceived by white working class communities as having ignored their needs and interests. This anger can be seen to have built on a niche of long-term resentment resulting from industrial decline in general and the 1984-1985 miners' strike in particular. Individuals and groups feel excluded from participation in governance, and by implication, influence over the allocation of resources. This resentment and exclusion represents an important protracted social

conflict variable that can be seen to play a key role in the development of identity-based hostility. Social-psychological group identity theory argues that exclusion is likely to reinforce group feelings of subordination. The researcher suggests that by moving in the direction of the empathic response, the BNP has offered an improvement in group esteem and a potential route of reasserting dominance over out-groups such as migrants and Muslims.

Furthermore, the researcher finds that the factors that seem to critically tip the balance towards support for the BNP in the fieldwork localities are those of scarce employment resources and high levels of multiple deprivation. Severally and jointly they profoundly limit the ability of communities and individuals to meet their needs, whilst social-psychological group theory indicates that the effect is likely to be poor group esteem and rigid boundaries seeking to protect in-group resources from 'outsiders'. Protracted social conflict methodology sees this type of rigid group identity difference as critical in creating a propensity for violence.

Some BNP supporters see violence between ethnic groups as a likely future scenario, presenting frightening prospects for the small ethnic minority communities in the fieldwork locality. However such extremism is not inevitable. Structural reform to address inequalities is well overdue, but is unlikely to be progressed in the current economic, social and political climate. Yet much could be done to defuse hostility and latent violence by enabling people in vulnerable communities to talk about why they feel as they do. The next three chapters of the study explore the rationale, process and outcomes of an initiative focused on this objective.

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CHAPTER 5

THE ROLE OF FAITH AND RELIGIOUS VALUES IN CHALLENGING HOSTILE PREJUDICE AND STEREOTYPES

The previous chapter explored factors driving support for the BNP in South Yorkshire. This chapter will utilise action research findings that have arisen from collaboration with the inter-faith CD project to discuss the role played by faith in challenging BNP divisive hostility.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter address's the study's fourth central question:

- What role did faith and faith values play in challenging hostile prejudice and stereotypes in the action research locality?

This chapter discusses action research findings that arose from the researcher's collaboration with the CD project. The findings are structured around specific themes that underpinned interviews carried out by the researcher with CD project management committee members. These themes were:

- Inter-faith partnership working and personal motivation
- The purpose and relevance of project activities
- The role of faith in dialogue
- The relevance of networking with key partners and stakeholders
- Objectives for the project's future development.

The chapter makes use of contemporary research relevant to CD project activity that builds on the study's literature review and locates the project in research relevant to inter-faith working and faith engagement in public affairs. An explanation of the methodology and a description of the governance and principal activities of the CD project

follow this. The main body of the chapter is a detailed presentation of research findings and analysis that address the study's fourth key question.

EXISTING RESEARCH. INTER-FAITH WORKING AND THE ROLE OF FAITH

The study's literature review (chapter 2) found that in contemporary UK society, faith has an increasingly prominent presence. Debates amongst the establishment elite as to the type of faith that is 'acceptable', jostle with the narratives of those who argue against faith having any formal role in societal governance and public life. Dinham, Furbey and Lowndes (2009) argue that faith believers can be seen as the 'other' and that mutual acceptance of the positions held by secularist and faith believers need to be found. A possible route for addressing this 'otherness' can be seen in Chapman and Lowndes (2008) discussion of faith in governance. They highlight the commitment of faith groups to the interests of excluded sections of the population and suggest the potential for those involved in governance working with faith believers to identify common ground and avoid focussing on competing values.

The CD project, based on inter-faith cooperation, and with its roots in a public challenge to divisive extremism, can be seen as a practical example of the type of action that responds to these positions. A concern to work with members of excluded communities, irrespective of whether groups held faith or secular positions, was intrinsic to CD project purpose – 'mutual acceptance' was a cornerstone of project values through a non-judgemental approach to dialogue activity. Furthermore this purpose was framed by a wider community cohesion agenda, requiring cooperation with different aspects of governance, giving common ground for interaction.

The inter-faith nature of the CD project may have been significant in the project's efforts to avoid any challenge – other than from the BNP – to faith playing a visible role, both in addressing societal concerns and - given the BNP's electoral progress - making an explicit intervention in the democratic process. Given this, the CD project's inter-faith status merits some consideration.

Inter-faith activity and partnership working has been the subject of both government policy and academic research. Weller's (2009) discussion of faith participation in public life draws a distinction between multifaith and inter-faith activity. In his view the term 'multifaith' is an appropriate description for any event or project that sees people from different religious groups coming together. For Weller, such events can be distinguished from inter-faith activity which he suggests indicates: "... the relationships between religions and the people who belong to them."(2009:63) This definition suggests an environment of continuity and purposeful engagement between faiths, rather than a single event or 'one-off' project with a time limited focus. Give this, the work of the CD project can be seen as inter-faith, since it was rooted in productive interactions between religious groups that were consistent features of inter-faith partnership working. The term inter-faith is therefore used in the text as best expressing the CD project's inception, purpose and management.

Inter-faith working has previously been identified as a community cohesion resource. The 2008 Department of Communities and Local Government strategy "Face-to-Face and Side-by-Side" identified faith groups and inter-faith forums as useful processes for delivering strategies that could develop shared values and contribute to collaborative action that sought to improve community cohesion in local neighbourhoods(2008:8). However Furbey's (2008) review of faith in

community cohesion argues that the extent and diversity of faith in the lives of individuals and communities means religion is never homogeneous and is unlikely to act as a passive and acquiescent conduit through which 'top-down' policy can be delivered(2008:123). Whilst Furbey and central Government's respective positions do not suggest unanimity about the type of role faith could play in community cohesion, there is clear agreement that faith does have a role.

Singh and Cowdens (2011) question this assertion in their review of religion in public policy. They argue that whilst the concept of multiculturalism has been problematised for encouraging difference and separateness, the growing influence of faith groups in developing solutions to community cohesion issues has escaped critical scrutiny by researchers and that too little attention has been paid as to the extent that faith is truly representative. The authors' argue that what is required is:

> "…a new political discourse of egalitarianism which is unashamedly universalist and secular."(2011:343)

They suggest that this could be formed through an alliance between progressive secularists and faith believers who come together to address problematic issues. Their perspective can be seen to reflect wider societal narratives considered earlier in the study - the problem is not just the role of religion but also that there is too much, and, it is too influential.

Singh and Cowden's position contrasts with research by Dinham and Lowndes (2008) who describe a variety of roles for faith communities, organisations, networks, leaders and representatives in becoming involved in public life and governance in particular. They articulate the potential role of faith in engagement with societal issues and structures through a concept of three 'narratives'. These provide a

useful framework for assessing the role of faith in partnership working that led to CD project inception, and subsequent management.

Their first narrative sees policymakers engage with faith because of the resources it brings. These resources can be seen as human capital (staff and volunteers) social capital (networks) physical capital (buildings) and financial capital (2008:829). The authors see this approach as hierarchical and bureaucratic.

A second narrative approaches engagement from the perspective of faith communities and refers to faith believers taking part in activities relevant to their personal motivation. In this narrative the focus is on religious or spiritual capital, rather than social goods. It does not assume that believers are also members of faith organisations, or that faith leaders automatically have representative connections with faith communities. What is important is that a faith community is primarily a place of worship and fellowship – rather than a resource bank that can help to achieve policy objectives (2008:843).

The authors identify a third narrative which sees faith communities actively involved in activities and local partnerships, in order to secure better representation for communities. In this narrative the role of faith is to improve and enhance governance and address social exclusion by contributing knowledge, expertise and the authoritative status of faith leaders and representatives (2008:838-839).

Dinham and Lowndes acknowledge that the role of faith groups, including in partnership arrangements that involve faith groups, is never straightforward. Questions will always remain as to how decision-making processes operate and the extent to which those involved are present in the role of partner, or as representative of groups. Arguably such a caveat may be true of all those, whether religious or secular, involved in

public life in general and partnership working in particular. The authors believe that, since there is no shared model for faith engagement with communities, policymakers and secular partners may have different perspectives with regard to the role of faith in public engagement (2008:841). Nonetheless, Dinham and Lowndes provide a useful context for the study's action research findings. The following case study describing the CD project provides a firm grounding for presentation of the research findings.

THE COMMUNITY DIALOGUE PROJECT

The inter-faith CD dialogue project was established in January 2010 to counter the rise of right-wing extremism in South Yorkshire. Funded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) the project has the following aims and strategic result areas (CD project:2010a).

Aims

- To work together to understand individuals' experiences and the processes that can address prejudice and, through dialogue and the challenge of their respective faith and value systems, to learn together to transform prejudice and challenge racism.
- To enable groups from our different cultures, ethnic groups and faiths to build relationships, to work together on shared problems and to look to one another for support to challenge racist and divisive ideologies in our communities.
- To challenge racist and divisive perspectives by giving more voice in the media to those individuals and groups which recognise diversity as normal.
- To work to promote an understanding of difference as positive and contributing to the richness of our communities.

- To gather and disseminate learning on how these aims are most effectively achieved in practice.

Strategic Result Areas

- People in faith groups in South Yorkshire which are vulnerable to divisive & racist politics are more aware of and able to challenge racism and faith-based prejudice in themselves and others.
- People in communities in South Yorkshire which are vulnerable to divisive & racist politics develop a greater understanding of and where possible, form links with, groups and communities of different faith/ethnicity with which they would not ordinarily mix and are more receptive to alternative narratives.
- Within the media across South Yorkshire there is a shift in favour of messages that challenge divisive coverage of community relations such that awareness is raised of alternative narratives (CD project 2010a).

Project Activities

These aims and strategic result areas were delivered through three project activities (CD project 2010b).

1. Provide Safe Spaces within which difficult dialogues around racism and faith-based prejudice can take place.
2. Support and encourage interaction between groups/communities that do not ordinarily mix.
3. Develop a communications strategy that will counter the effect of divisive reporting in the media; empower community groups and individuals to work with the media.

Immediately prior to project commencement the funding body withdrew financial support for activity 2. Seen in the context of community cohesion and peacebuilding theory this decision runs

counter to learning outcomes that encourage interaction between communities as a method for reducing tensions and hostility. However, a consequence of this funding decision was that the CD project could focus on the remaining two activities.

Project Governance

The project was rooted, in and developed within inter-faith partnership working arrangements in South Yorkshire. This partnership working underpinned CD project inception, provided endorsement of the project's activities and included the provision of essential practical support in relation to day-to-day governance. This support included:

- One partner organisation providing the CD project with office accommodation and associated support
- Another partner providing legal, human resource and payroll support so staff could be properly employed. This included placing employees on the partner employment establishment and providing financial and administrative management. This partner also undertook day-to-day management and supervision of the lead paid employee
- All partner agencies facilitated access to their social networks in order to promote the work of the CD project and its engagement in local communities
- All the partners nominated individuals of sufficient seniority and influence to form a core membership of the CD project's management committee.

Management Committee

The CD project's management committee was the focus of governance and accountability for the founding partner organisations and had sole responsibility for all project activity. This group operated within clear terms of reference that included accountability and

decision-making processes consistent with standards that promote good quality public and third sector services.

The management committee convened on a monthly basis. Each meeting worked through a prepared agenda and was minuted. Meetings focused on a review of project activities, maintained financial accountability through reports of income and expenditure, and made decisions about the project's strategic direction.

At the commencement of the action research phase of this study the management committee comprised Anglican, Methodist, Muslim, Jewish, Catholic, Quaker and Buddhist perspectives. The researcher's co-option onto the management committee, in line with the research agreement, coincidentally provided a secular (or in the words of one committee member a humanistic) viewpoint.

Staff and Budget

At the time of the action research the project had one full time equivalent project manager and a part time media officer. In 2010 the CD project was awarded £90,000 over a 15 month period to cover all expenses.

Project Target Group

From the outset the CD project aimed to work with white, primarily working class communities – reflecting the practical experience of project founders and managers that such groups were most vulnerable to BNP strategies of building support in local communities. The focus was not on active supporters of the BNP, but rather the critical mass of people who might be encouraged to move in the direction of extremist support. The primacy given to maintaining a non-judgemental perspective, allied with the spectrum of faith belief evident in management committee membership, enabled the CD project to work

with both religious and secular groups. However the initial focus was on the former, a reflection of the project's extensive networks in religious groups, allied with pressure from the funding body that required evidence of rapid and substantive progress in order to maintain financial support.

Safe Spaces Dialogue Facilitators

Dialogue facilitation services were commissioned from a locally based third sector mediation organisation, although some members of the management committee, and paid members of staff, also facilitated dialogue. Whether externally commissioned or provided from within the organisation, all those who filled this role were required to be skilled and experienced in facilitation methodology. Since provision of 'Safe Spaces' dialogue, is central to the study's action research this aspect of the CD project's work is defined below.

Safe spaces dialogue

Where different communities are perceived to face each other within rigid boundaries of separateness or hostility, community cohesion and peacebuilding strategies advocate <u>inter-community</u> dialogue as a process leading to peaceful coexistence. Broadly, the aim is to identify common ground between groups, thereby reducing tensions that could be exploited to generate inter-group hostility.

However in some circumstances contact between groups is neither possible nor is it the most effective way forward. This may be because a group is neither ready, nor willing, to meet members of other groups, or there is little or no opportunity to do so. Such situations were typical of some communities in the fieldwork locality, where BNP divisive narratives were taking root. Given this, how were hostile prejudices and stereotypes towards out-groups to be addressed?

CD project founders and managers were aware of these in-group positions and consequently sought an alternative route to inter-community dialogue. Their empathic familiarity with communities in the fieldwork locality led them to identify the relevance of providing opportunities for people to talk with each other, in a non-judgemental environment, inside their 'own' group. The aim of such conversations was to explore the difficult feelings on which extremists feed, without the expectation of participants meeting another group. The CD project referred to this approach as 'Safe Spaces' although the concept can also be understood as <u>intra-community</u> dialogue. A description and analysis of this process is a key outcome of this study's action research and forms the core of the next chapter.

METHODOLOGY

Chapter 1 discussed the study's action research method employed by the researcher and applied in this element of fieldwork as follows.

The researcher explored partnership working at project inception and in subsequent development, the rationale for project activities, and, crucially, what project activity revealed regarding the role played by faith values in contemporary community cohesion. This work also aimed to support project development by capturing views regarding current activity and future CD project development and could be used to support decision-making about future strategic direction.

Method

Eleven of the twelve members of the committee participated in the interviews. This included two paid employees who attended committee meetings. The research used a semi-structured interview schedule, largely consisting of open questions, and devised to enable

respondents to answer a series of preplanned questions and give them the opportunity to add any further information or views they considered relevant. Part of the interview schedule was based on project documentation and included statements framed within a Likert scale to capture complex data, for example evaluations of the engagement of, and contributions made by partners and stakeholders. The schedule was reviewed and commented on by two members of the committee who formed part of the action research cooperative enquiry group. The group adapted a number of questions in order to identify data, which would assist the CD project in deciding on a future strategic direction.

Each participant was sent a pre-interview copy of the questionnaire. Following unanimous agreement, audio recordings were made of each interview. Participants were subsequently sent a transcript of the meeting and were invited to make amendments as necessary. Following these amendments participants were sent a final transcript.

Each interview lasted on average ninety minutes, took place at a venue and time convenient to the participant and was carried out on the understanding that an individual's identity was anonymous. This requirement has been strictly adhered to both in this study and in the written and verbal report of research findings that were made to the project's management committee.

All those involved were cooperative, gave freely of their time and spoke with frankness and clarity about their engagement with the project, their role in developing CD Project dialogue methods and their hopes and expectations for the process.

Timing

The research was planned and conducted between November 2010 and January 2011. The written findings were circulated and orally presented to committee members in March 2011.

Analysis and Presentation of Findings

Interviewee's responses to each question were transcribed and subjected to rigorous analysis. Themes and subcategories within these themes were identified under which responses to each question could be organised. The action research findings are presented as an analytical narrative that follows the sequence of questions used by the researcher when interviewing management committee members. The intention is to avoid an overly structured discussion of findings that could detract from the unique and often personal views that people shared in relation to their perspectives of the role of faith in addressing progress made by the BNP.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

INTER-FAITH PARTNERSHIP WORKING AND PERSONAL MOTIVATION

Participants were asked what, from their viewpoint, had been the motivation for developing the CD project. In responding to this question people drew a distinction between motivation, as in the formal reasons why the project was set up, and their personal motivation for becoming involved. When considering the former, four main themes emerged.

Formal motivation

- A concern within inter-faith forums about the effect on communities of the growing electoral support for the far right in South Yorkshire.
- Building on the faith leader's stand at election time.

- A perceived need to provide time, safety and space for dialogue about the root causes, attitudes and beliefs that provide support for the far right.
- The need to challenge divisive messages and an opportunity to put out positive messages.

Discussion and Analysis - Formal Motivation

Interview respondents identified the need to challenge racism, Islamophobia and the BNP in South Yorkshire. They saw motivation for the project as building on work that had already been undertaken by faith leaders, especially their joint statements during elections, where members of the public had been encouraged to use their votes to stop the BNP(Carnelley 2009). Generally, respondents saw the faith leaders as adopting a visible presence in opposition to right wing extremism, particularly in white working class areas.

Some people saw the faith leader's election statement as having, by its very nature, only a short-term effect. There was a need to build on this and engage with some of the deeper underlying issues. Alongside this a majority of respondents saw a clear need for deeper discussion around the causes of support for the far right. Some saw encouraging dialogue as having the potential to improve cohesion by challenging prejudiced views whilst the motivation of other interviewees was the recognition that vulnerability to divisive politics was also present in churches. Providing time and safety to engage in dialogue those who may be drawn towards the BNP, was seen by some as an important step forward in addressing the causes of what might make communities vulnerable to the influence of the far right.

In general, there was recognition of the need to go beyond, in one respondent's words "election time posture politics" (Slade 2010 a)

and explore what makes communities vulnerable to the right wing voice. One respondent emphasised:

> "... the need to create a space of trust and dialogue which went beyond I'm right and you're wrong." (Slade 2010h)

Some respondents referred to the need to put the other side of the story from that found in the right wing press and the narratives of right wing organisations. Taking action to meet this need proved in the eyes of all participants to be one of the most important and complex areas of project activity. However, over a year after project commencement it remained a priority under which much still needed to be achieved.

Personal Motivation

Participants revealed personal motivations for helping to set up the project or becoming involved at a later stage. Their responses were categorised under the following five themes.

- Personal experience of racism and faith-based prejudice.
- Personal political motivation.
- Personal faith and value system.
- Personal attraction to project processes.
- Personal attraction to multi-faith partnership working.

Discussion and Analysis - Personal Motivation

Some interviewees described individual experience of racism and a culture of scapegoating. Others referred to experience of the defensiveness, anger, fear and loss that makes some white communities vulnerable to divisive politics. Experience of working in deprived localities with strong support for the BNP had led some to a personal understanding of why right wing extremism might do well in some areas.

Several respondents described their personal motivation as drawing on their experience as anti-racist campaigners. This included

working to oppose extremism in both faith-community and secular contexts. Others described personal concerns that right-wing politics are making ground in some areas. Indeed, one respondent saw the CD project, more as countering extremism than promoting cohesion (Slade 2010 c).

A majority of respondents described their personal faith and value system that served as important motivators for their engagement with the project. For some, this led to their motivation by "...human rather than religious perspectives" (Slade 2010d). One respondent described a belief in 'transformation': that nobody was beyond being reached and that people are drawn towards the BNP because they feel someone is listening to them (Slade 2010d). Several respondents described a Christian perspective leading to a commitment to social justice, concern about deprivation and the poor self-image of some communities. For one respondent, engaging with the project was embedded in faith values and concern about the growing acceptance and tolerance of antipathy which in the past climaxed in the Holocaust.

All respondents were clearly attracted by the nature of CD project's methods. One person who had joined the management committee after project inception commented: "...it was the most wonderful thing, it was heart-warming, people really care."(Slade 2010b) Alongside this, the innovative nature of the project ethos and its efforts to work in the middle ground, with people who could move towards or away from extremism, were important factors. Most interviewees highlighted the importance of the project working with local communities. Grassroots, neighbourhood engagement, working with communities to address some of their fears before they become bigger issues, and getting beyond the posture politics of election time, were all cited as factors that attracted interviewees to the project. For some

respondents, creating a situation where people could feel safe was a feature that appealed to them. For others, the project offered the opportunity to learn about and improve understanding of other cultures.

A majority of respondents saw the inter-faith aspect of the project, and the focus on addressing right wing extremism, as personally important. Indeed, they felt that the inter-faith partnership background to the project, reflecting the experience of good relationships between faith leaders and within faith forums, has been the critical springboard for any project achievement.

ROLE IN ESTABLISHING THE PROJECT

The researcher asked participants if they had a role in establishing the project. The aim was to explore the extent to which partnership working between individuals and organisations was significant in making progress. At the time of the research six people said they did have such a role, and five said they had joined the management committee at a later stage. This response can be seen as indicating the evolving nature of the project, suggesting the likelihood that new arrivals would bring different perspectives to those held by project founders. It was noteworthy that any new viewpoints seem to have been incorporated without any shift away from the project's aims and without any obvious organisational or relationship tensions.

Analysis of the detailed responses of those who did have a role in establishing the project saw the following four themes emerge.

- Partnership working in identifying funding and, or, co-writing bids.
- Using networking and partnership arrangements.
- Negotiating and developing the three core project activities.
- The development of governance and financial management.

Discussion and analysis

As in responses to the previous question, themes of networking and being able to build constructively on existing partnership working were strong. A number of people made a connection between establishing the project and their involvement with faith forums, or a personal commitment to the project's central activities.

At the planning stage there was clearly a high level of debate surrounding the purpose, shape and priority the project should give to possible activities. Each potential piece of work clearly had a champion supporting its cause. In this sense the ethos of constructive partnership working was crucial and played out in a practical way. What also appears to have been important is that a background of macro, faith-based partnership working was reflected in the micro relationships between the project founders which thrived through some testing discussions - the essence of high quality partnership working - and arrived at a position where the project focused "…where it needed to be." (Slade 2010f) People made compromises around ideas to which they were passionately committed. This process of mutual challenging is likely to have made the end result more robust and practical.

Equally important was to blend faith-based, political and social values with the need to make sure progress was founded on high quality governance. Without robust financial and management systems, the objectives of those aspiring to make progress would have floundered. The importance of this aspect of project development must not be overlooked, for without it there is no chance of sustainable progress.

Of the five people interviewed who did not have a role in establishing the project, two were employees. Three further respondents had become involved through membership of their faith communities or their participation in a faith and justice forum. This new membership

enriched the initial group composition responsible for project development.

ROLE AS A MEMBER OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Participants were asked to describe their role as a member of the management committee. The researcher was keen to discover to what extent faith values were evident in the way in which participants approached management committee responsibilities. However analysis of responses identified three broad themes that were surprisingly secular.

- Being a team player.
- Having a specific role in the management committee.
- Having a specific role in external relations.

Discussion and Analysis

Being a team player was an important role for some respondents. This included keeping committee members informed about progress and activities across all project areas. For others, drawing on the experience and knowledge of group members thereby ensuring collective decision-making and participation in committee decisions, were important aspects of how people approached their individual roles.

A majority of respondents saw themselves fulfilling a specific role within the project management committee. For one, this included helping the committee understand what life is like for the Muslim community and feeding back what the project was trying to achieve. For another, providing expertise in promoting and facilitating dialogue was seen as their key role. Other interviewees identified a specific interest in one or more project activities such as the communication objective and a further participant made a specific contribution through the line management of staff. Often, more than one role was followed.

A number of people saw themselves as having a specific role in external relations. Generally speaking, a crucial aspect of project progress lies in an extensive network of relationships within which the CD project sits. Critical amongst these were relationships with potential funders, personal relationships with community groups and friends and professional relationships with facilitators. Some members also had a role to act as an interface between the project, their faith community, local authorities and third sector partners and stakeholders. One person represented the organisation formally responsible for the project's financial management and governance. The diversity of networks was remarkable, if only in the variety of religious and secular identity and organisational boundaries that such a relatively small project crossed.

However, a minority of respondents suggested some uncertainly and frustration about their role, finding it difficult to become engaged in the project beyond attendance at committee meetings. These tended to be respondents who joined the committee after the CD project was underway. Of this group, some saw an aspect of project activity, for example safe spaces dialogue, as work with which they would like to become more engaged. This suggested a need to ensure that the project was fully aware of and took the opportunity to exploit the expertise of all its committee members - the researcher recommended that an audit of skills and interests might be useful in enabling members to express interest in one or more project activities that they would be able to support.

THE PURPOSE AND RELEVANCE OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Interviewees were asked to evaluate whether the three core activities, established at project inception, remained relevant. Establishing these views was important in relation to the project's future strategic direction – an outcome of the action research agreement – as

well as having the potential to provide the researcher with deeper insight regarding the role of faith in addressing the impact of the BNP.

This evaluation fell into three parts, each one related to a specific project activity as described earlier. Interviewees were asked to rate their views regarding each outcome, its relevance and to explain why they came to this conclusion. This rating was achieved by inviting committee members to make a choice as to whether the outcome remained relevant, mostly relevant, hardly relevant or not at all relevant.

Project outcome 1

Project outcome 1: "Participants in safe space sessions are able to explore complex issues such as racism and faith-based prejudice and consider how to respond to them from within their faith or value system." (CD Project 2010)

All interviewees felt that this objective remained fully relevant, was a central part of the project and that they had a strong commitment to it. The researcher's analysis of comments revealed a number of themes including:

- changing attitudes
- a local approach to safe spaces
- safe spaces: a very different approach to most antiracist activities
- a faith/value based focus
- the effectiveness of safe space sessions
- looking to the future.

Discussion and Analysis

For some respondents, making a difference on the ground meant it was important to find a way of changing the attitudes of ordinary people, not just leadership figures. This engagement was seen as

involving people in discussing issues such as prejudice and racism that are difficult to talk about – in one interviewee's words:

> "...if you don't get people to talk, it will be difficult for them to change." (Slade 2010f)

This perspective was reflected in many responses - representing a cornerstone of CD project methodology. Encouraging people to talk about what they feel and why they feel in a particular way opens an opportunity to look at the causes and implications of prejudice. The BNP have successfully employed similar strategies - although in the context of inflaming rather than reducing hostility.

The importance of working with the 'very local' in communities was strongly embedded in participant perspectives. In the view of one interviewee some people live very locally and are afraid of outside influences that might touch them (Slade 2010h). Another interviewee emphasised the importance of engaging in conversations with people about what life is like within their community - in order to respond to their concerns. (Slade 2010d) Another respondent saw clear connections between wider events and local issues.

> "How people see and approach the big issues is coloured by... local fears, so addressing the very local is the best place to start." (Slade 2010e)

Responses highlighted the innovative and unique nature of the concept of safe spaces dialogue. One respondent saw anti-racist activity and events as being supported by people who were already committed anti-racists - however in reaching out to other people who were not similarly engaged, giving them a racist label was, in the view of a majority of interviewees, unhelpful. They felt it could stop discussion and make people become defensive instead of exploratory. Indeed one

interviewee emphasised the importance of dialogue with people who don't agree with an anti-racist perspective (Slade 2010e).

Given this, there was unanimous agreement that it was essential for people to feel safe to talk about what:

"...everyone is thinking about but not talking about - they don't talk because they might be accused of being racist." (Slade 2010e)

However a number of respondents articulated the difficulties of creating a climate of trust where conversations could take place in a way that enabled people to move beyond the 'I'm right, you're wrong' mainstream antiracist strategy. For one interviewee this required a climate where people could:

"…trust each other, where people feel safe, loved and accepted for who they are, and where they know their fears and anxieties are listened to and addressed…" (Slade 2010h).

In the words of another interviewee:

"...in safe space sessions we hear that participants feel the need and appreciate the opportunity to talk about these things - even when the initial message is 'I'm not sure where this is going to go- or I'm not sure about having this discussion." (Slade 2010d)

Applying faith and other value systems to safe space dialogue sessions was arguably, one of the most complex areas of project activity. One interviewee suggested that people who practice a faith tend to be kind and caring people. In this person's view safe spaces were important for people who <u>do</u> have a faith, but <u>do not</u> practice it in relation to racism and faith-based prejudice (Slade 2010b).

The views provided by another respondent further affirmed the relevance of faith values in this aspect of CD project activity and considered that Christian doctrine would not support racism and prejudice. They added that it is permissible to question the faith or value system of others, but this should not happen on the basis of prejudice, but rather through information, experience and contact (Slade 2010f). For another interviewee the values which safe spaces dialogue touch on are wider than faith and are equally important in changing the way an individual thinks about things. For this person:

"...it's not just faith, it is a trigger in your value system that can challenge you, why you believe in a particular myth about people." (Slade 2010i)

Based on these views, faith, in itself, would not prevent prejudice arising, nor would it be the only relevant resource through which it could be addressed. Indeed a concern for several interviewees was the extent to some which members of Christian congregations were thought to be supportive of BNP ideology. Most respondents felt that other values and influences were as significant as faith.

It appears that whilst faith may be an opening for establishing and beginning a safe space conversation, other identities and norms need to be considered to be able to progress a dialogue session. In the words of one respondent:

"...in the safe spaces, sometimes faith is explicit - for example what does faith say about this - but most of the time it is in the background." (Slade 2010j)

Evaluating the effectiveness of safe space dialogue is challenging. This reflects a broader issue involving any project that seeks to achieve attitude change - measuring how much change occurs, when it occurs

and to what extent it is direct, indirect or incremental, is always problematic. Furthermore, change may not bring about improvement, but rather prevent a situation or attitude from getting worse. One interviewee referred to such difficulties, although in their view, whilst outcomes may be difficult to measure "...things can still happen even if you can't measure them." (Slade 2010g) Another interviewee emphasised the importance of the indirect impact of safe space dialogue sessions.

> "...hopefully those people [safe space dialogue participants] will go away and influence ten different people." (Slade 2010b)

This position is supported by theory and practice with groups who are involved in conflict. 'Indirect contact' - in this context hearing about somebody's experiences and change of views - can be as important in reducing hostility as taking part in an activity first hand.

In looking to the future, one interviewee commented that safe space dialogue sessions consume a significant amount of project resources but reach a relatively small number of people. Such a process was, in this interviewee's view, not particularly cost-effective although they acknowledged that the benefits of dialogue sessions might go on to influence other people who were not part of the original dialogue session (Slade 2010c). Another respondent commented that an exclusively faith focus to safe spaces dialogue prevented work with other people who also needed to be reached (Slade 2010a). Both these issues are significant for considering the transferability of CD project dialogue methodology and are considered in the next chapter.

When looking to the future a majority of interviewees articulated their fears for how communities might view the 'other' in the future, given the current pressure on financial and other resources. One respondent

was clear that the organisation, and by implication its partners and stakeholders, needed to be in a better position to help deal with this situation. This view was summed up by one committee member who said that the desired outcome of safe spaces dialogue:

> "...has become even more relevant since project inception - unemployment, benefit changes - and how communities in South Yorkshire will be affected." (Slade 2010a)

Clearly, there was awareness that these pressures have the potential to exacerbate the issues on which the project focused. In response, the CD project began to consider a process for recruiting, training and supporting volunteer dialogue facilitators who could provide a more enduring presence in communities by supporting and sustaining change that could emerge from dialogue groups.

Project Outcome 2

Interviewees were asked to determine the relevance of a second CD project outcome that falls squarely within mainstream community cohesion and peacebuilding methodologies.

> "People in communities in South Yorkshire which are vulnerable to divisive and racist politics have the opportunity to interact with groups and communities of different faith/ethnicity with whom they would not ordinarily mix." (CD project documentation. 2010)

All interviewees expressed a view that this activity remained relevant, though overall their level of enthusiasm and support for this outcome was less than that for safe spaces dialogue. Interviewees qualified their responses with the view that a lack of funding for this specific outcome had affected their ability to deliver this project outcome.

Analysis of comments made by respondents revealed three themes:

- Interacting communities.
- An activity valued as an integrated element of the whole project.
- Looking ahead – or future progress.

Discussion and Analysis

Interviewees pointed to practical examples of interaction between people of different backgrounds, occurring in the course of their daily lives, as an example of the relevance of this project outcome:

> "Meeting people and working with them opens up appreciation of the other....outcome two enables people to interact when they don't normally. That's good." (Slade 2010f)

This position broadly reflected the views of all interviewees. One respondent commented that they would be delighted to see this project outcome realised, especially if the initiative arose from something which was addressed in the safe spaces dialogue group. However, another person remarked that the project may need to think through processes, other than safe spaces dialogue, on which to support interactions between groups of different faiths. In this respondents view, dialogue between different groups may be daunting for some groups. As an alternative:

> "They could come to do something [both groups] are interested in, that brings them alongside people without being sat in a room having to have dialogue." (Slade 2010j)

The respondent went on to suggest that larger, organised multicultural events are very useful in multicultural areas, but may not be appropriate in some mono cultural South Yorkshire communities where there is very little diversity. In their view the CD project may need to find alternative

ways in which to help communities to come together in a non-threatening process.

Most respondents emphasised that failure to gain funding to support activities relevant to outcome two, broke an integral link between project outcomes one (safe space dialogue) and three (influencing media narratives). A majority of interviewee's saw outcome two as a progression of safe spaces dialogue as one commented:

> "You talk first in safe spaces then decide to meet a group you've never talked to - it's a deliberate consequence of space spaces." (Slade 2010i)

However, another interviewee articulated the difficulties involved in bringing two groups together without both groups feeling that their fears and anxieties were being addressed, emphasising the importance of preparatory work (Slade 2010h).

Some interviewees saw outcome two as being less innovative than outcome one. This view reflects the focus of mainstream social policy research and practice that sees contact between communities as the usual starting point for initiatives designed to improve relationships. Indeed some interviewees suggested that the principle funding body holds this view. In the view of one interviewee this project outcome was not supported because the funding body knew that examples of these kinds of intercommunity activities were already happening around the UK (Slade 2010k).

When looking to the future, frustration with the project's funding base was clearly a concern for a number of respondents. One interviewee emphasised how lack of funding makes this outcome a missing link in the overall integration of project activities, especially in

South Yorkshire where "...the BNP have so much prime ground..."(Slade 2010i).

The importance of integrating the three project activities was identified by several interviewees – articulating a need for the CD project to work across all three activities in an attempt to reach as many people as possible. One person argued:

"You'll never have a situation where all white people can have friends who are Muslim - but there is a lot people can learn about prejudice that will help them decide how to vote and what they feel about asylum seekers." (Slade 2010e)

The study has already discussed the significance of media narratives in developing a platform that the BNP can build on. It was therefore crucial to assess the CD project's effectiveness in pursuing this important outcome. Committee members were asked to consider the continued relevance of the project's third activity.

Project Outcome 3

"People in communities in South Yorkshire receive clear and consistent messaging which challenges divisive coverage of community relations in the media. Community groups and individuals are able to use the media effectively." (CD project documentation. 2010)

All interviewees felt this outcome was still relevant. Several passionately endorsed the importance of this activity and its potential to reach more people than outcomes one and two. Transcript analysis revealed a number of distinct themes as follows.

- Media coverage and its impact.
- Consistent messages.
- An integrated part of CD project activity.
- Looking ahead.

Discussion and Analysis

One interviewee representing a minority faith community summed up the challenge facing the project in pursuing this outcome. This person described how, when attending a hospital appointment with their partner they had:

> "...sat next to this woman who was reading the front page of the Daily Express, the headline was 'Muslim terrorist lived in Great Britain'-something like that. I thought 'what must this person be thinking?' I felt anxious for her - she's reading this, it's being sensationalised and she's going to have 101 thoughts in her mind, then in walks someone [of Asian heritage]with a scarf covering her head and a husband with a beard and they go and sit next to her. I thought, how does she feel, because it must be a bit scary for her and I was almost angry at the front page. If we had a safe spaces group this week this would be the topic of conversation because it proves the point - look, they are all terrorists, because he [the terrorist] looked normal and look what he did." (Slade 2011b)

The anxiety producing nature of the media narrative described by this interviewee highlighted the importance of this outcome. All respondents echoed this in various ways. One referred to consistently negative media coverage of outsiders and especially Muslims who they described as "scapegoat of the month."(Slade 2011a) In general, people saw the mainstreaming of anti-Muslim sentiment as providing a powerful but negative backcloth to the project's work. Several interviewees saw this situation deteriorating in line with a change of national political governance.

Interviewees identified a number of concerns about the impact of media narratives. For example, one interviewee commented:

"People get their particular prejudice largely from the media... groups don't mix because of prejudice fed by media." (Slade 2011f)

Another argued:

"...racism and faith-based prejudice in the media have to be recognised...we're influenced by what we are fed." (Slade 2011h)

Interviewees gave a number of examples from the local and national press that provided distorted views of crime reporting, where the faith of Asian offenders was identified as Muslim, whilst the religion of white offenders convicted of similar offences was ignored. Some interviewees saw this approach as one of carelessness: others believed a more malevolent influence was present.

A common theme was the need to provide a stronger voice to communities, who are getting on well with each other, and who are dealing with difference and acceptance as part of the routine of their lives. Interviewees pointed to examples of work with media outlets in other areas that had been successful in changing editorial policy so as to produce fairer and more balanced reporting. A number of respondents saw clear and consistent messages as being an essential ingredient in this action. The CD project had undertaken a media analysis identifying the need to take similar action locally. However, interviewees could not identify evidence of project activity that had led to this analysis being delivered through a practical strategy.

All interviewees underlined the paramount need for the CD project to implement its communications strategy as a channel to deliver consistent messages. However they felt this should go beyond press releases and focus on changing and establishing an alternative narrative to that found in mainstream media. One interviewee commented:

"Consistent messaging is vital to counter the culture of 'us and them' we find fostered by many communications from comedians to editors, columnists and people who write to papers. They have a ready channel of communication. The [CD project] wants to see that influenced by positive messages. We are trying to assist people to develop positive messages, themselves." (Slade 2011j)

There was a strong view amongst interviewees that engaging with processes to deliver positive media narratives could significantly influence people. Several identified evidence of the apparent success of negative messages providing divisive stereotypes of other communities, for example travellers. However, attempts to deliver clear and consistent messaging also brings dilemmas. One interviewee commented:

"I don't like the idea of brainwashing in whichever direction – it makes me think of the Nazis." (Slade 2011e)

However the majority of interviewees were also pragmatic in what could be achieved. One respondent said:

"The aim is not to make the media better - it is to make it better than it would have been otherwise." (Slade 2011f)

At the time of the research, work dedicated to this media outcome was still developing, especially in deciding what needed to be done and how effective this might be. As one interviewee commented: "influencing the media is necessary but very hard." (Slade 2011a) Considering how this essential outcome might develop in the future was framed by uncertainties about how to make progress. Some interviewees felt the outcome needed more support and a bigger part in the project. Others saw it important for the project to support individuals and groups to use the media effectively, but questioned the extent that this was happening, and how it might be done. Others saw developing

management committee expertise in this area as a priority and that the project should be seen to work across a range of media platforms, for example the internet, local newspapers, television and radio. Several interviewees saw that practical initiatives, for example mobilising communities to write to national papers such as the Daily Mail and The Sun, as well as local papers, could produce positive results. However, working with national media organizations was, in the view of some interviewees, a huge task, beyond the remit of the CD project. They added that it might be an initiative that nationally based stakeholders such as the EHRC, faith organisations and political parties could respond to.

In the round, interviewee's views reflected uncertainty with regard to how to take this outcome forward. The researcher's objective assessment of the project's progress in achieving their desired media outcome finds that the CD project clearly struggled to get to grips with a complex area of work. It may well have been an over-ambitious target for a small project with a limited budget. The researcher recommended that in order to guide their work it may be useful to commission independent advice with sufficient expertise to propose what can be realistically achieved, how it can be achieved and how the effectiveness of activity can be assessed. This proposed initiative was subsequently progressed.

THE ROLE OF FAITH IN DIALOGUE

Interviews with committee members explored three aspects of the role of faith in dialogue. Firstly, the choice of intra-faith rather than inter-faith dialogue as a focus for safe space activity, Secondly, whether consideration had been given to involving faith groups other than those of Christian denominations in their safe spaces work and thirdly, how

tenets of faith were applied in safe spaces activity and wider CD project outcomes.

Intra-faith or Inter-faith

Interviewees were asked to comment on the rationale underpinning intra-faith rather than inter-faith dialogue. Several interviewees commented that as the project progressed, this distinction became understood, not as intra-faith or inter-faith dialogue, but rather as intra-community and inter-community dialogue. Other interviewees felt unable to respond because their involvement with the management committee began after project commencement. In general terms, responses to this question proved difficult to categorise although analysis did reveal three themes:

- Rationale for intra-faith choice
- Intra-community as much as intra-faith
- Practicalities.

Discussion and Analysis

As with many aspects of CD project activity, responses revealed a wide spectrum of personal interest and commitment. For some, this commitment changed as the project developed. One interviewee described being less committed to intra-faith/intra-community safe space dialogue when the project was being devised and saw this approach as merely:

> "… some sort of way of helping the church put its own house in order" [yet when the dialogue secessions began, became more committed, seeing it as]"…brilliant, valuable not only for the church but also its members since they are also members of communities." (Slade 2010a)

Setting the right environment for exploring prejudice was important for many people. One commented that feelings such as trust and safety were key principles of safe space dialogue, if the experiences and views the project was trying to reach were to be expressed. Being with people from backgrounds of different ethnicity in the same room, as a first step, meant that it might be harder to achieve these requirements and would make essential exploration of prejudice difficult (Slade 2010i).

Another interviewee commented that much could be achieved if you started with:

> "...who you are - so much of how we feel and think about things depends on where we are in our heads, rather than the facts." (Slade 2010h)

This view underlined the project's commitment to working with feelings that determine how others are seen, that prejudice is not rational and feelings that promote hostility need to be explored before encounters with other people.

One interviewee saw people with prejudiced views as having little respect for those who are not like them. This person felt that having a group of mixed faith and ethnicity would itself present problems, since people with prejudiced views would already be closed to those on the receiving end of prejudice and in such an environment any direct challenge would risk moving individuals into a corner rather than achieving change (Slade 2010i).

However another interviewee articulated a perspective that combined rationalistic and empathic values arising from a desire not to offend those of another faith commenting:

> "Reliable information and the facts need to be available. People benefit from conversations about values which will help them...

knowledge and information about what to say...It's quite scary to meet people from another faith - better if you've had preparation which makes you feel safe." (Slade 2010g)

Several interviewees felt that confidence was seen to be an important ingredient in this process. One respondent believed that people from Christian faith groups need to feel confident when speaking about their own faith and that this was not always the case:

"Giving people the opportunity to feel secure, that they will not make mistakes, be laughed at or offend, is an important step before meeting people whose faith can be articulated more strongly." (Slade 2010i)

These responses can be seen to range from the practical to the emotional - people of faith need information and preparation before encountering people of another faith as well as an opportunity to work through why they feel hostility in order to avoid feeling trapped by feeling as they do. The opportunity to also address the sense of 'otherness' wider than that of faith, which people might feel and which can show itself in lack of respect to any individuals who do not belong in their neighbourhood, village, or immediate environment - was considered by the CD project to be a crucial focus of their work.

The CD project's movement towards a concept of safe space dialogue as an intra-community rather than just an intra-faith activity was evident in responses that related dialogue to white British ethnicity. One interviewee saw safe space dialogue sessions as being mono-ethnic rather than multi-ethnic (Slade 2010c). Most interviewees echoed this view and that safe spaces dialogue sessions should concentrate on white communities, because this is where the extreme right wing were

most likely to make progress - an analysis that could be applied to any group of white people, and not just faith groups.

However, faith was also observed to bring unique resources to this process. In the words of one interviewee:

"if you're going to help someone from a white, working-class community struggling with this - to reach within themselves, they are likely to feel vulnerable, so if you do it within the church or faith community, with trusting relationships which may already exist, and build on that in order to try unlocking people, that's a good thing in its own right." (Slade 2010h)

Lastly, there were important practical reasons for focusing on intra-faith dialogue. One interviewee said that since faith groups set up the CD project, this gave easy access to those groups. Similarly, another respondent described the starting point as one step in the right direction. Well-established networks provided an easy place to start from and from which to build and extend.

INVOLVING OTHER FAITH GROUPS

Participants were asked if consideration had been given to whether faith groups other than Christians be given the opportunity to participate in safe space sessions specific to their faith. This question was significant for future project strategy in considering the extent to which discussing hostile prejudices and stereotypes might be useful for communities other than white monocultural ones. Three themes were evident in analysing responses as follows.

- The current approach meets the objectives of outcome one.
- Resources implications and practicalities.
- Looking ahead.

Discussion and Analysis

Responses generally articulated core project purposes. One interviewee was typical in commenting that there had been discussions about dialogue that might include Muslim groups, but that the project was set up to tackle support for far right extremists. "That makes white communities our principal audience." (Slade 2011e) Another interviewee said that whilst work in other faith communities would form part of an approach based on mediation this was not as relevant for CD project activity:

> "...we should be targeting people in danger of voting for the BNP
> - Muslim people are not in danger of voting for the BNP." (Slade
> 2011e)

The interviewee argued that the focus needs to be people likely to vote for the BNP. The vulnerability of Christian communities to the tactics of the far right was evident in a number of responses. One interviewee considered that susceptibility would be reduced by giving communities the chance to consider how they position themselves, who they think they are and how they feel about themselves (Slade 2011h). Another commented:

> "Christianity is a dominant faith in the area - and that is where
> there was felt to be a need - because of complacency - that
> tends to happen within Christianity...you don't have to be as
> confident in your faith as people in the minority do."(Slade 2011i)

Another interviewee summed up the extent to which the BNP and EDL have attempted to adopt white British Christian values by proclaiming that community values were being eroded by outsiders, thereby providing justification for their strategy. This interviewee stated their belief, informed by social networks within their locality, that the BNP had set their sights on Christian communities (Slade 2011e).

Several interviewees saw the CD project's limited resources and capacity as preventing any extension of dialogue sessions beyond Christian communities. Those involved in project planning were clear that consideration had been given to working with faith groups other than Christians, and in the planning stage a sequence of dialogue sessions was anticipated – work would begin by engaging churches and then other faiths might become involved through the project management group. However the reduction in CD project funding required a focus on what was feasible. Alongside this some significant difficulties were also identified, for example:

"...people weren't sure how this would happen - how would you arrange a safe space dialogue within a mosque." (Slade 2011h)

One interviewee commented that it was important for the CD project to work with groups of other faiths, and secular groups, where there were common values that could bring them together. However, the CD project needed to start from somewhere.

"The most extensive networks we had into the community were people on the management group – [who mainly belonged to] Christian faith communities - so this was partly the reason to work with Christians initially." (Slade 2011h)

Subject to the limitations of funding, working with other faith groups remained a project aspiration. One interviewee remarked:

"…it's important to work [in safe space intra-community dialogue] with other faiths, particularly Muslim groups, to get to a position where we can move to inter-faith dialogue." (Slade 2011f)

Another interviewee endorsed the view that dialogue sessions in faith communities, other than Christians, are likely to be a development of the project (Slade 2011k). However other people were more cautious, keen

that the management committee should give careful consideration to this development and feel confident that sufficient learning around safe space dialogue had taken place.

A number of people saw the development of inter-faith work as one that could take place in partnership with other organisations, rather than coming solely to rest on the shoulders of the CD project. One person saw the potential for the project to work alongside a similar venture targeted on young Muslims. The respondent saw such an initiative as providing useful learning.

Analysis of these responses suggests a broadening of the CD project's perspective, from a purely intra-faith focus, to a wider platform of engagement with communities, evident in developing CD project learning with regard to intra-community dialogue. This development can be seen as consistent with concerns around exclusion and social justice and also reflects growing awareness of the complexity of values, in addition to faith, that influence groups and communities. A number of interviewees described a lack of confidence in Christian communities regarding their ability to articulate faith belief - in contrast with Muslims who were seen as being skilled actors in this area. For Christians this may have reflected more fundamental lower individual and group self-esteem, at least as far as faith is concerned.

Alongside this, the CD project was under pressure from its funding body to make early progress. This meant starting with Christian faith groups - although this also resonated with concerns amongst some interviewees that the BNP were making progress amongst Christian congregations. The CD project's focus on intra-faith dialogue, and then intercommunity dialogue, produced important learning in relation to helping communities, within their own space, to reflect on why they feel hostility towards outsiders.

APPLYING TENETS OF FAITH

Discussion of the role of faith in project activity was further developed during interviews by asking participants how they saw tenets of faith being applied to safe spaces sessions and other project activities. Three themes emerged which informed the organisation, discussion and analysis of the findings, these being:

- Working on common ground between faiths
- Applying Christian tenets of faith
- Other values, principles and motivators underpinning safe space dialogue and activities.

Discussion and Analysis

The findings describe personal relationships between an interviewee's faith and other values and their perspective of complex social issues. The responses provided the researcher with a powerful insight into the spiritual values motivating individual commitment to the project and its activities. One interviewee was unequivocal about the importance of seeking common ground through an inter-faith perspective.

> "In major faiths like Islam and Christianity there is common ground, values and principles. Let's work with that. If we work from there - from the human aspects rather than say 'Christianity says this - this is what we need to do '. Because, for example Christianity saying be kind to your neighbour is exactly the same in Islam." (Slade 2011b)

Two other interviewees identified with this position, one commenting that the concept of a 'good neighbour' (a metaphor closely associated with CD project identity) is a core value of Christian faith and other major religions (Slade 2010b). In the view of another interviewee:

"...there is common ground across Abrahamic faiths- God is a God of justice - we give God different names but as far as I'm concerned it's the same God."(Slade 2011i)

Interviewees described a number of Christian tenets of faith they thought relevant to the CD project. Some responses were very personal and articulated commitments to themes of social justice, for example:

"...moral principles about the equality of all human beings in the sight of God." (Slade 2010j)

"For me, holding faith is about being part of a world where you have respect for other people." (Slade 2010e)

"Do unto to others as you would have them do unto you. If we do this we would get rid of all sorts of things, For example bullying." (Slade 2010 g)

Other interviewees saw a clear relationship between their faith values and project activity:

"The thing for me is about 'the plank in your own eye '. The church cannot condemn the BNP unless it talks to people in its own pews." (Slade 2010h).

"We need to sort out what is happening in our own house...My faith would say we need to be talking to the BNP. Christ would go to the tax collectors, or the BNP of his day, and that's what I'm seeking to do really...I see the Church as the body of Christ and opening ourselves up to be more loving and seeing the world truthfully." (Slade 2010e)

"Love thy neighbour is an obvious tenet of faith. Faith drives my commitment and energy for the project." (Slade 2010i)

Other responses, whilst less personal, were nonetheless equally insightful regarding the part played by faith in the project's inception and dialogue activity. Two people commented that:

"There is a lot of the project which is about practical expression of faith values." (Slade 2011j)

"The project activities very much come out of people's faith, their understanding of respect for human beings, the role of forgiveness and reconciliation as a way of creating communities of wholeness - individuals who can reconcile the paradoxes of being human." (Slade 2011d)

Two interviewees gave examples of how faith was evident in dialogue groups. The first, referred to a dialogue group of practicing Christians engaged in discussion with reference to faith, Christianity and scapegoating and another group that took place as part of a liturgy service using Old Testament passages (Slade 2010j). The second, argued for the relevance of facilitating dialogue in such settings:

"There may be people in congregations who support the BNP. People have clever self-preserving capacities. There is stuff in all religions that you can use to say 'God is on our side' - a self-justifying God." (Slade 2010h)

One interviewee commented that an appropriate response in such a situation lay in a quiet challenge "'how do you see this in the context of your faith?" (Slade 2010d)

Another interviewee had found:

"There are two aspects. How does faith arise naturally within a dialogue so the group becomes aware of how their faith base is

relevant? The other aspect is what to bring in as the facilitation team." (Slade 2010j)

For some interviewees faith was a significant presence in working with people - for others it could also be seen to support narratives that blame 'the other' for a sense of injustice – 'a God is on our side perspective'. Another person saw ethnicity as being more significant than faith whilst a further perspective saw faith and culture closely interacting. One individual explicitly referred to the interconnected nature of faith and other values:

"What are Christian values and what are cultural values? They always get entwined with any religion." (Slade 2010i)

Interviewees also described perspectives that were not, in their view, directly based on faith values. One commented that, although a member of a faith community, their motivation and commitment to the project was based on politics (Slade 2010a). Another offered the view that, whilst some people on the management committee see the project relating to their faith:

"...we also have to engage with people who don't work that way, for whatever reason." (Slade 2010h)

One interviewee believed that:

"The issue is not the faith of the people - it's their ethnic origin...The [safe spaces] groups seem to be a subset of white people in an area susceptible to voting for the BNP - I don't see this project as being particularly faith orientated." (Slade 2010c)

Another interviewee offered a not entirely dissimilar view:

"Whilst the project and its activities come out of people's faith there needs to be a recognition that these issues are being played out on a political landscape." (Slade 2010h)

In general terms the importance of faith and other values were merged in the majority of responses. For one person safe spaces were clearly about accepting people for who they are:

"...that's where you begin with people. Before anything else they are there to be accepted and not judged." (Slade 2010e)

However another person saw faith as having a potentially ambivalent presence:

"What may be a hurdle is that what people believe is the one true faith and relationships with other faiths are on the basis of proselytising - that's off the ball as far as I'm concerned." (Slade 2011f)

This comment can be seen to reflect a concern held by secularists - that engagement with faith communities opens an inevitable portal to evangelism. It was relevant to hear a suggestion that some form of internal sanction, within faith groups may be present which can counter any such tendency.

Two interviewees referred to the concept of scapegoating. The symbolism of the goat, laden with the sins of the many, sent into the wilderness to be destroyed - appears to have had relevance to contemporary racism and faith-based prejudice. Both articulated the kind of situation which, allied with faith, can move people towards BNP support and the CD project's role in such circumstances:

"If you're marginalised, poor, if your life isn't what you want it to be you look for a scapegoat and if you have a faith - that is going to be with you on your side of this injustice. The task is to help people

engage differently with that picture of themselves and their community - for people who see themselves at the end of injustice." (Slade 2010h)

Whilst discussing the CD project's role of challenging negative media coverage of the 'other' in general and Muslims in particular, another interviewee described the phenomena as 'scapegoat of the month' and went on to add:

"The way anti-Muslim sentiment has become the mainstream, which as a Jew - with my particular bits of collective memory - you know when I say 'scapegoat of the month', you know as a Jew - we know, as a gang, we know about this - I feel very passionately about that." (Slade 2010 a)

Another interviewee underlined the importance of the CD project working with all groups, irrespective of whether they were religious or secular - and added a poignant reminder that prejudice and hostility is not limited to white monocultural working class communities. In their view:

"...it's not about separating people out into those who have faith values and those who don't. None of us have got it all of the time. We all have our foibles, our weaknesses, our moments. The strength or quality we're looking for is being able to recognise that - it's not as if some people are immune to prejudice - and if you think it is - then you've had it really." (Slade 2010e)

The diversity of faith values, and their congruence with CD project activity, made a strong impression on the researcher's atheistic perspective. Commitment to activities that resonated with values of social justice was allied with deeply held faith perspectives. The latter were evident as strong drivers of individual involvement in CD project

work, expressed in a common and harmonious approach to practical and challenging activity.

Two aspects were particularly striking. Firstly, despite contemporary discourses challenging faith activity in public life, the CD project's progress appeared not to have been hindered by such perspectives. Indeed, the project appeared to have successfully avoided such a challenge. This may have been helped in part by the CD project's initial focus on faith groups – faith getting its own house in order – allied to the CD project's willingness and capacity to work with both faith and secular groups.

A second aspect - the diverse nature of faith perspectives that were held within the CD project's management committee – is likely to have had relevance. In some settings, similar diversity of faith identity is a focus of division and hostility. However in the CD project the same identities appeared to have secured an integrated sense of purpose – evident when interviewees described personal reflection that found commonality between their faith perspectives, rather than attitudes that sought difference. A sense of unanimity may be attributable to the quality of interpersonal relationships. However the complexity of faith perspectives, allied with political and secular positions, may also have provided healthy checks and balances that inhibited concerns of proselytising that are of such issues for secularists.

NETWORKING WITH KEY PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS[5]

Partners

Whilst the faith roots and nature of CD project activity appeared to be a unique presence in community cohesion in South Yorkshire, it was by no means isolated from interaction with relevant faith groups. Having been developed with partners from Methodist, Roman Catholic, Muslim, Jewish and Buddhist communities, participants were asked to evaluate the involvement of each of organisation, identified in project documentation as a partner, on a scale of 1-6 (0 representing no involvement and 6 representing full involvement). Figure 6 below sets out the findings.

Figure 6: Partner's average scores rated by interviewees.

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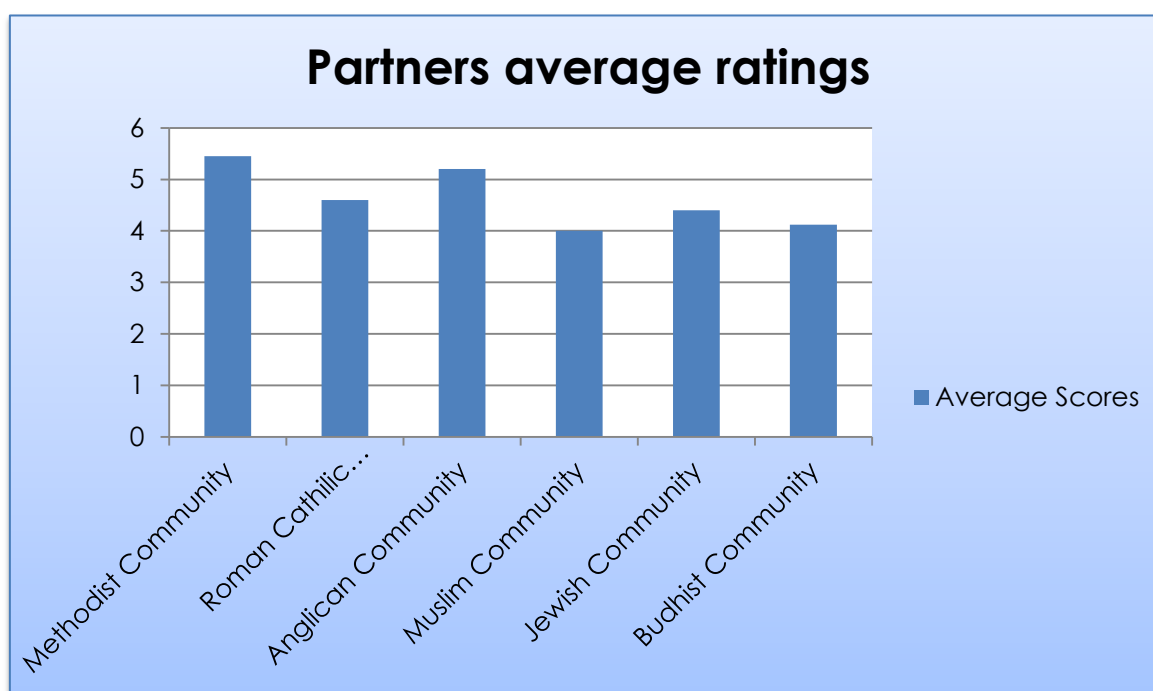
[5] Stakeholders were distinguished from partners in the following way. Partners were committed day-to-day management and the continued support of project outcomes. Stakeholders were outside agencies, groups, or individuals who had an interest in and could gain from project activity. Some stakeholders could also offer practical resources or access to social networks which could support the work of the project.

It is important to note that three interviewees did not give all partners a rating. In most cases this was because of lack of knowledge. It should also be noted that not all participants felt comfortable with this exercise and were reluctant to rate the performance of one faith denomination as different from another. Subject to this caveat, all partners scored between 4 & 5.5.

Discussion and Analysis - Partners

The researcher sought to explore perspectives relevant to the involvement of these partners - and by implication CD project networking - on overall progress. Assessment scores varied in relation to an individual's role in the project. For example a member of staff would be likely to have a more detailed understanding of the contribution of individual partners than a committee member without the benefit of direct experience.

In responding to this question interviewees focused on management committee membership and project development as the basis of their assessment. Whilst the information in figure 6 provides an overview of perceptions of partnership support, the question was methodologically flawed. Despite testing prior to interviews, participants found it difficult to distinguish between whether a member of the committee was present in their own right, was present because of their faith identity, was present because of links with their faith community, or was there because they represented their faith community.

All partners were rated as having an average score of at least 4. Interviewees provided a number of comments that emphasised the importance of partnership working. All interviewees believed that all partners were important – and that the range and commitment of partners appears to have significantly enriched the project and its work. One respondent summed this up in the following terms.

"Having Buddhist and Jewish representation as well as Christian and Muslim gives the other view. We can share and find different ways of working." (Slade 2010b)

The quality of any activity that draws people away from the comfort zone of their usual group can be assessed on the basis of its effectiveness. This assertion was tested through exploring the project inception phase with interviewees. Responses revealed that project development required close partnership working between different religious communities in meeting funding application timescales, where the requirement to make urgent progress was achieved because existing networks brought people together quickly. This period illustrated that good-quality partnership working is not the same as everything being 'sweetness and light'. Those committee members who were project founders referred, somewhat euphemistically, to the 'close discussion' that was necessary in order to ensure that a bid emerged that would meet everyone's satisfaction. Compromises on individual interests were necessary to allow collective progress.

The micro partnership working between individuals highlights the relevance of macro, background partnership working, within faith forum and between the faith leaders group. These influences appear to have established and modelled an important culture of cooperation and participation. One interviewee commented:

"The project coming together from an inter-faith perspective is wonderful. The faith groups want this to happen. We need to make sure people know this is the case." (Slade 2011b)

However several interviewees also commented on the need to make further progress around partnership working. A concerted effort should be made to involve more Muslim community representatives in

the management committee. A need was also identified by some interviewees to develop formal partnership arrangements with "...non-Christian and non-faith communities." (Slade 2011j)

It was noteworthy that the CD project had developed important and close links with organisations, other than those reflected in management committee membership. For example a number of interviewees referred to the CD project having played a pivotal role in bringing groups together to address common concerns, for example, an anticipated demonstration by the EDL.

Partnership working was an evident strength in CD project process and progress. However, emerging action research findings suggested there was scope to build on existing networks and the management committee agreed that a review of relationships would be useful in ensuring an appropriate range of interests and resources, with potential to support the project, were appropriately engaged.

Stakeholders

Alongside partnership working, the CD project had identified a range of stakeholders whom they had already engaged or hoped to engage in the project. Interviewees were asked to assess the level of engagement by each stakeholder. The aim of this aspect of the interviews was to identify social networks, beyond partnership arrangements, which would indicate the extent to which the CD project had developed from its inception within inter-faith partnership working. Interviewees were asked to assess the level of engagement with the stakeholders, as identified in project documentation, on a scale of 1-6, 1 representing no engagement to date and 6 representing full engagement. Figure 7 below sets out the findings.

Figure 7 stakeholder engagement

Stakeholders Average Rating
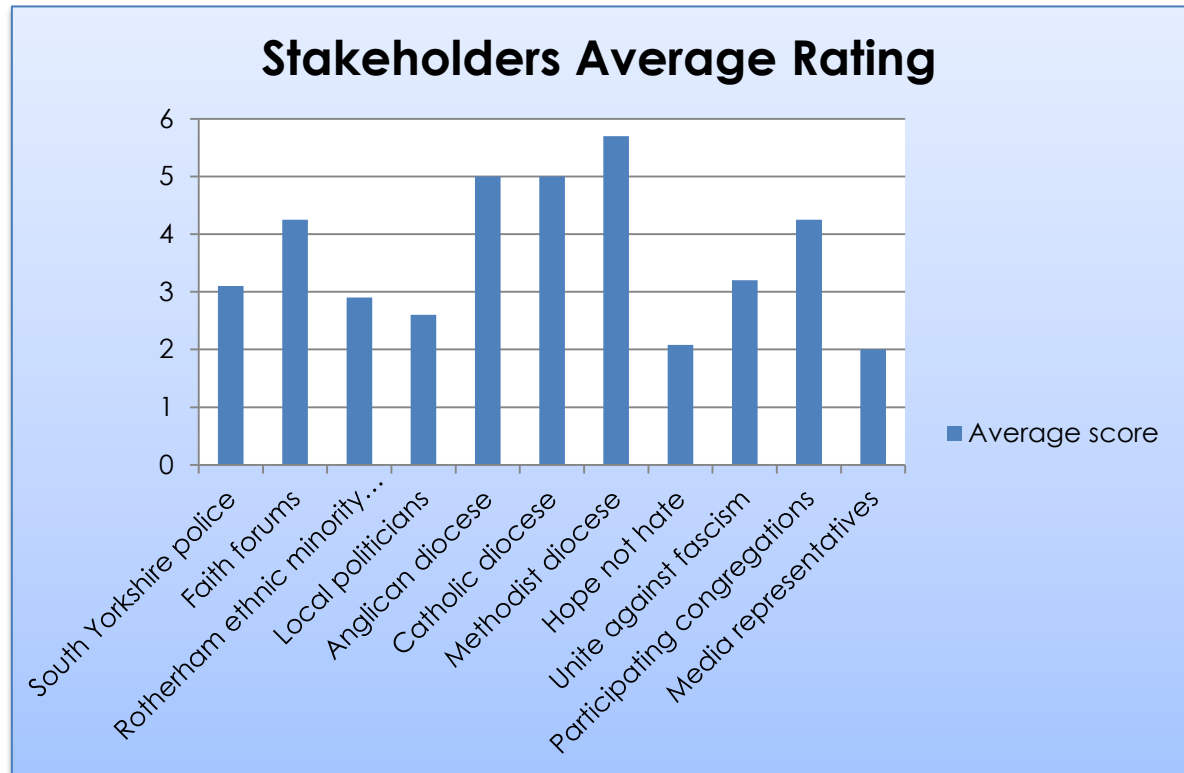
Faith organisations received the highest average rating of engagement with the project. Secular groups including media representatives and local politicians were not highly rated. Some committee members felt they had insufficient information to accurately assess the level of engagement of particular agencies.

Discussion and Analysis - Stakeholders

As with the ratings previously ascribed to partners, the ratings given to stakeholder engagement were influenced by the role of individual interviewee's in the organisation. For example, some interviewees rated the engagement of South Yorkshire police as low. However an employee interviewee reported extensive and helpful contacts with this agency, and gave a higher than average score suggesting that fellow committee members would be surprised by the richness and productivity of contact with stakeholders. Indeed the productive and useful networks

that flowed into and out of CD project activity and which interacted with faith and secular organisations were impressive. This might have been anticipated in relation to some faith organisations. However it was noteworthy that the diversity of relationships with secular agencies did not appear to have experienced impediments described in the work of other researcher's.

A theme in most responses was a poor relationship between two local antiracist campaigning groups, Unite against Fascism and Hope not Hate. One person summed up this relationship as:

"It's a good job the far right fall out amongst themselves because if they were all unified all the time then the left wouldn't have a hope." (Slade 2010a)

This example of lack of co-operation and agreement between organisations seeking to oppose injustice is not unfamiliar in peacebuilding work. However it is surprising, given progress made by the BNP that greater efforts could not have been made by these organisations to identify and work from common ground so their resources could be targeted on addressing extremism, rather than inter-organisational acrimony.

When discussing these emerging findings priorities for improving partnership working and stakeholder engagement were considered. Suggestions included working with politicians, improving stakeholder involvement with participating congregations, trying to prevent fragmentation between groups opposed to the extreme right wing and developing stakeholder engagement with schools and educational establishments.

Improved 'working' with politicians was contentious. The presentation by the BNP of an identity as a respectable potential party

of governance, suggested the need to consider closer work with local politicians. However, most respondents did not appear to believe that this was a strategy that would be consistent with the integrity and independent ethos of the CD project.

The richness and variety of work with partners and stakeholders was impressive. Much of this may have been a consequence of the interpersonal skills of those engaged in this crucial networking. However, apart from the example of some disunity between local anti-fascist groups, it was noteworthy that at no stage during any interviews did respondents identify any barriers or impediments to networking with faith, or more pertinently, secular organisations. Indeed, interviewees described examples of the CD project being approached by local government and police service employees to provide advice and guidance. On one occasion a senior local authority representative sought the project's engagement in a community considered to be problematic in relation to the prevalence of right wing extremist views. Whilst the CD project sought to preserve some distance from formal governance, there did not appear to be any undercurrent of similar reservation on the willingness of such groups to initiate engagement with the CD project.

OBJECTIVES FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Interviewees were asked to give their perspectives regarding the future scope of CD project activity. The first question focused on what, in the view of interviewees, had been the most positive processes and/or outcomes of the project to date. Responses fell within three themes, those of:

- Safe spaces dialogue
- Partnership working and working with stakeholders
- The management committee and staff.

Discussion and Analysis - Positive Outcomes

Learning about the process of facilitated dialogue – safe spaces - and developing CD project methodology had, for the majority of interviewees, been an important aspect of both personal satisfaction and project progress, one, articulated the challenges of undertaking a process that has been seldom replicated in a similar context.

"We're only just beginning in terms of practice - holding the balance between people expressing hurt and loss - and mediating conflict." (Slade 2011d)

Other interviewees referred to the achievement of trying new things, evaluating and changing the process so other people don't have to 'reinvent the wheel'. For another the achievement of safe spaces sessions lay in its flexibility and the extent to which this allows and enables change. One interviewee believed that knowledge underpinning dialogue processes is increasing because: "Things happen which we didn't expect." (Slade 2011d)

One interviewee saw the flexibility of the organisation commissioned to provide dialogue as important, enabling learning about how to approach groups to be incorporated in a changing and improving methodology. Another interviewee referred to a group who want to meet people from a different faith as a significant sign of progress.

Partnership working, which saw the CD project moving from a blank sheet, to designing governance and completing a successful funding bid, was identified by the majority of interviewees as a key achievement. Several referred to the extent that this was only possible because of partnership arrangements between faith leaders and more informal partnership working between those whose task was to design and write the funding application. This had set a climate for continued partnership working which had a number of tangible outcomes. In the

view of interviewees the project was now well established, had developed productive working relationships with partners and stakeholders in South Yorkshire, was having some impact in communities were the BNP were active, and through its partnership working and dialogue methodology was moving beyond what one committee member described as "…the posture politics of electioneering."(Slade 2011h)

For several interviewees the most positive process has been the joining together of partners: "A real achievement for a little project." (Slade 2011b) This view was echoed by others who pointed to the formation and work of the management committee as a significant achievement. This was especially the case during work undertaken to agree project direction and common values. For another participant, the work of paid CD project staff had produced significant achievements and that the quality of their delivery of a piece of work which enables people to promote unity and challenge extremism has been a central feature behind progress (Slade 2010f). For another interviewee the significant achievement had been the range of different people, representing religious and ethnic diversity, coming together in the management, staffing, and facilitator's consortium to successfully build and sustain a cooperative project team.

Project Difficulties

Interviewees were then asked which aspects of the project had been the most difficult to achieve. Four themes were evident in their responses to this question.

- Achieving progress on the media outcome.
- Establishing safe spaces dialogue.
- Funding and project design
- Stakeholders and partners.

Discussion and analysis - Project Difficulties

The majority of interviewees saw the project as having struggled with activity that aimed to work with the media. Earlier in each interview they had all rated this activity as highly relevant. The failure to formulate and implement a media strategy had held back progress, both on this specific activity, and the project moving forward based on integration between its three key activities.

Whilst this may have been partly a result of the activity being beyond the resources and expertise of a small project, there was, arguably, also a conceptual failure. Productively engaging with media platforms is complex, evident in the extent to which nationally and internationally based primary and contextual discourses, need to be influenced. This analysis received some implicit endorsement from one interviewee who commented that the project had experienced: "...difficulties in understanding the difference between having press releases and more strategic key messages." (Slade 2010a)

Several participants saw the business of establishing and beginning safe space dialogue groups as a difficult area. Given the innovative nature of both the project and safe space dialogue, this was not surprising. There was little experience and learning elsewhere on which to draw. Some interviewees expanded on this theme, referring to difficulties in devising dialogue processes, choosing facilitators, recruiting safe spaces groups and finding groups who wanted to go beyond an introductory stage involving more than just hearing about the possibility of dialogue. One interviewee commented that developing dialogue processes could have been helped by having more time to think things through. However a number of interviewees stressed that learning how to provide safe space dialogue sessions was an important aspect of developing the approach. Some interviewees located these difficulties

as occurring at project commencement rather than being current ones, suggesting that a level of learning had begun to accumulate.

All interviewees commented on the difficulties resulting from a reduction in funding during the CD project's early stages. This lead to changes in project design and a focus on activities one and three at the cost of project activity two, affecting longer-term project priorities. At the time of interviewing, funding uncertainty continued with the principle funding body withdrawing support after March 2011. One interviewee commented that, in a sense, the project had been designed to meet the needs of the EHRC - the funding agency being vocal in what they wanted.

Doubtless, the CD project's difficulties in relation to securing stable and consistent funding are typical of many third sector organisations. It was noteworthy that as the action research progressed, an increasing amount of time and energy was committed by members of the management committee, and paid employees, to drafting and submitting funding bids. Each bid typically involved negotiating a labyrinth of processes, with the success of one application being determined by another - many funding organisations would only commit support if they saw 'matched' funding. These processes were a significant distraction from focusing on developing mainstream project activities. More broadly, the CD project's difficulties reflected a wider climate of economic austerity and reductions in public expenditure. Like many organisations, the CD project was competing for resources from an increasingly reduced purse. It was somewhat ironic that many of the issues the CD project sought to address were casualties of contemporary reductions in public expenditure.

One interviewee saw involving stakeholders, especially those from statutory agencies, in both project design and subsequent progress as a

difficulty. Another commented that the project needed to do more to build relationships with other faith communities and that it was vital to focus on this objective. Both these responses have been referred to in the previous discussion and analysis of responses to partnership and stakeholder working.

Interviewees were asked if there was any action that, in hindsight, they would do differently. A number said that at the point of interview there was nothing significant that they would wish to see done differently. One interviewee commented:

"We have done many things well: we are where we are, there's more to be developed: the project is as it should be and will become what it needs to be." (Slade 2010 f)

One interviewee commented that the process of establishing a totally new project had produced considerable anxiety. However they went on to add that the need to allay the accompanying uncertainty had been a driver in bringing people together in collective decision making (Slade 2010 h). However, several interviewees identified aspects of the project that could have been approached differently.

One remarked that the need for a longer preparatory stage with specific safe space dialogue groups could have been anticipated. This might have been helpful in encouraging groups to stay involved and prevent them pulling back, as had happened in two situations.

One interviewee commented that, when viewed through economies of scale, project activities one and two required significant resources - by contrast, activity three (the media strategy) required fewer. However, this minority view contrasted with the comment of another interviewee who, when referring to the media strategy remarked:

"We should have been clearer about what we were asking and what was needed." (Slade 2010a)

EXIT STRATEGY

At the last stage of the interview, participants were reminded that there were doubts about funding for the CD project after March 2011 and they were asked what sort of exit strategy should be put in place if funding could not be secured.[6] This question was included in the schedule at the request of a member of the action research cooperative enquiry group. Analysis of the responses to this question revealed four themes as follows.

- Project closure.
- The project continuing.
- Continuing with safe spaces dialogue.
- Sharing the Learning.

Discussion and Analysis Exit Strategy

Some interviewees were clear that if funding was to cease then the project should close.

"If funding finishes, that's where it ends. You can't have a half-hearted job." (Slade 2011g)

However, the project closing should not deny achievements and accomplishments to date. In the words of another interviewee:

"Even if the money runs out it was worth doing what we did - this was a joining of faith communities." (Slade 2011b)

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[6] Following this element of the action research the principal funding body agreed to extend its support until December 2011. The CD project has since secured funding until 2014.

Other interviewees saw some scope in the project been able to continue without funding. "Trying to find people, for example faith groups, to take the project up as a way of the good work continuing..." (Slade 2011f) was typical of a number of responses.

Some interviewees saw the management committee as having a key role in trying to ensure continuity. Others felt the committee should continue to meet, arguing that the involvement of some members did not depend on funding – some interviewees had been engaged in safe space dialogue work and could continue to do so. A number of interviewees saw the possibility of continuity in relation to safe space dialogue. For example, disseminating a written record of facilitator's resources and methodology could be useful. Several interviewees urged consideration be given to training people who are interested in safe space dialogue to enable them to be volunteer facilitators.

"Supporting them as community champions, with friends, family, and in a community setting." (Slade 2010d)

The need to provide continuity and some continued project presence was echoed in a wide range of comments with regard to learning and training. This need was accompanied by concerns as to how this could best be done. For example one interviewee suggested:

"A document to share the learning - but not a toolkit. A toolkit would be half the jigsaw." (Slade 2011i)

The theme of making sure the lessons that have come out of the project are properly learnt was a central concern of all interviewees. One person summarised these concerns in relation to safe space dialogue sessions.

"We need to capture the learning: encourage people to carry on learning. You need skills to facilitate safe space dialogue...although

there are a lot of backgrounds people can come from...don't turn the learning into a technology, toolkit." (Slade 2011d)

Another interviewee made a similar comment, although from the perspective of all project activity.

"There is a legacy...which churches and faith groups could use. It has been worth doing to help create a body of knowledge." (Slade 2010h)

Transcript analysis of the responses concerning an exit strategy suggests interviewees were divided with regard to the way forward. Some felt there was little practical alternative other than project closure. Others thought some activity, especially around safe spaces work, could continue. However, given the innovative and complex nature of this activity, and the amount of CD project resources dedicated to recruiting dialogue groups and planning engagement, it is hard to see how this would have been a realistic possibility. All those interviewed felt sufficient learning had accrued across a range of project activity, but especially safe spaces dialogue, to warrant this being shared with partners and stakeholders.

OTHER ISSUES

Interviews concluded with participants being asked whether they wanted to raise any other issues concerning the project. The majority felt there was nothing they wanted to add to the responses they had already made. This may be related to the fact that most people had been talking for at least an hour and a half - some even longer. However there were a small number of general comments that offered further insight to responses to other questions in the interview schedule.

One interviewee, a Muslim, commented that involvement in the CD project had been a "real experience", contrasting their involvement in the CD project with personal experiences of racism and prejudice.

"Some experiences...make you think things are getting worse. Then you come to a meeting where people are trying to make things better...Challenging the rubbish...There is something really valuable [about the project]....the model works-we've all got something to bring to the table. We share that and it really has been effective." (Slade 2011b)

Another interviewee, also a facilitator, wished to emphasise the importance of a non-judgemental approach to safe spaces activity. In their view:

"Facilitators are learning to be interested in what people say, to listen and be concerned, to value what people think...one has to be really interested in what people have to say. To be listening, curious, to be concerned and to value whatever people bring in - nothing human is alien to me...." (Slade 2011d)

A final contribution revealed a personal perspective touching on common ground held by all interviewees:

"Personal motivation [for being involved with the project]...we're dealing with something at a strategic level, at a practice level and it's also intensely personal, and it's different for different members of the management committee. That gives it energy." (Slade 2011e)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on interview findings and analysis, and in line with the collaborative and participatory nature of this study's action research methodology, the researcher made a number of recommendations to the project management committee. These were interim findings and recommendations as the action research element, focusing on dialogue methodology, was still underway and not due to be completed until August 2011. Recommendations were relevant to:

- the management committee
- interim safe space dialogue development
- the media strategy
- working with partners and stakeholders.

Management Committee

An audit of member's experience, skills and project interests would be good practice in order to ensure the project was fully aware of and exploiting the expertise of its committee members. This recommendation had the following objectives. It would:

- Develop the engagement of more recent interviewees through efficiently utilising their expertise across all project activity
- Enable an interest to be expressed in a specific project activity with which committee members could be linked. This would lead to a more equitable sharing of knowledge and militate against some committee members having to take sole lead for a particular activity
- Better support networking with stakeholders and partners by developing clear management committee links with relevant organisations.

Safe spaces

An annual cycle of evaluative interviews with a small but representative sample of dialogue participants would bolster the CD

project's limited post-dialogue evaluation. Such evaluation would help establish participant views regarding:

- The effectiveness of dialogue facilitation methodology
- How facilitation might be improved
- Establishing whether or not the sessions had a lasting impact.

Although the number of dialogue sessions had exceeded that required by the funding body, increasing the numbers of sessions was a challenge in the minds of most committee members. An equally significant issue was the need to support dialogue participants and sustain motivation in challenging prejudice, after sessions had been completed.

An effective and resource appropriate way of broadening the impact of the project, increasing its involvement in communities vulnerable to right wing extremism, and sustaining change could centre on recruiting volunteers based in communities where dialogue sessions were planned or had been delivered. Such individuals could act as co-facilitators. They would require a network of training and reliable advice, support and supervision that could be grounded in the regular facilitator consortium learning and supervision meetings.[7]

Media Strategy

Consideration could be given to commissioning independent expertise to establish how the project could realistically achieve its media aims and the effectiveness of activity assessed.[8]

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[7] Progressing this interim recommendation took place in the context of the project's response to action research findings focusing on dialogue processes described in the next chapter.

[8] This recommendation was progressed during 2011.

Inter-faith and intercommunity partnership working

Consideration could be given to extending safe space dialogue sessions to other faith communities and secular groups.[9]

Other partnership working

Partnership working remains an essential strength of CD project processes. In order to ensure this continues the management committee could review relationships with partner organisations to ensure an appropriate range of interests and resources are committed to supporting the project. In addition to those already engaged, consideration should be given to increasing partnership working with Muslim communities as a priority. Consideration could also be given to developing partnership working with, and management committee representation from, non-faith organisations.

Stakeholders

It would be good practice to review relationships with those agencies seen as stakeholders to ensure they are fully engaged with the project. The list of stakeholders could be reviewed to make sure that agencies that should be engaged in the project, but are not currently so, are appropriately involved. Given the political presentation of the BNP as a potential party of governance, consideration could be given to working more closely with local politicians providing this does not undermine the integrity of the project.

Governance

The management committee could consider creating the role of deputy chair from within its membership in order to provide support to a

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[9] This recommendation was progressed following the successful outcome of funding, leading to work with two schools and two community groups.

range of issues that need to be addressed at management committee level.[10]

CHAPTER FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Dinham and Lowndes (2008) concept of three narratives provides a structure for analysing the action research findings presented in this chapter. The relevance of their first narrative was evident through inter-faith partnership working that proved to be central to the CD project being founded. Faith leaders were described by interviewees as united in publicly opposing BNP right-wing extremism. The resources released by their involvement were relevant to physical capital, through the provision of accommodation, whilst auxiliary support - relevant to human capital, allowed the CD project to draw on human resource and legal advice. Relevance to social capital was exampled through extensive inter-faith networks whilst spiritual capital was evident in the value base adopted by faith leaders and subsequently by project founders and managers. There did not appear to be a presumption that faith leaders were representing all members of all faith communities. Rather, they provided leadership in a way that modelled the practical application of faith values. In doing so, their role was critical in project progress.

The CD project did have some interaction with formal, secular partners. This was achieved through stakeholder relationships with individual local authorities and through the formal arrangements which founding faith groups already had with existing partnership structures. However an issue for the CD project committee was the maintenance of independence from formal governance systems.

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[10] This recommendation was subsequently progressed.

Dinham and Lowndes second narrative was useful in illustrating the extent to which faith values or spiritual capital was a live presence in the perspectives of those founding and managing the CD project. Interviewees spoke of deeply held personal, spiritual values that led them to be motivated to address progress made by extremists and to understand why people might be attracted to divisive narratives. Nowhere was this more evident than in safe spaces work, which sought to proactively reach out to people and listen to their concerns through a non-judgemental and empathic perspective. Indeed, perhaps the most striking evidence of faith values came through the recognition that people need to be listened to and not judged whilst being challenged by exploring alternative perspectives.

It was useful to note that some interviewees had clearly reflected on common ground that existed between their different faith and denominational values. For some, this had been important in making progress that centred on faith communities coming together in a practical way, to establish and implement a project based on a common valuing of peaceful coexistence.

The CD project contained a significant level of faith diversity, drawn from background inter-faith working, that had come together to work on complex activities and operational difficulties. Given that in some parts of the world, faith groups of the identity represented within the project face each other with belligerence and hostility, this level of effective and practical cooperation can, in itself, be seen as noteworthy.

Dinham and Lowndes third narrative was apparent both in faith partnership working, and concerns amongst interviewees with the need for greater social inclusion. These factors, allied with detailed knowledge of communities in the fieldwork locality, were important motivators for management committee members becoming involved in founding the

project and its subsequent management. The relationship between poor white monocultural working class communities and BNP support was strongly felt by the majority of interviewees. Close personal knowledge and involvement of participants in local communities provided qualitative confirmation of the part that inequalities and exclusion had played in progress made by the BNP. Furthermore, concern about the BNP's adoption of Christian identity was clearly a live issue. Forums for their extremist progress were not confined to working men's clubs and internet-based communication - some participants had seen the BNP make inroads in the membership of the church congregations.

Other Findings

The energetic presence of faith and faith values alone did not prevent tensions and problems arising which were clearly evident in the limited progress in pursuing the CD project's media activity. This shortfall in achievement could undermine the impact of the integrated nature of project activities, since the whole is only as strong as progress in its individual elements. Arguably, interacting with contemporary media narratives is beyond the remit of such a project, driven by values that emphasise face-to-face dialogue and direct communication.

All those interviewed expressed disappointment that project activity that aimed to bring communities together was not funded. Paradoxically, this allowed a focus on intra-community dialogue whereas in the wider research community such learning and experience is far less evident. In the long term, this focus may be more consistent with the project's learning ethos.

In this action research, the CD project's founding and subsequent management can be seen to represent a useful example of the role of faith - realising a complex joint activity targeted on a significant threat to stable community cohesion. The role played by faith values was manifest

in both spiritual and religious capital. Spiritual capital was clearly evident in deeply held convictions that expressed themselves in a commitment to justice and addressing inequality combined with a non-judgemental approach to challenging prejudice. Religious capital was apparent in the practical provision of leadership and resources.

There can be some apprehension, on the part of those involved in secular public governance and partnership working, that faith engagement brings with it the danger of evangelism. However the researcher found no evidence of any such activity. Arguably, the checks and balances inherent in inter-faith cooperation may have been as relevant as the values and perspectives of individual committee members, in preventing such an outcome.

This chapter's action research found that interviewees identified a number of issues which were seen as being relevant to BNP support – and which have already been explored in the study. Interviewee perspectives were founded through close engagement with fieldwork localities. Against this background, the extent to which some communities are poor, feel marginalised, that authorities are not interested in them, were consistently referred to as likely drivers of BNP support. Interviewee concerns were articulated by apprehensions with regard to how communities could cope with the imminent circumstances of further austerity and the extent to which this would exacerbate resentment on which the BNP feed. The next chapter provides a discussion of how the CD project's dialogue methodology sought to engage with these issues.

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CHAPTER 6

A FRAMEWORK FOR INTRA-COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

The previous chapter considered the role of faith and faith values in CD project activity designed to address right wing extremism. A key element of this activity was the development of 'space spaces' dialogue. This chapter explores this dialogue process alongside the action research outcomes that shaped a model framework of intra-community dialogue that may be utilised in other settings.

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is the first part of the study's remaining key question:

- What is the role of community dialogue in challenging prejudice and stereotypes? How do people become involved? What do dialogue processes look like?

The second part of the question 'What do people think about the experience of taking part?' is considered in chapter 7.

The innovative, intra-community dialogue framework developed from learning that arose from CD project's 'safe space' work in communities where groups can face 'outsiders' with belligerent and hostile perspectives, but where the more usual strategy of inter-community dialogue with such groups is not a realistic possibility. The four constituents of this framework are:

- Aims and underpinning principles
- The dialogue framework
- Core skills required by those implementing the framework
- Evaluation – discussed in chapter 7.

The intra-community dialogue framework bears some similarity with methods developed in Northern Ireland, referred to later in the chapter, and there are reports of relevant work having taken place in Palestine. However there is no published evidence of similar processes, described in the detail of this chapter, being applied on the UK mainland. The research findings represent a contribution to the body of knowledge relevant to UK community cohesion, peacebuilding methodologies and learning surrounding human security theory, especially in the context of preventing the eruption of hostility and violence. In general terms, the framework may be relevant to groups with hostile perspectives towards out-groups from which extremists with political or religious positions are drawing support, but where dialogue with outsiders is neither feasible nor sensible.

However, although the CD project dialogue framework may be transferable to different settings, it is important to stress that the methodology is not a prescriptive formula. The approach has been developed, refined and improved on the basis of facilitators working within the unique identity and cultural context of groups in the research locality. Setting out to replicate each detailed aspect of the processes should not be the starting point. Instead, the approach should be to reflect on learning presented here and consider how the processes described can be adapted to another setting.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the methodology employed in this element of the study's action research. The text then provides a review of research that locates the dialogue framework within the existing body of relevant knowledge. The innovative nature of the processes discussed requires an emphasis on lateral connections with the work of theorists and researchers. There was no directly similar process that could have been utilised to inform the development of dialogue

methodology, or which the researcher could have directly utilised for the purposes of analysis and discussion of research outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

The focus of this element of the study's action research was the development of a dialogue framework that expressed the project's learning arising from planning and delivering dialogue sessions. When the action research commenced, four groups had met, or were in the process of meeting, and a further five were planned. These nine groups were a central focus of data collection.

The researcher was co-opted into facilitator consortium membership for the duration of the action research. This enabled the research process to support the CD project and dialogue facilitators in developing and consolidating their emerging learning into a framework that captured and built on their methodology. Membership also provided access, in line with ethical approval, to the written records and verbal descriptions of the work of facilitators. The researcher adopted a listening, reflective and evaluative role to membership that was consistent with the group ethos.

The main sources of data collection were transcripts and written notes of meetings of a consortium of facilitators, although data from interviews with members of the CD project management committee discussed in the previous chapter were also relevant. Alongside this, the researcher interviewed a sample of dialogue participants. Their evaluative observations of the experience of taking part in this aspect of project activity were fed into the development of the CD project dialogue framework. The researcher made regular reports on progress to CD project management committee members, allowing their views on the developing process to be incorporated.

Consortium members held a variety of faith positions, including Christian, Muslim and Buddhist perspectives, alongside those with secular views. All had skills and experience of group facilitation and mediation. Membership comprised four females and four males, including the co-opted researcher. Meetings were chaired by a consortium member, independent of the project management committee, and benefited from an agenda and circulated notes of key action points. Most individuals knew each other and some had formed strong working relationships, although none had worked as a combined group before. Two consortium members, who were both facilitators and CD project committee members, helped to ensure activity remained consistent with CD project objectives. Throughout the research, consortium members remained conscious of the innovative nature of their practice and the need to focus on continual learning. Indeed the researcher had to encourage members to accept that, whilst continual improvement was essential, sufficient learning had arisen to warrant this being shared with others.

Progress in developing dialogue methodology was evidenced by the regular formative reports provided by the researcher to consortium meetings using a structure of reflective feedback based on 'this is what we have learnt so far-what do facilitators think about this progress-what are the next steps'? This approach also allowed the researcher to introduce theoretical and research perspectives into the developing discussion.

Audio recordings of five consortium meetings attended by the researcher between November 2010 and September 2011 were transcribed and circulated to consortium members both for their comments and as an opportunity for them to be involved in data analysis. These transcripts were used to structure discussion that sought

to identify emerging learning and implications for future practice. Facilitators were encouraged to engage with the research process by categorising key themes and learning outcomes that would support the development of methodology. This approach enabled the CD dialogue framework to go through continual refinement, challenge and development.

Action research involving the consortium concluded in a workshop facilitated by the researcher and project manager. This was designed to enable members to work through each detail of the processes described in this chapter, challenge any aspect of the method and affirm their agreement of a draft framework as an appropriate and useful reflection of their work. These outcomes were reported by the researcher to the CD project management committee. The researcher's collaboration concluded with a presentation on behalf of the CD project to representatives of partner and stakeholder agencies and the principle funding body.

The researcher's analysis of facilitator consortium transcripts, records of dialogue groups and interview transcripts with dialogue participants and management committee members identified rich seams of data that shaped the CD project's framework. This study's analysis of the resulting findings aims to present a discussion of processes in the context of a framework that is accessible and comprehensible – What type of groups? What did facilitators do? Why did they do it? What were the results? – whilst capturing the nature of interaction between facilitators and dialogue participants that was often experiential. In order to achieve this balance, findings are structured around four themes that dialogue facilitators, with the researcher, considered to be a relevant vehicle for expressing the learning that arose from the CD projects work.

- Dialogue Groups – the type of group, differences between groups, the number of dialogue sessions, the role of group convenors and leaders.
- The aim of dialogue - from the perspective of participants, facilitators and the CD project.
- The dialogue framework – underpinning principles, the dialogue process and core skills required by facilitators to work with groups.
- Evaluating the impact of dialogue from a participant perspective – considered in the next chapter.

The underpinning purpose of the framework was summarised in a paper developed by a facilitator (Fitter 2011). The document encapsulated the essential aim of the CD project's approach to working with groups, and the complex milieu of external influences that could underpin group perspectives.

> "My starting point is a presupposition that when there are <u>fixed views</u> [authors emphasis] - that is, a pattern that is relatively stable over time - for example that a particular social group is <u>the problem</u> - then some sort of disturbance is needed to unsettle the system and enable it to re-constellate into a new pattern. And that it is our hope - that this new pattern, with appropriate facilitation, will embrace more of the complexity of the situation, rather than become more polarised. Sometimes this disturbance happens through world events, and without facilitation there is the real risk of increased polarisation. But not inevitably. Sometimes people come to the precipice, realise what is at stake, and have some sort of transformative experience, which may be strong enough to influence others too."(2011:1)

EXISTING RESEARCH

The study has already considered the emphasis that community cohesion writers place on contact between individuals and groups. Cantle (2008:188-233) encourages action to address parallel lives and the limited contact that communities have with each other. Gilchrist (2009:64) endorses contact between groups although she acknowledges that this involves more than just bringing people together and may require involvement from a neutral third party to help people discuss problems and concerns. The mainstream arguments supporting intercommunity contact are clear and well established - but appear to assume that contact between groups is the only way. Such positions can give rise to the view that a 'one size fits all' attitude applies - that those for whom cosmopolitan multicultural life is a regular experience have made judgements that inter-community contact is the right way forward for all communities. This perspective fails to appreciate the cultural complexity of communities beyond the parameters of urban conurbations. The words of one person taking part in a dialogue session, recorded by a facilitator, were typical of the views of a number of dialogue participants and summed up the difficulties in focusing on inter-community dialogue:

"In our area it's 98% white British - there isn't much diversity and we don't get much chance to meet people. Going straight into a meeting with another group would feel artificial and frightening." (Slade 2011a)

This view was significant for the CD project's approach to developing a methodology. A number of participants referred to people in their communities who had never met, let alone conversed with, people who were not white. Alongside this, limited numbers of people of different ethnicity presented important practical limitations to bringing

about contact between white mono-cultural groups who were either co-resident, or living within sufficient proximity of groups of other ethnicity, for sustained and meaningful interaction to feasibly take place.

However a literature review reveals that elements of inter-community contact process bears some similarity to intra-community dialogue methods developed by the CD project. The researcher sought to test the relevance of these positions through the action research process and subsequent findings.

Allport's (1954) discussion of prejudice and in-group attitudes to race argued that intergroup contact would lead to a reduction in prejudice, providing four key conditions are in place. Firstly, each group needs to have equal status within a contact situation, secondly, contact should focus on common goals, thirdly, achieving these goals should result from intergroup cooperation and not competition. Fourthly, those perceived to be in positions of authority, whether as community leaders or representatives of governance, should be seen to explicitly sanction any contact.

Allport's work continues to resonate with contemporary writers. Pettigrew's (1998) discussion of intergroup contact theory and contemporary practice develops Allport's approach by identifying four possible outcomes of inter-group contact that support change. Firstly, new learning about another group can act to correct negative stereotypes which underpin prejudice. Secondly, optimal group contact is likely to be effective in modifying behaviour, leading to changed attitudes and positive expectations of interactions that also have a beneficial effect on attitudes. Thirdly, Pettigrew believes that anxiety is a common theme in intergroup encounters and can lead to a negative perception of intergroup interaction that adds to prejudice. Action to reassure participants is therefore vital. Pettigrew's fourth possible

outcome centres on intergroup reappraisal. He argues that optimal intergroup contact can lead to reappraisal of in-group norms and positive attitudes towards out-groups generally.

Two further areas of research are relevant to the intra-community dialogue processes developed by the project. Hewstone et al's research (Hewstone et al 2007. Hewstone et al 2009) based on segregated communities in Northern Ireland concludes that indirect contact - group members hearing about positive experiences of relationships that fellow members have with an out-group - can have a positive impact on the group overall. Chris and Turner's (2009) development of 'imagined contact' also has resonance. Their methodology is designed for use in localities where direct contact between groups is neither feasible nor sensible. In such circumstances they demonstrate that 'imagined contact', where participants work through various scenarios involving social contact with other people, can reduce prejudice and help in preparing for opportunities to meet people from other groups.

Peacebuilding research in Northern Ireland provides a more direct link with the CD project's work. Church, Visser and Johnson (2002) describe an approach to conflict resolution that they refer to as both intra-community dialogue and single identity work. Their research explores a range of processes for engaging groups, for whom a culture of sectarian division is a deeply entrenched reality. They question, to use their terms, the 'Allport / Pettigrew hypothesis', that sees inter-community contact as the way forward in addressing tensions between communities, arguing: "...increased intergroup contact has not rendered viable, reconciliation in this [Northern Ireland] society." (2002:8) Church, Visser and Johnson suggest that what is needed in some circumstances is a process that will engage those most steeped in their own traditions but that may be supportive of eventual contact with other

communities. However the authors are conscious of difficulties related to the extent to which intra-community processes may make communities more insular:

> "Proponents of this methodology [intra-community dialogue] argue that it serves as the primary way towards peace in this society. Traditionalists in peacebuilding and conflict resolution... argue against lack of focus on cross community dialogue and engagement."(2002:17)

Church, Visser and Johnson's research refers to an elective range of methods for working with single identity groups, some of which are more focused on improving group esteem, for example by considering cultural achievements, than dialogue which addresses feelings of hostility towards outsiders that was central to CD project activity. However their findings that emphasise the usefulness of looking at new and innovative dialogue processes has much synergy with the CD project's approach.

Although much community cohesion and contact theory research emphasises the importance of dialogue, less has been written about how dialogue should be conducted - once a dozen or so people have introduced themselves. What happens next? Fortunately, peacebuilding literature provides clearer guidance as to how dialogue can be taken forward. Most theorists and practitioners emphasise the key role of independent facilitation. Azar (1990:123) describes a detailed process that sees the causes of identity-based conflict being addressed in workshops facilitated by independent third parties. He emphasises that facilitators need to have adequate levels of knowledge regarding the perspectives of parties they will be working with, and especially issues which affect their communities. He also stresses the importance of facilitators and participants working together on the basis of equal status. Whilst Azar's approach is comprehensive in its presentation of

structure, it is less so with regard to the content of interactive processes between facilitators and dialogue participants.

However Tint's (2010) description of dialogue scenarios, when participants meet in a sometimes emotionally charged frame of mind, is helpful in deepening practical understanding of the work of dialogue facilitation. Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty's (2007) discussion of inter-faith dialogue set in the Middle East also offers relevant learning. These authors draw on the work of the Jewish-Palestinian Dialogue Group in describing a process where participants are encouraged to enquire, learn and unfold shared meaning, integrate multiple perspectives and uncover and examine assumptions (2007:8). They emphasise the role played by 'affective' dialogue where participants are encouraged, often through storytelling of personal narratives - to:

> "...express their feelings and thoughts and beliefs from a personal point of view [this] allows past hurts to be gradually revealed." (2007:16-18)

The next section of the chapter deals with a detailed description of the development and process of CD project dialogue processes which, as they unfold, can be seen to have much resonance with Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty's position.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

THE DIALOGUE GROUPS

Dialogue consortium meetings focused on the work of nine dialogue groups from across the research locality involving approximately 84 participants.[11] These groups met between July 2010

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[11] The geographical location of groups is not revealed in order to maintain compliance with the CD project's undertakings of anonymity to participants.

and April 2011. Table 12 below provides an overview of these groups in the order in which they were convened.

Table 12 Type of Groups				
Group	Type of group	Convener	No of sessions	No of participants
1	Specially convened faith-based	Clergy.	2	9
2	Specially convened faith/secular	Clergy	3	12
3	Existing Liturgy group	Clergy	1	7
4	Specially convened faith-based	Parochial church council	2	8
5	Recreational group based at a church	Community worker	1	9
6	Church campaigning group	Clergy	3	9
7	Church governance evaluative group	Clergy	1	14
8	Church governance group	Church management team	2	8
9	Recreational group based at a church	Community worker	3	8
Totals	9		18	84

All the groups had some connection with a faith group either through their own faith activity, or through using buildings and facilities – as the case with recreational groups – that belonged to a faith denomination. Three groups were specially convened for a dialogue session, whilst the remaining six groups already had an existing purpose. Five of the nine groups were convened by clergy, two by local faith governance convenors and three by community workers. Three groups met for three dialogue sessions, three groups for two sessions and three groups had one session each. 84 participants took part in dialogue sessions. Analysis by the researcher found a number of variables between groups that are discussed under the following sub-categories.

- Type of group and differences between groups.

- Role of group convenor and leaders.

- Number of sessions

- Group Diversity.

Discussion and Analysis: Type of Group and Differences between Groups

Seven of the nine groups had their roots in faith-based activity. This can be seen to reflect the CD project's inter-denominational and multi-faith background alongside inter-faith partnership networking across the locality. These networks gave ready access to locally based groups which were used to publicise the project's aims and objectives and to generate interest to take part in dialogue sessions. Although the two recreational groups did not have a 'faith focus', their functioning was contingent on using faith community buildings.

On closer analysis the nine groups can be seen to comprise six distinct types of group.

- Three specially convened groups – established from an invitation to members of congregations to take part in a dialogue session.

- One liturgy group – where a dialogue session took place within an act of worship.

- Two recreational groups - where people met for an existing reason one being a 'mother and toddler' group and the other a regular social meeting of older people.

- One evaluative group - where a church group undertook an evaluation of project facilitation processes rather than fully participating in dialogue.

- One church governance group - that involved a faith organisation's management team.

- One church campaigning group – established to address local concerns regarding poverty.

Even on the basis of this limited sample, faith impresses as having a remarkably diverse role, attuned to the needs and interests of people engaged in a variety of activities that ranged from a spiritual focus, to concerns regarding social justice. For the CD project this differentiation emerged as an important learning point - directly affecting the way in which facilitators worked with a particular group.

As the cycle of dialogue sessions progressed, some facilitators indicated a preference for working with specially convened groups, who they saw as unencumbered by existing 'baggage' and with a greater chance of being energised by introductory processes. Three of the groups were described by group convenors as being specially established for the purposes of the dialogue session. However the researcher's interviews with dialogue participants, discussed in the following chapter, found that these groups were made up of participant's who already knew each other either quite well or very well – suggesting wide levels of internal social bonding. Furthermore, one group that was assumed to be of a single faith identity, held a variety of participant membership comprising different Christian denominations as well those as with secular and atheistic perspectives. These findings emphasised the importance of contact with group convenors before the first session, as part of pre-dialogue planning, and the need for caution on the part of facilitators in making assumptions about the composition of a group.

Two groups, a governance group and a campaigning group, had an established purpose and remit. They saw an opportunity for dialogue about prejudice and racism as consistent with their group activity and important for their in-group development. Both groups impressed as having a well understood remit and positive in-group esteem and engaged frankly and openly with facilitators. Critical learning arising from

work with these two groups centred on the usefulness of building a relationship with group members that reduced in-group perspectives of facilitators as outsiders, achieved by identifying common ground between CD project and dialogue group objectives.

The project's involvement with a <u>liturgy group</u> brought faith values and theology to the forefront of dialogue facilitation. This session took place between a gospel reading and communion and used the Good Samaritan parable as a vehicle for considering dialogue objectives (King James Bible: Luke 10:25-27). More than in any other dialogue session, this interaction was framed by faith and ritual. Facilitators who worked with this group had values congruent with those of the group, emphasising the importance of matching appropriate facilitators with the identity of particular dialogue participants. However in this group, facilitators reported that they found it difficult to explore more secular issues relevant to prejudice and hostility. This may well have been because faith identity, through the nature of the dialogue setting, was dominant and largely exclusive of other identities and influences.

The <u>evaluative group</u> gave the governance body of a faith partnership organisation the opportunity to take part in a dialogue session. This group offered useful suggestions for project development, especially in being sensitive to issues such as domestic violence that might be live concerns in some communities. However the group opted primarily for an evaluation of facilitation rather than engaging in dialogue objectives.

The two <u>recreational groups</u> - a mother and toddler group and an older people's recreational group - presented contrasting responses that proved crucial in developing dialogue methodology. The 'mother and toddler' group came at mid-point in the sequence of sessions and was challenging to engage with. Whilst some group members did become

involved in discussion, the majority failed to respond to facilitator's initiatives. Whilst facilitators felt that this was, in part because of the subject matter, and in part because of distractions created by the children, it was also evident that outsiders, without the explicit permission of all group members, were taking up precious recreational time. As a consequence some important lessons were learnt regarding continuity and clear communication between project staff, facilitators and individuals involved with groups were a dialogue session was convened. Those convening a dialogue session needed to keep group members involved with and supportive of the initiative. Furthermore, dialogue planning must ensure that all participants give permission for their involvement. However in spite of these initial difficulties, CD project involvement with this group led to wider community engagement - which took place after the action research - and focused on addressing racism in a local school.

By contrast, work with a recreational group for over 50s that came later in the sequence of sessions, provided the setting for a complex dialogue facilitation process. This group had an ethos of courtesy and openness and enjoyed working with facilitators in describing their community and how they saw the world. Group members had powerful experiences of class prejudice and were prepared to engage in challenging reflection centred on the hurtful implications of class prejudice they had experienced. This led to a discussion exploring anti-Muslim stereotypes which was developed by facilitators using an exercise involving 'veiling' and what it felt like to wear one. Work with this group was critical in crystallising key aspects of learning around building a relationship with a group, and working with strong group identities, as a way of exploring prejudice.

Discussion and Analysis: Role of Group Convenors and Leaders

Six groups were convened by clergy, two by community workers and one by a representative of a church council. Those convening dialogue groups were in a role that could be considered as one of leadership. In seven of the nine groups this person also became a member of the dialogue group. This presented potential difficulties for facilitators in working on the basis of equality with group members, since such an individual was likely to have hierarchical relationships with group members outside the dialogue session. Furthermore, challenging any narratives of prejudice that an individual expressed could undermine their leadership position. This could have wider implications for post-dialogue role performance and for broader group equilibrium where this coalesced around the leader. Strategies for addressing this issue were important in developing the dialogue methodology. After considerable debate facilitators agreed that in order to perform their role effectively they had to 'take control of the space', emphasising the importance of pre-dialogue planning. Facilitators sought to provide reassurance that affirmed the status of leader and group convenor roles whilst ensuring that when dialogue sessions began, all participants were treated on the basis of equality, thereby enabling the essential process of challenging all participant's views when appropriate.

Important practical learning emerged from groups one and five where a convener was not present. Both groups were adversely affected by a lack of continuity between initial contact and the subsequent planning and delivery of a dialogue session. These experiences re-enforced the crucial role that pre-dialogue planning played in achieving a successful outcome and were influential in determining the pre-dialogue role of CD project staff. Having identified a group interested in a session, clear processes were required that resulted in a member of the facilitator consortium quickly engaging with a dialogue group

representative. Such processes were also important in providing facilitators with opportunities for planning based upon the group's purpose, objectives, and its unique cultural context. It was at this early stage that facilitators first had an opportunity to start considering issues and concerns from the perspective of in-group viewpoints.

Discussion and Analysis: Number of sessions

The variation in the number of sessions was both a reflection of early uncertainty on the part of the CD project with regard to how many sessions would be most effective, as well as the amount of time participants were able to commit. For facilitators, at least two and ideally three sessions provided the best opportunity for building a relationship with a group and delivering facilitation which met the group's needs in ways consistent with project objectives. In groups three, six, seven and eight the number of sessions fitted with existing activities or objectives of these groups.

The researcher's interviews with dialogue participants, described in the next chapter, suggested some ambivalence with regard to the number of sessions. Some interviewees were satisfied, whilst others thought the number insufficient. One commented after three sessions:

"...I view the exercise so far as a preliminary to the main exercise." (Slade 2011b)

This view was typical of participant interviewees who closely identified with project objectives. However, from a project perspective more open-ended commitment had clear resource implications. This learning began to argue the importance of developing cost-effective methods of sustaining and building on interest and potential commitment.

Discussion and Analysis: Group Diversity

The variety of participating dialogue groups reflected the diverse role of faith in people's lives - ranging from spiritual well-being to the provision of premises or the opportunity to meet and talk with others. Faith identity was a strong feature of some groups but in others was a more background presence. Some groups gave the impression of a positive sense of well-being - outward looking and focused on objectives that promoted cooperation. One group appeared to have a strong internal narrative of prejudice experienced by their community. Another group was difficult to engage, in part because of activities that had little accessible congruence to CD project objectives, yet this contact widened the CD project activity within the community.

However, underneath the homogenised group identity of faith or recreation lay a variety of group mechanisms and accompanying dynamics that could frame facilitators as helpful listeners or intruders. Working with such diversity was challenging and saw facilitators engaged in careful reflection as to what worked and what could be improved. The need to consolidate learning was underpinned by the realisation that lack of preparation to engage participants in discussion about stereotypes and prejudice could make a situation worse. One participant, reflecting back on a dialogue session that took place early in the action research period, articulated their group's sense of grievance that they might be considered prejudiced in any way. This grievance was accompanied by a suspicion of darker motives.

> "Was there any money involved? Several people had spoken to me about the first meeting - that it had been a waste of their time. I mean they did come to the second meeting but they said that they had felt they got nothing...They didn't know where it was leading and they were unsure what was expected and I think they

felt targeted for a particular reason; possibly because [name of locality] is very white and I think they were a bit resentful of that." (Slade 2011 c)

During the action research, an appreciation began to emerge within the facilitator's consortium that in order to guard against dialogue engagement doing more harm than good, experiential activity should be balanced by and included in a framework that consolidated learning as to what worked well. The developing learning focused initially on what the aims of a framework might be.

AIM OF THE DIALOGUE FRAMEWORK

During the cycle of dialogue sessions, facilitators used consortium meetings to evaluate interactions with groups that had worked well, and those where things could have gone better. In order to support the development of a framework that brought clarity to their activity, the researcher analysed consortium transcripts and facilitator records to identify a series of themes that could underpin the development of dialogue framework aims. These themes comprised:

- Enabling facilitators to work with groups
- Promoting safety for facilitators and participants
- Ensuring consistency with CD project activity.

With facilitator consortium members, the researcher developed these themes into a series of aims that the CD dialogue framework should pursue. The framework should:

- Ensure the right balance between clear practical processes (who does what and when) and the essential 'chemistry' of the approach of 'going with what comes up in a group'

- Be the most advantageous way of applying core principles and facilitators skills

- Promote a safe environment within which facilitators and participants could work

- Represent best practice in delivering a key project activity - Providing Safe Spaces within which difficult dialogue around racism and faith-based prejudice can take place

- Endeavour to deliver dialogue sessions which are a rewarding and wholesome experience for participants.

Discussion and analysis

Balancing planned process with a group's unique chemistry was a relevant starting point. Innovation can be seen as a feature of CD project progress from the point of inception through to the development of dialogue methodology. Arguably progress had been achieved, in part, by stepping outside mainstream constructs of inter-community dialogue and developing new approaches geared to local communities. Given this, it was essential not to constrain learning by a premature or restrictive approach. Furthermore, it was important not to inhibit the unique dynamics and identity of a group - referred to by facilitators as its 'chemistry' - through imposing an externally created structure of what was considered to be sound practice. This pointed to the relevance of core facilitator skills in managing this balance. However there was also a growing awareness of the need to consolidate process - who does what and when - once a group expressed interest in a dialogue session so that subsequent arrangements could be smoothly and efficiently put in hand.

The framework needed to provide the most advantageous setting for applying principles underpinning dialogue processes and facilitator skills. Maintaining equilibrium between the competing demands of

processes and chemistry required the dialogue framework to develop in a way that could provide the structure a group could work within, whilst not inhibiting essential group dynamics. Recognising the need for this balance underlined the importance of facilitators having a range of core skills. These were identified as critical in enabling facilitators to approach a dialogue session with confidence, and helping participants to feel assured that those working with them had a sufficient level of competence to take them through difficult areas.

The importance of a <u>safe environment for participants and facilitators</u> reflected awareness that dialogue sessions could be disturbing for participants and stressful for facilitators. However a fundamental requirement of project activity was that dialogue sessions should take place in a safe, secure and non-judgemental environment in which people could relax and talk about their concerns. Steps to achieving such an environment needed to be evident throughout each aspect of the CD project's dialogue framework.

The framework's aim <u>to achieve best practice</u> was twofold. Firstly, dialogue processes needed to be informed by existing research and evidenced based practice requiring continual learning and improvement. Secondly, dialogue processes would need to be related at all times to the CD project purpose and activities.

Finally the dialogue framework should endeavour to deliver sessions that were <u>a rewarding and wholesome experience</u> for participants. Arguably this aim is aspirational. The unique nature and composition of each dialogue group meant it would be impossible to accurately predict every turn of events in a session, some of which might be rewarding and others more threatening. Given this, it would be impossible to completely guard against a risk of a session being a source of discomfort. Accordingly it was important for the framework to develop

and be applied in ways that minimised risk, providing this did not inhibit the essential purpose of dialogue sessions.

Building on this work, a series of principles were developed by the researcher and consortium members on which delivery of framework aims could be based. The objective was to provide guidance for project staff in working with communities that might be interested in dialogue sessions, and for facilitators as they planned and delivered work with specific groups

DIALOGUE PRINCIPLES

The researcher's analysis of consortium transcripts, facilitator records, and transcripts of dialogue participant interviews, identified themes that began to define a series of principles – underlined in the following analysis - that could provide guidance to facilitators and project staff.

Discussion and Analysis

Being open and honest with groups about the reasons for the project's aims and objectives emerged as an important principle during the early stage of dialogue sessions. CD project concerns about extremism were best described in an apolitical context, with participants being asked to reflect on whether they saw extremism as a problem in their area. Interviews with participants of early groups revealed that if participants felt they had been 'singled out', or targeted for attention because they were thought to be prejudiced, they became understandably defensive, especially when there was strong views that:

> "...prejudice and racism are not a problem here because we are all white..." (Slade 2011c) "...extremists are other people: out there...there isn't a problem with racism and prejudice here..."(Slade 2010a)

In such circumstances the involvement of facilitators could be met with hostility and rejection. Facilitators found it useful to look generally at the causes of tensions between communities - as a way of helping groups consider project objectives - without giving the impression that critical assumptions had been made about the community where the group was located.

Ensuring there is permission from the group for dialogue to take place was an early learning outcome. Dialogue sessions worked best from everyone's perspective when people had freely and openly given their consent to embark on a difficult conversation. In two early groups there was a lack of clarity about whether participants had given any agreement and in one of these groups – the mother and toddler recreational group - the convener was not present at the session and had not told group members that facilitators have been invited.

Working with the identity of a group and its unique cultural context became a cornerstone of planning and providing dialogue. Its relevance was evident throughout dialogue sessions and was expressed in practical terms by facilitators exploring how group members saw their communities. This proved to be a useful starting point for more difficult conversations about prejudice and was relevant to in-group mechanisms that promote self-esteem, and with which facilitators could interact by responding empathically to in-group perceptions. Effectiveness of this approach was also evident through participants responding positively to facilitators being interested in learning about 'their community'. In describing their work with one group a facilitator commented:

> "They really, really want to know what we think about them so there is definitely a two-way process of learning that they are

willing to engage with which, again, I think is really open and generous."   (Slade 2011 d)

<u>Working with the hopes, aspirations and fears of communities</u> was evident in a number of ways. As work progressed it became clear that communities worked hard to maintain positive esteem and had strong values that people should be treated properly - fairly, and with courtesy. However, at the same time they knew they are seen critically by outsiders. In one such group a facilitator reported that a dialogue participant had overheard a bus driver disparagingly referring to the participant's community as one where: "Nobody works on here, no one pays council tax!" (Slade 2011a) This learning proved important in developing skills exploring personal experience of prejudice – because of class or gender or disability - as an opening to how other communities might encounter hostile stereotypes, but on the grounds of their faith or ethnicity.

Approaching dialogue from the perspective of participants revealed that some communities were disturbed by changes and outside events, especially the presence of people they considered to be 'outsiders' and who did not engage with their sense of community. Participants in one dialogue meeting were reported as perturbed by the extent to which people responsible for allocating housing were: "…bringing in all sorts now - druggies." (Slade 2011e), although at the same time, newcomers could be welcomed if it was felt that they fitted in.

The sense of a lack of control over immediate circumstances – of things being 'done' to communities' rather than 'with' them reflected wider sentiments of exclusion - the extent to which some people felt powerless because of the decisions other people make. Dissonance was evident in tensions that arose from the attempts of participants to

behave with courtesy towards others - including newcomers - that contrasted with group feelings that the establishment extended no similar attitude towards them.

"The government doesn't do enough to make things better. The church should do more to make things better." (Slade 2010 b)

Listening to these concerns and understanding the perspectives of those who shared them was important since, in the words of one dialogue participant: "The BNP are good listeners." (Slade 2010 a)

Generally, for dialogue participants, the theme of 'our community – our group' was evident. One participant placed their perspective in an amalgam of church, community and secularism:

"We are community Church first and foremost...We have worship but in a lot of our events we try to engage with people who are not at all religious." (Slade 2011 f)

Another participant's comments reflected their community's acceptance of the 'newcomer' that fitted in. For example:

"When I moved here, I remember saying to some friends more people had spoken to me in the first three months I have lived here than in the three years where I used to live." (Slade 2011 c)

Appreciating the complexities of group identity and culture demanded much of facilitator's skills and time, 'tuning into' perspectives of those with whom they would be working. However, when this was achieved, rich and revealing narratives emerged.

Acknowledging the extent to which groups were affected by events outside their immediate lives and communities arose regularly in facilitator's notes and transcripts of consortium meetings. These issues ranged from the perceived destructive influence of outside pressures on

cultural identity affecting young people, exampled by the grandmothers referred to in chapter 4, to the impact of the media as a powerful driver of attitudes. Dialogue groups demonstrated positive and negative stereotyping of others based on the power of a 'single narrative' - images and media discourses that meant dangerous 'outsiders' could be identified on the basis of dress and biology and requiring a watchful presence when in public spaces with such people.

Discussion of change and loss which arose regularly in dialogue groups frequently focused on the miners' strike of 1984-1985 which continues to be a powerful driver of group identity and culture. Added to this legacy were references to the later collapse of traditional heavy industries. Some facilitators described how these themes emerged either openly in group discussions, were sensed as background issues of bitterness and resentment or echoed in a wider sense of loss. Facilitators reported participants describing: "...fear that traditional patterns, for example kinship networks, may be eroded." (Slade 2011g)

Building a trusting and empathic relationship with the group was an essential prerequisite for helping people to talk about subjects that concerned them and the difficult issues central to CD project activity. Group discussion sometimes focused on the issue of what can be termed 'political correctness'. Facilitators reported that in some groups people described a reluctance to talk about people in other communities because they were concerned about accusations of racism. This emphasised the importance of facilitators making sure participants were encouraged, by a safe and non-judgmental environment, to express their views and were supported in considering alternative perspectives when appropriate. Relationship building highlighted facilitator's skills in responding to expressions of racism and prejudice within the group. Encouraging self-reflection and gently

probing for alternative understandings was more effective and welcomed than any overt or strident challenge.

Allowing and enabling people to talk about things they need to talk about arose as an early outcome of research data analysis indicating the importance of involving the group, or at least its representatives, in planning a dialogue session. The implementation of this principle proved relevant when more than one session was to take place. In four of the nine groups facilitators directly engaged participants in planning each session, gaining the benefit of explicit permission for a topic to be addressed. A dialogue participant described the approach as:

> "...very sensitive and accommodating. They didn't barge in - they explained their objectives. People were asked if they would like to take part in exercises." (Slade 2011h)

Identifying with the group the issues they would like to explore was a closely related principal. Helping people talk about concerns that were important to them also had a practical basis. Two groups - a church campaigning group and a church governance group - had existing aims and objectives, making it important that the dialogue session was congruent with these group purposes. In another group the requirement was 'also have some fun' in the process. As consortium meetings progressed a clearer understanding of the relevance of pre-existing group purposes began to be realised, emphasising again the importance of working with a group at the planning stage.

Discussion with groups as to how they wanted to spend a dialogue session was sometimes stimulated by exploring how they looked at the world and the kind of problems and issues they encountered. One group convener commented that it might be difficult to stimulate discussion

since most of the group were: "…white working class males who don't enjoy that sort of activity…"(Slade 2010c) although an evaluation of this session revealed the group remained engrossed in intense conversation relevant to dialogue aims for some two hours.

The project was committed to <u>supporting people who wanted to take the outcomes of dialogue further</u>. One group expressed an interest in meeting people from a Muslim community. Another group indicated that intercommunity contact might be a future objective. In general, facilitators adopted an approach of discussing the possibility of interaction without overtly pushing the group towards such an objective. In fact, only two of the nine groups indicated that interaction with another group might be a possibility. In addition, supporting and sustaining a wide range of such initiatives could have been beyond the existing capacity of the CD project.

This set of principles was developed from direct experience of facilitators interacting with live and powerful experiences – where groups could be seen to be facing contemporary 21st-century life with increasing discomfort. In-group mechanisms seemed to be under growing pressure to cope with maintaining stability and equilibrium against external influences that brought unwarranted change, over which people had little control. In the background there was a sense of disillusionment with the establishment and a quiet anger at the way their communities were treated both in the past and the present.

However, analysis of research data suggested that dialogue participants found the experience of being encouraged to talk, and respectfully listened to, a welcome one. Whilst this was only one aspect of exploring the causes and implications of prejudice and stereotyping, it was nonetheless essential. Facilitators were keen to ensure that such experiences could be replicated as widely as possible. Whilst identifying

principles and their rationale could guide facilitators work, this was only a preliminary step in being confident that work in dialogue groups was effective. With the researcher's support, facilitators turned to the business of clarifying a dialogue process underpinned by these principles.

THE DIALOGUE PROCESS

Building on the development of dialogue aims and underpinning principles, the researcher used a workshop process involving consortium facilitators to consolidate learning with the aim of designing a dialogue framework. The task was further informed by interviews with participants, especially their comments as to what had worked well and where there was scope for improvement.

The outcome was a two-stage dialogue process, agreed by members of the consortium as an accurate reflection of their work and later by the project management committee as an appropriate distillation of their strategy in delivering a key activity. This two-stage process is summarised as follows.

- Stage one. Initial planning and preparation for a dialogue session.
- Stage two. Delivering a dialogue session, made up of four elements:
  - Introduction
  - Dialogue
  - Reflection
  - Outcomes.

Discussion and Analysis: Stage 1- Initial Planning and Preparation

Stage1. Initial planning and preparation for a dialogue session was seen as essential for providing effective facilitation. Planning was seen to begin at a stage where an employee of the CD project, or a member of the potential dialogue group, interacted to express an interest in

dialogue participation. This led to debate about the role facilitators and CD project staff would undertake in developing contact with a group.

The research findings argued that the guiding principle should be one of continuity and that dialogue sessions were more challenging for facilitators, and less satisfactory for participants, when this early continuity was absent. Continuity was best achieved by linking at least one co-facilitator with a group representative who could then be involved with discussion and planning. Where this early contact took place it assisted the facilitator's task of building a relationship with the group, reducing the extent to which they might be perceived as intrusive outsiders. Furthermore, this continuity gave facilitators the opportunity to find out more about the community and the group's expectations of dialogue - both of which were found to be crucial in developing a dialogue plan appropriate to the group's needs - and to agree practical arrangements with regard to dates, a venue and the number of people likely to be involved.

The research found that working closely at an early stage with a key member of a group could also have implications for supporting dialogue outcomes. The facilitator consortium were introduced to and reflected on conflict resolution methodology that describes such an individual as the 'insider-partial' (Lederach & Where 1991) - a person who remains a member of a group but is sympathetic to and supportive of peacebuilding initiatives. As the action research reached its conclusion, facilitators were beginning to identify such individuals who, with support, could have a role in championing and supporting local action when dialogue sessions were complete.

Discussion and Analysis: Stage Two - Delivering Dialogue Sessions

Introductory Element

Whilst each facilitator had a unique approach to introducing themselves and building a relationship with a group, research findings revealed that the introductory element of a session had a number of common purposes. Facilitators began with an introduction to the CD project and its aims and objectives followed by trust and confidence building with the group - developing a theme of 'we are learning from each other'. A further purpose was to find out, from the group's perspective, what it felt like to live in their community, listening especially to local narratives describing their concerns.

Dialogue Element

The dialogue element of a session could be said to begin in the period where people felt safe in being able to look at feelings of prejudice. If facilitators were working with a group for the first time, or who were only committed to one session, then the dialogue would flow from the introductory element. Where groups were committed to two or more sessions, facilitators found it useful to seek continuity by reflecting back to themes and issues that had emerged during, or since, the previous meeting. This approach acknowledged research findings arising from interviews with dialogue participants that highlighted the relevance of informal interactions between group members, outside the confines of a dialogue session. Drawing these experiences and possible changes into the session was seen as important in acknowledging and responding to changes in group dynamics.

A non-judgemental approach, albeit challenging views when relevant, was the key ingredient in the effectiveness of the dialogue element. The research found that in some groups, facilitators found it useful to start in a structured way, for example with a role play between

facilitators presenting an aspect of prejudice, then moving towards a more equal relationship between facilitators and participants, where group members reflected on their own experiences of prejudice. However in several groups, a structured series of activities formed the core of this element of facilitation, with discussion working around it.

The Reflective Element

Facilitators reflecting back key themes that had arisen in the dialogue session were helpful in highlighting particular outcomes. Alongside this it was important to establish whether participants had been overly disconcerted by the dialogue session, taking appropriate action where necessary. If a further session was planned then this element could give an indication of the themes or topics participants wanted to explore.

Outcomes

Identifying the outcomes of a dialogue session flowed from the reflective element and was important for ensuring closure both for a specific session and the conclusion of a series of sessions. Research identified the importance of facilitators exploring a number of areas with participants. Some of these were unique to a group, but in general focused on how people felt as a result of the session(s) and whether attitudes in relation to prejudice had been influenced in any way. Facilitators asked if people wanted to take any action as a result of the dialogue session. This could include being more ready to challenge prejudice, and might extend to contact with other groups including groups of different faith or ethnicity. Figure 8 below provides an illustration of this two stage dialogue framework.

Figure 8 Two Stage Process of Intra community Dialogue (Slade 2012)

STAGE ONE: PLANNING

Initial Phase
- Project staff seek out and identify a group showing interest in participating
- Facilitator introduced by project staff to group/ group representative. Begin relationship building

Preparation
- Facilitator working with co-facilitator builds knowledge about group's community and expectations of dialogue
- Agree Practical Arrangements

STAGE TWO: DIALOGUE SESSION

INTRODUCTORY ELEMENT
- Discuss project aims and objectives
- Build trust and confidence
- Help people to feel safe
- Find out what the group wants to do
- Enable people to talk about their experiences

DIALOGUE ELEMENT
- Establish continuity with initial phase and /or previous session
- Provide and agree with group the structure for the session
- Explore personal experience and then project specific experience of prejudice
- Use exercises, especially facilitator role play

REFLECTIVE ELEMENT
- Reflect key themes
- Check if participants disconcerted; take action where necessary
- Identify any congruent affective or behavioural change
- Determine whether group wishes to participate in any further action

OUTCOMES

Closure

Further dialogue session

Other post-dialogue action in support of project aims

Identify support for initiating / sustaining action

FACILITATION SKILLS

Achieving dialogue framework aims, applying principles and delivering successful dialogue sessions, required a range of facilitation skills. Some can be seen as common to all group facilitation - core skills, whilst others were project specific. The researcher's analysis of data identified a number of critical skills.

Discussion and Analysis: Core Facilitation Skills

Core skills common to all those involved in group facilitation were necessary. These were both practical and interpersonal. Given that dialogue sessions were resource intensive – planning and delivering three sessions could take between nine and twelve hours in total – facilitators required skills in time and project management.

Alongside this, skills in joint working, communication and co-facilitation were crucial. The CD project had made an early assumption that facilitators would work in pairs. Although this approach meant committing more resources, most facilitators were more experienced in applying some skills than others. This combined with the usefulness of one facilitator leading dialogue whilst their partner adopted more of an observer/assisting role, underlined the usefulness of this approach, giving a more rounded set of dialogue skills.

Other facilitation skills focused on the interpersonal and involved maintaining a respectful attitude, empathic listening – for the spoken and unspoken - non-assertive challenging, encouraging self-reflection and reframing. These skills were important in recognising and responding to the effect of external influences on participants, which were brought into group processes, and internal mechanisms that enabled facilitators to understand and work with specific group dynamics – recognising when a prepared activity was no longer needed.

Project Specific Skills

Some facilitation skills were more specific to CD project activity. In some groups, facilitators were required to have <u>skills and knowledge in applying aspects of theology</u> relevant to issues of prejudice and stereotyping. In all groups, facilitators required a working knowledge of, and skills in, <u>understanding and working with concepts of racism and prejudice</u>. In addition a subset of skills were identified and categorised which are discussed and analysed in the following text.

- Role-play.
- Holding conversations to a topic and pursuing issues in more depth.
- Addressing the power of the single narrative.
- Working with the group culture.
- Using personal experience of prejudice.
- The role of the leader.

Discussion and Analysis: Project Specific Skills

Research findings suggested that <u>role-play</u> between facilitators focusing on prejudice with which participants could identify - and then be helped to transfer to project specific prejudice - proved effective. Dialogue groups were asked to observe and discuss facilitator role-play rather than undertake roles themselves. Most people are uncomfortable with role-play and there was no benefit to be gained by adding to the discomfort possibly felt by the nature of the issues discussed. Role-play often led to discussions about prejudice in general and the experience of group members in observing, being a recipient of, or perpetrating prejudice.

One example of experiential learning through role-play did directly involve group participants. This occurred when one group had said they wanted to learn more about Muslim culture. Their next session involved working with a Muslim co-facilitator. She wore a niqab, which caused

some initial consternation. A key element of the interplay between the group and their visitor was a wide-ranging discussion of the wearing of the niqab, which included several participants taking the opportunity to try on the garment. Responses as to how they felt when wearing the veil included positive feelings of safety and exoticism, alongside more negative feelings of moroseness allied with mourning. These expressions of feeling led to a discussion of religious traditions and British culture that related to the niqab as an expressed sign of the 'other'. Such exercises proved to be a rich source of material. (Slade 2011j)

Being able to skilfully and sensitively hold conversations to a particular topic, and pursuing issues in more depth, was important when groups experienced discomfort with a topic and wanted to move on to safer ground. Knowledge of and skills in, addressing the power of the 'single narrative', that were frequently founded on media discourses, provided opportunities encouraging participants to look for alternative ways of seeing outsiders. In several groups, issues emerged during such conversations that participants found painful to deal with. However, facilitators observed that self-reflection and learning took place that might not otherwise have arisen.

A working knowledge of and skills in, working with a group culture were used to help participants explore the paradox of how attitudes toward outsiders might conflict with the group norm - for example treating people properly versus hostility towards out-groups. Such discussion called for close listening and a careful empathic response on behalf of facilitators since it was possible that group members could become resentful through insensitive probing that highlighted obvious contradictions.

Groups commonly denied that prejudice was an issue in their communities. Given this, facilitator's skills focused on 'reframing', used to

promote talk about <u>personal experiences of prejudice</u>. Such an approach provided an opening for thinking about how groups of outsiders, for example Muslims, might have similar experiences. These conversations required sensitivity, since group participants could describe experiences related to their gender, disability or class that were distressing.

<u>Working with Group leaders and convenors</u> required the application of specific interpersonal skills. These individuals were generally a member of the clergy – but could also be informal, powerful individuals in groups. Facilitator sensitivity needed to acknowledge the role played by convenors and formal leaders that was addressed by ensuring they were engaged in planning how a dialogue session might proceed. The role of informal leaders was encouraged when this had a positive effect, however, where this was inhibiting group progress, it was managed by ensuring all participants had an opportunity to contribute and that any dominant narrative was sensitively challenged by facilitators.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

The action research outcomes discussed in this chapter describe a process of intra-community dialogue. The framework, devised by the researcher with CD project facilitators and staff, does not seek to undermine more usual intercommunity approaches to dialogue. Rather, it provides an alternative form of intervention when contact between communities is not feasible, but where there is vulnerability to the hostile and divisive narratives of extremists.

The dialogue framework can be seen to reflect elements of social–psychological theory pertaining to groups and their identity cited earlier in the study. The framework deliberately focused on non-judgemental

rather than pejorative challenges to perspectives that might be held by participants towards outsiders. By exploring and challenging these viewpoints, participants were encouraged to feel they were listened to and valued. Allied to this was a facilitator attitude that sought to learn about the participant's group and their community. Where this learning revealed positive in-group experiences and values then these were reflected back to groups and interacted with internal mechanisms likely to promote good group esteem. Together, these strategies appeared to ameliorate the negative impact of facilitators being framed as outsiders. Hierarchical in-group perspectives of outsiders (Hogg 2006) were addressed by facilitators working on the basis of equality with groups – a 'we are learning from you as you are learning from us' - working <u>with</u> people, and not doing things <u>to</u> them.

The dialogue framework also shares some common ground with Azar's (1990) processes of facilitated dialogue, especially his emphasis on the equal status of participants and facilitators, and addressing issues which were of concern to those taking part. The relevance of his work in addressing feelings of resentment was also evident. Similarly, there was congruence with Abu Nimer, Khoury and Welty's (2007) discussion of dialogue as a sharing exploration of narratives.

The framework echoes aspects of contact theory and practice. The emphasis placed on equality between group members, together with valuing each perspective and contribution, was to prove an underpinning principle guiding the development and implementation of the project's intra-community processes and has resonance with Allport's (1954) conditions for effective intercommunity dialogue.

Chris and Turner's (2008) research of imagined contact was introduced by the researcher into consortium discussion and proved relevant to exploring an aspect of dialogue process where facilitators

worked with groups to help them imagine how feelings such as personal hurt arising from their encounter with prejudice might be similarly experienced by out-group members of different ethnicity.

Elements of Pettigrew's (1998) processes were similarly relevant to the dialogue framework. Although learning about another group did not arise through direct contact, dialogue facilitators sought to explore the implications of negative stereotypes for 'out-groups', through encouraging participants to describe the implications of their personal experiences of prejudice. In this way facilitators aimed to provide groups with the opportunity to learn more about the predicament of 'out-groups' and the extent to which common experience might exist.

Pettigrew's concern to minimise anxiety was reflected in the priority dialogue facilitators gave to ensuring sessions were 'safe spaces' for participants, where they could discuss fears and concerns openly without being exposed to a judgemental or a critically challenging response. Furthermore, the reflective element of the dialogue framework had parallels with Pettigrew's emphasis on reappraising group norms, behaviour and attitudes combining in a new group culture toward outsiders. When describing the new found willingness of a previously 'conservative' group to challenge prejudice, one facilitator commented:

> "I think it's a little bit about creating a shared culture - culture in a different sense - cultural conversation and openness. So there is now a culture in [name of locality] group - no doubt they have their culture outside - but there is a culture of our dialogue with them, which is quite…high-energy, fairly open, and pretty robust." (Slade 2011i)

However this action research has identified some potential challenges to a more widespread application of the framework. Firstly,

set against the growth of those powerful drivers of extremism - austerity and deprivation – the project's capacity is in danger of being overwhelmed by a growing tide of hostility to the 'other.' Proposals were made by the researcher during the action research process to extend resources by recruiting and training volunteer co-facilitators. Without such a strategy it is difficult to see how the CD project will be able to make any significant inroads into communities where anger and resentment is likely to grow.

Secondly, given the level of resources required, further work is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of the dialogue framework and whether the approach justifies commitment of resources Although this action research has involved collaboration with a project in its early stages of development, what evidence is there that innovation will achieve long-lasting change?

Subject to these caveats, this study finds that the dialogue framework has value as a community cohesion, peacebuilding and human security resource. The approach does not seek to offer any kind of shortcut to inter-community processes. However in areas of low levels of ethnic diversity, where communities offer a range of reasons preventing them from meeting with other groups, different processes are necessary in order to challenge the fears and prejudices on which extremism feeds. In order to address such positions the dialogue framework represents a process that enables people to consider why they have negative feelings about 'outsiders' - which extremists can exploit - and to explore alternative ways of seeing the world where 'the other ' is less threatening.

The next chapter will consider the comments of participants, analysed through an appropriate evaluative tool that indicates the potential effectiveness of the dialogue framework.

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CHAPTER 7

PARTICIPANT EVALUATIONS OF DIALOGUE.

The previous chapter discussed a framework of intra-community dialogue that aims to give people a safe and non-judgemental, albeit challenging, opportunity to discuss hostile feelings towards outsiders. This chapter moves the study towards its conclusion by discussing the views of participants who were involved in dialogue sessions.

This chapter considers the second part of the study's remaining key question:

- What do people think about the experience of taking part in safe spaces dialogue?'

INTRODUCTION

The action research findings presented in this chapter provided the basis on which to discuss and analyse the experience of participants in taking part in dialogue sessions. The aim of this third element of the research was to identify qualitative data by means of formative evaluation that would feed into the development of the dialogue framework described in the previous chapter – what, from a participant perspective, had gone well and where could improvements be made?

The chapter begins with a short literature review discussing the practice of project evaluation in community cohesion and peacebuilding activity – and the opportunities for both disciplines to learn from evaluation experience and practice outside these fields. The text then outlines methodology that was founded on research theory considered in chapter 1. The main body of the chapter discusses findings that explored the experience of participant's involvement in the CD projects developing dialogue framework.

EXISTING RESEARCH

The study's literature review provided examples of work that evaluated the underlying concepts and policy implications of <u>strategic</u> community cohesion policy in the UK. However, literature describing evaluation methods which seek to assess the <u>practical impact of community cohesion practice</u> in the UK appears to be underdeveloped. This may reflect uncertainty over definitions of community cohesion and vacillation in the way in which the concept has been used by central government - whether the policy thrust is strategies which might help people get on better with each other, or is concerned with the prevention of violent extremism. Exactly what would be evaluated? Peacebuilding methodology can leave a similar impression. Smith's (2004) study of progress in developing peacebuilding frameworks commented that: "There is no known way of reliably assessing the impact of peacebuilding projects."(Smith 2004:11)

Given these positions, evaluation of both peacebuilding and community cohesion interventions can face a bewildering range of possibilities. Which initiatives should be prioritised? Is there any evidence that an initiative will make things better, cause deterioration, maintain the status quo or consume resources that would be better deployed elsewhere? What are the views of people who are the recipients of these initiatives? These questions suggest the need to acknowledge the importance of evaluation as a way of improving practice on the basis of what works best, and point to the need to develop a method able to achieve this task. Both community cohesion and peacebuilding may benefit from learning arising from outside these fields, where evaluation strategies are more developed.

Bachtler and Wren's (2006) study of evaluative methodology used by the European Community to assess the effectiveness of continent-

wide community cohesion strategies, identifies a situation that is the opposite of that which appears to be the norm in peacebuilding and UK community cohesion practice. Bachtler and Wren found that the complexity of policy, combined with contested narratives disputing its appropriateness, have given rise to a plethora of evaluative strategies. Whilst acknowledging the industrial scale of EU practice, their discussion usefully distils a plethora of concepts into three distinct approaches. Firstly, a positivists approach - that gathers objective knowledge through observation. Secondly, a realist approach that seeks to find the causes of changes in policy and programmes amongst practitioners. Thirdly, a constructionist approach that involves evaluating interactions between policy and stakeholders to establish their views. (2006:149-150) This third approach is consistent with this study's action research method and compatible with Schalock's (2001) research of outcome based evaluation, developed from experience in evaluating a variety of public and private sector initiatives.

Schalock's work provides a rationale for evaluative practice which peacebuilding and community cohesion strategists might consider relevant. Despite a strong association in evaluation strategies that compare costs with results, Schalock suggests that more fundamental issues need to be considered – indeed in his view, evaluative outcomes based on concepts are more profound than those that arise from statistical evidence (2001:4).

In Schalock's view the critical reason for evaluation lies in distinguishing between success and failure - a perspective that has become important in a range of public activity such as education and health care, where evaluative practice is vital in determining which interventions work. He believes that an element of distinguishing effectiveness from ineffectiveness lies in exploring and analysing the

contributions that specific programs, services or interventions have on the lives of people (2001:3-4). Elements of this person centred approach and Schalock's emphasis on short term, intermediate and long-term outcomes have been utilised by the researcher in devising, conducting and analysing participant evaluation.

METHODOLOGY

Dialogue participants were interviewed so their experiences could contribute, through facilitator consortium meetings, to development of the CD project dialogue framework. The research was planned so that participants involved at the beginning, mid-point and end of the action research period could be invited to take part. It was anticipated that this timeline would help analysis of key factors that had taken, and in the future would take the development of the framework in a particular direction.

Locating participants to be interviewed proved difficult. Whilst CD project guarantees of anonymity was a crucial aspect of providing dialogue in a safe and secure environment, it meant that no personal details of participants were recorded by the project, making random sampling of a large group of participants impossible. Attempts to overcome these difficulties included a member of the project management committee negotiating with people prepared to be involved in the research, whilst the researcher used networks developed with interview participants to locate others who were willing to be interviewed.

These recruitment arrangements led to eight participants being interviewed, giving a small sample of 9.5% of the 84 people involved in dialogue sessions held between July 2010 and April 2011. Interviews took place between March and September 2011. Participants were

interviewed using a semi-structured schedule that had been reviewed and improved by the action research cooperative enquiry group. The schedule employed a combination of open-ended questions and the use of a Likert scale format to assess individual feelings about a particular issue. This was supplemented by participants having the opportunity to add further comments if they wished. The schedule was forwarded to participants before the interview together with an information leaflet about the research.

The participant sample was made up of three females and five males. Of these eight, four participants opted for individual interviews whist the remaining four preferred to be interviewed in pairs. Participants were interviewed at a time and venue that suited them best. 7 of the interviews took place at participant's homes. One interview was conducted by telephone reflecting the pressure of time for this participant. Although this person responded willingly and easily to interview questions, the process lacked the benefit of personal interaction and relationship building present in other interviews.

All participants signed an agreement giving permission for the interview to be recorded and their views included in the research. Each person was guaranteed anonymity. Interviews were conducted in line with the researcher's agreement with the CD project and its ethos, requiring a non-judgemental and enquiring approach to be applied to the task. Arguably, this helped participants to be forthcoming with regard to their views and feelings. A transcript was made of each interview that was forwarded to participants for their amendment. One person responded with minor changes.

Participants talked in detail about their feelings in relation to faith, the communities in which they lived and how right wing extremists had managed to gain a toehold. While some participants struggled to

remember detailed content of dialogue sessions which took place several months' earlier, they had little difficulty in recalling feelings associated with the issues which had surfaced. For some participants, their involvement had been a powerful experience and was still the subject of discussion and debate, months after sessions had been completed.

Adherence to CD project processes ruled out the collection of any personal data with regard to participants. The researcher felt constrained to comply with this fundamental approach. This precluded collecting information with regard to variables such as age or self-assessment in relation to class. Overall, this did not appear to undermine the research findings although their absence did inhibit closer analysis.

Interview transcripts were analysed in relation to categories that comprised the questions used in the interview schedule which form the subject headings in the following findings. These questions were designed to assess the views and feelings of participants, before, between and after completion of the sessions.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

HEARING ABOUT A SESSION
Participants were asked how they first heard about the dialogue session in which they took part. This was relevant to exploring whether CD project processes for providing publicity and encouraging engagement could be improved. Analysis of responses revealed a variety of ways in which participants heard about a dialogue session.

- One participant heard about a session through the group convener.
- Three participants, who were group convenors, had contacted the CD project after having heard about the initiative through social networks.

- A friend had invited one participant to the session.

- A further participant heard about the session through an announcement to the congregation during a religious service.

- Two other participants were uncertain as to how they first heard of the possibility but on reflection think it was posted in a list of notices.

Discussion and Analysis

There were a number of <u>formal</u> ways of people hearing about a dialogue session – either through announcements or notices. However transcript analysis found that <u>informal</u> social networks played at least an equal part in a participant taking part in a session - 5 of the 8 participants said they were personally approached and encouraged to take part. Recognising the importance of these in-group mechanisms for attracting participants was an important learning point, and had a helpful impact on processes designed to develop interest in a dialogue sessions.

However these mechanisms occasionally had an unanticipated effect. In one group there appeared to have been a conscious attempt to sift out – in a participant's words - "less liberally minded people."(Slade 2011a) This was of concern as inclusion and engagement of those with such perspectives was at the heart of the CD project. A similar theme emerged in a further group where networks operated by the group convenor were used to invite those who might be sympathetic to CD project activity. Together, these findings indicated the importance of written publicity alongside advice and support to convenors regarding the aims and objectives of the dialogue session. Enabling convenors to understand that a session would work best if membership was open to all and widely publicised (unless it was specifically based on a closed group) was a key learning point.

REASONS FOR A SESSION

Participants were asked what they had been told about the reasons for a dialogue session. This question aimed to establish whether communities felt they had been identified in some way as needing this kind of dialogue. Data analysis revealed the following.

- One participant thought the group had been convened to talk about hostility towards other communities.
- Two participants believed that the objective was to learn more about prejudice.
- Two other participants, interviewed together, disagreed on what they had been told. One was clear the objective was to look at prejudice. The other was unclear as to whether they had been told anything.
- Another participant had been told that the session was relevant to the work of their church group in looking at the impact of poverty on communities.
- Two participants, interviewed together, were clear that the objective was to look at the causes and implications of prejudice. However they also reported resentment amongst group members that the community had, for some reason, been identified as requiring this kind of dialogue session.

Discussion and Analysis

The majority of interviewees were clear that the purpose of the dialogue session was to look at some aspect of prejudice and this did not appear to be a source of resentment, or stimulus for them to work against the aims and objectives of facilitators. However there was not complete clarity. One participant interviewed with a colleague said that they thought the session was to give:

"...a broader element to what we might think. I didn't realise until the meeting took place that it was to do with prejudice..." (Slade 2011b)

However this person's co-interviewee was sure there had been a discussion, prior to the session, that its purpose would be to look at issues of prejudice and the way in which people relate to each other.

One interviewee welcomed the initiative in providing a dialogue session. Far from feeling negatively identified, this participant felt the event was congruent with the existing objectives of their already existing group.

"We felt it was important... to sort ourselves out...[the group] might go forward and take the same idea into [other] churches. The group were very sympathetic." (Slade 2011c)

However this contrasted with the experience of one group who met early in the cycle of dialogue sessions. The interviewee reported that participants voiced concerns that their community had been specially identified as requiring CD project intervention. Nearly eight months afterwards, the session was still the subject of heated conversation. Transcript analysis of this interview suggested some group participants reacted through a 'shooting the messenger' strategy, questioning the integrity of facilitators by raising the possibility of some financial motive behind the initiative to work with the group. There was also evidence of justifying hostility to the intervention by relating lack of ethnicity in the community to a consequent and obvious clear absence of prejudice.

These findings provided learning for the CD project in three ways. Firstly, it supported the focus of planning being aligned with group perspectives and interests. Secondly, the findings emphasised the importance of facilitators working to assure groups they had not been

identified as ones with high levels of racism and prejudice – rather, that the CD project was concerned by the progress of extremists across South Yorkshire. Thirdly, participants could experience continuing post-dialogue discomfort. Consequently, a reflective element was introduced into the dialogue process to assess for any distress and to take appropriate action if this was indicated.

PARTICIPANT'S FEELINGS BEFORE A SESSION

In relation to the dialogue session participants were asked how they felt before the session took place. The aim was to assess whether research findings arising from contact theory, which predict increased levels of anxiety, were evident. The question was asked in a Likert format accompanied by the opportunity for participants to add any further information. Table 13 below, sets out the findings.

Table 13 **Looking back on how you felt before a dialogue session please say whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements.**				
I felt anxious or apprehensive or nervous about what would happen	Strongly agree 0	Agree 1	Disagree 3	Strongly Disagree 2
I was interested or curious as to what the session would be like	Strongly agree 1	Agree 6	Disagree 0	Strongly Disagree 0
I was annoyed or angry that the session was thought to be necessary	Strongly agree 0	Agree 1	Disagree 4	Strongly Disagree. 2
I was pleased that the session was thought to be necessary	Strongly agree. 1	Agree 4	Disagree 0	Strongly Disagree 1

An even number of options was offered in order to encourage a clear choice. Two participants felt unable to respond to the first statement, saying they could neither agree, nor disagree, whether the session made them feel anxious or apprehensive. Another explained they were open-minded regarding their curiosity about the session, neutral in relation to whether the prospect made them feel angry and were neither pleased nor displeased, that the session was thought to be necessary. A further participant was unable to respond to the last question.

Discussion and Analysis

The majority of interviewee's indicated they were not apprehensive about the prospect of discussing racism and prejudice. This finding may run counter to the body of knowledge arising from contact theory suggesting the subject may produce anxiety in participants. However care has been taken, as with all the findings in this chapter, not to over emphasise any contribution to the existing body of knowledge owing to the small sample size. What is more relevant is their contribution to project improvement. In relation to project learning it is possible that anxiety may have been offset by the extent to which participants knew each other before the session took place. One participant did admit to some anxiety but this was primarily a result of concerns as to how other group members would behave.

Seven of the eight participants were curious as to how the session would develop and perhaps this healthy curiosity helped sustain interest and engagement during the session. Six participants indicated that having the session did not make them feel angry - they did not feel their community had been identified as one where racism or faith based prejudice might be a problem. However analysis of additional comments found that two participants believed this was not the case for other members of their dialogue group, who felt they had been so identified

and who adopted an aggressive and defensive stance during their second dialogue session. The individual who strongly disagreed that the session was felt to be necessary explained that it was an articulation of their anger at the existence of prejudice and racism rather than the session itself.

ACHIEVING PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Interviewees were then asked whether, in their view, the CD project objective - participants explore issues such as racism and faith-based prejudice and consider how to respond to them from within their faith or value system - had been achieved in their session. The aim of this question was to identify scope for improving dialogue processes.

Five interviewees indicated they agreed or strongly agreed that this objective had been achieved, whilst three indicated the objective had not been met.

Discussion and analysis

Of those who indicated the objective had been met, the views of one participant were typical of a range of additional comments. This interviewee had found:

"It made us aware that we had got hidden prejudices. It's opening up an area we don't pry into...[it was] good to reveal underlying prejudices from a religious point of view." (Slade 2011c)

One interviewee - who was a member of a different dialogue group, disagreed. For this person the objective had not been achieved because, in their view, the dialogue sessions failed to explore issues in sufficient depth, attributing this failure to group membership (Slade 2011d). This contrasted with the views of two participants of another dialogue group. One of these interviewees felt that the objective had

been met although more could have been done given extra time. Their colleague participant considered that issues of prejudice had been explored, but insufficient time had been given to looking at how to respond when people were confronted with such behaviour (Slade 2011b). This expression of a need for practical learning was helpful for facilitators in developing strategies such as role-play which dramatised how such responses could be made.

Analysis of additional comments found that two other participants who disagreed that the objective had been met were members of an early dialogue session employing processes that improved as development of the CD project framework progressed. Their dialogue group, referred to in earlier discussion and analysis of responses, believed their community had been identified by some unspoken authority as needing a discussion about prejudice. Participants were hostile to the prospect and, based on the account of these interviewees, appeared steeped in denial that any element of this phenomenon was present in their group or community. Again these research findings were helpful for facilitator's development of planning processes from the perspective of groups they would be working with.

ROLE OF FACILITATORS

Participants were then asked about the role of facilitators in attempting to achieve dialogue objectives. The aim of this question was to identify scope for improving relevant skills. Six of the eight participants felt their facilitators approach had been helpful.

Discussion and Analysis.

One participant commented on the competency of facilitators in that:

"They really picked up on things, there was nothing left unsaid - they were very thorough." (Slade 2011 c)

When the researcher asked a supplementary question about any particular aspect of the facilitator's work that stood out as effective, two participants interviewed together commented on a discussion of the 'single narrative'.

Participant 1. "Have you ever been the victim of a single narrative' - was one issue that came up."

Researcher. "How did they get the idea of a single narrative across? It's not something that everybody comes across every day is it?"

Participant 2. "They showed a film clip of somebody talking about her experience of having been the victim of the single narrative and that there was a pattern of narratives rather than just one…using this approach you could respond more sensitively to people rather than 'she's black' and therefore we don't need to listen to this." (Slade 2011a)

Transcript analysis revealed that additional comments made by the two participants who disagreed that the facilitators approach had been helpful, again came from an early dialogue session, identified earlier as having a problematic interaction with the CD project. In the context of discussing this question, the participants disclosed a dynamic interaction taking place <u>between</u> sessions that appeared to have been key in framing perspectives of facilitator involvement. Much was learnt from this early experience with regard to facilitator's planning, provision of structure and for their control of a dialogue session as well as the benefits of drawing out conversations amongst participants that may have occurred between sessions.

ISSUES RAISED IN A SESSIONS

Participants were asked whether it was easy or difficult to discuss the kind of issues that were raised in a session. The aim was to assess levels of discomfort during a dialogue session. Seven out the eight participants found the issues explored in the dialogue session easy to discuss.

Discussion and Analysis.

One participant related their view to the facilitators approach: "The facilitators were very amenable...Facilitators were non-judgemental." (Slade 2011c) This person also referred to other factors:

> "The body language and the approach of facilitators were helpful. Having a Muslim with us this lent a different dimension. No one had strong prejudices but discussion about prejudice led to a discussion about gypsies and travellers- [arising] mostly out of fear...so not just prejudice but cultural prejudice as well." (Slade 2011c)

This interviewee's comments suggested that the ethnicity of facilitators could serve as a useful entry to a wider exploration of prejudice and extended the group's understanding beyond faith and biological difference. This served to be useful learning for the CD project and was further developed by the facilitator in a subsequent consortium meeting when they described how their ethnicity could allow them to stimulate discussion of sensitive issues - for example verbalising language used by some racists - more openly than facilitators who were white British.

The interviewee who did not find the dialogue session easy saw this arising through the failure of other participants in their group to reflect on and justify their views rather than any difficulties with the nature of the topic. This participant was interested in the role of the media in

developing prejudice and hostility and was keen to explore the significance of these narratives.

AFTER THE SESSION

Participants were then asked to describe how they felt after the session. A Likert scale format was used which aimed to assess satisfaction with the process, whether more had been learnt about prejudice, if interviewees were going to take any personal action and whether they were uncomfortable or upset after the session. Findings are set out in table 14.

Table 14 Looking back on how you felt after the dialogue session please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. On the whole after the session I felt:				
Satisfied with the session(s)?	Strongly agree 0	Agree 8	Disagree 0	Strongly Disagree 0
I had learnt more about prejudice?	Strongly agree 4	Agree 4	Disagree 0	Strongly Disagree 0
Able to take personal action or make plans to tackle prejudice?	Strongly agree 1	Agree 3	Disagree 4	Strongly Disagree 0
Uncomfortable or upset after the session?	Strongly agree 0	Agree. 2	Disagree 3	Strongly Disagree. 2

Discussion and Analysis.

The general level of satisfaction amongst participants suggested the dialogue framework was developing in an appropriate direction. Participants agreed that they had learned more about prejudice. For one, this involved a deeper understanding of prejudice amongst

unemployed and marginalised people and included learning how to recognise less obvious forms of prejudice (Slade 2011e).

For the four who disagreed that the session made them feel more able to tackle prejudice their views, in the main, lay not so much in becoming more aware of prejudice but in lacking the skills and confidence in being able to tackle it. One interviewee said that they were particularly concerned how they should respond if they did meet prejudice, articulating an anxiety relevant to the day-to-day practice of acting on agreed principles and values (Slade 2011f). This response pointed towards the importance of facilitators working with participants to help them develop safe practices in challenging prejudice but also indicated a deeper need for a supportive structure within the wider project able to support and sustain people in project interests. This reflected a gap in the developing dialogue structure and was included in the final framework.

A similar viewpoint was possibly evident through analysis of interviews with two other participants who said they disagreed with feeling able to take action to challenge prejudice. Their responses suggest a malaise around motivation in that they just hadn't taken any action (Slade 2011a).

IMPACT OF A SESSION
Interviewees were asked what impact the dialogue session(s) had made on them or their group with the aim of assessing whether project processes were achieving desired outcomes. Participants responded in a variety of ways.

Discussion and Analysis
One interviewee felt sessions had built on their experience of working with other communities (Slade 2011d). They also felt that for

other members of their dialogue group, who had not had such experience, the sessions had a similar positive impact. Another participant reiterated a view that they were already committed to addressing prejudice and described a number of examples of them doing this as they went about their daily life (Slade 2011e). A further interviewee said that the session had reinforced their view that the subject matter was one of importance for their community. That people had been prepared to meet and discuss the matter reflected a similar priority of views in their dialogue group although this interviewee also expressed disappointment that sessions had not gone further (Slade 2011c).

One interviewee said the experience had made them more aware of prejudice, particularly in the media (Slade 2011c). A further participant thought they understood prejudice better and how it could work 'in them' and that they had developed a practical strategy to respond to racism and faith based prejudice as a result of the dialogue session. This interviewee believed that both for them, and their group, the experience had given a greater understanding of and commitment to challenge prejudice. Two participants felt preoccupied by the uncomfortable reaction of their dialogue group to the dialogue session. This appeared to militate against the session having a significant positive impact.

For some participants, the experience appeared to reinforce their existing commitment to challenge racism and prejudice - a positive outcome for these participants. It is a reasonable assumption that interviewees, who were willing to give up their time to take part in this evaluation were likely to be already sympathetic to project activities. Given this, it was useful to learn that some participants saw other

members of their dialogue group reacting positively to the dialogue session.

At least two interviewees felt more able to recognise and challenge prejudice amongst people they encountered - one of these had utilised a strategy employed by facilitators to address prejudice evident in single narratives. Again, this outcome pointed to the need to develop dialogue processes that helped participants to identify practical strategies they could use on a daily basis.

For the majority of participant's, dialogue processes appeared to be moving in the direction of achieving desired CD project outcomes. This argued that the CD project's approach of continual learning and improvement would, given time, improve dialogue effectiveness. Even at an early stage of project development positive outcomes were being achieved. However it was a matter of concern that for two interviewees this was not the case. Whilst their personal experience, judged by their responses to other questions, was positive, group dynamics meant that, in the round, the experience might have proved to be negative and potentially damaging for them. The frank and open nature of their approach to the interview provided important learning for the dialogue framework.

CHAPTER FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The chapter began with a short review of literature outlining the rationale for undertaking an evaluation and a brief discussion of a framework within which this activity can take place. Modifying and applying Schalock's (2001) framework to the research findings helped structure the chapter's conclusions as follows.

What programme needs to be in place for outcomes to occur?

The programme was a process of dialogue applied as a key method for delivering a central CD project activity: challenging racism and faith-based prejudice.

Measure and evaluate outcomes that can be evidenced and are clearly relevant to the research aims

Evaluated outcomes centred on a sample of dialogue participants and their views regarding the effectiveness of a dialogue session. The evaluation was framed by an analysis of interview transcripts and completed Likert scores. Evaluated outcomes focused on the direct expression of participant views, formed through their membership of dialogue groups.

Match evaluation to programme activity

Matching the evaluation results, the views of dialogue participants in relation to programme activity - CD project 'safe spaces' dialogue - led to the following conclusions.

Dialogue participants heard about sessions through formal and informal social systems. The latter appeared more important in encouraging attendance. There was some evidence that people who were sympathetic rather than less supportive of CD project objectives were invited to take part in dialogue sessions. Set against these findings the CD project revised pre-dialogue process to ensure adequate publicity was provided and that support was provided for group convenors, who were advised that an open invitation to dialogue session was the best way forward.

Most dialogue participants were clear why a dialogue session was to take place, though in one group people felt they were targeted as needing this kind of activity. This caused a problematic interaction with

facilitators, evident within and between two dialogue sessions and was a distressing experience for two interviewees. This resulted in adaptation of the framework to include facilitator involvement in the pre-dialogue planning phase to establish group perspectives, helping to make sure dialogue processes acknowledged and were tailored to their needs.

Most interviewees did not feel anxious before a dialogue session although this may in part be explained by the extent to which people already knew each other. This would not always be the case and learning arising from contact theory, suggesting people feel anxious when addressing issues of prejudice and stereotypes, remains a consideration in pre-dialogue planning. Interviewees were evenly divided whether the dialogue session achieved project objectives. Misgivings were explained, in part, by dialogue sessions not going further and deeper. Difficulties surrounding one dialogue group and the extent to which facilitators were still refining their core skills, undermined the extent to which objectives were likely to be achieved in this group.

A number of interviewees commented on the effectiveness of their sessions in exploring the causes of racism and prejudice but were less satisfied with content regarding practical strategies as to what should be done to challenge racism and prejudice. Such strategies were subsequently incorporated into the developing CD project dialogue framework.

The majority of interviewees were positive about the role of facilitators, finding it easy to discuss subjects addressed during sessions. This may conflict with the project's perception, and wider theoretical positions, that conversations focusing on racism and prejudice are likely to be difficult. Again, this finding is likely to be relevant to the extent to which people already knew each other. The finding can also be seen as

positive feedback on the skills of facilitators in providing a safe and non-judgemental environment for a conversation to take place.

All interviewees were satisfied with the dialogue session and agreed that they had learnt more about prejudice. However interviewees were equally divided about whether they felt able to take consequent action.

Two interviewees were uncomfortable and upset after the session. This learning was significant for developing a reflective element to stage two of the dialogue framework, in order to make sure that any distress was identified and responded to. The experiences of these interviewees, together with work in other dialogue groups, led to CD project managers and facilitators becoming more aware of the importance of evidencing a duty of care towards dialogue participants.

Distinguishing between short term, intermediate and long-term outcome evaluation

The evaluation conducted was clearly focused on short-term or formative evaluation. Data analysis found that project activity generated some measurable results with the personal narratives of interviewees demonstrating some progress in achieving project outcomes. However identifying the likelihood of CD outcomes on a robust intermediate or longer term basis will be more difficult since the impact of activities of this nature may not materialise for some time. The effectiveness of a dialogue session might not be immediately evident if measured by a participant planning to take action to tackle prejudice - but may become manifest when and if a participant can reflect on their involvement in directly challenging racism or prejudice.

The researcher has found this evaluative framework a useful format for the presentation of this element of the research findings. Building on this, the study's final conclusion will give further consideration to this kind

of evaluation and its possible development and transferability to wider community cohesion and peacebuilding methodologies.

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CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

This study had two central aims. Firstly, to explore the role of religion in community cohesion, and secondly to examine whether protracted social conflict methodology may be a helpful resource for promoting peaceful coexistence between identity groups in the UK. These aims were addressed through a hypothesis, five principal objectives and a series of key questions that were explored through a literature review and action research methodology.

METHODOLOGY EVALUATION

The researcher found that the study's action research methodology was an appropriate method for capturing complex and sometimes emotionally charged or deeply personal perspectives relevant to a significant contemporary social issue. The study set out to explore the perspectives of people living and working in a reality beyond the world of leaders and strategists. By encouraging research participants to describe their experiences and viewpoints the methodology identified positive community resources in addition to issues and concerns, that are largely unacknowledged by policy makers and strategists but are important features of everyday life for many people.

All those involved with the research process spoke openly and gave generously of their time. The researcher found the diversity of perspectives of all those involved in each element of the action research to be rewarding to listen to, fascinating to analyse and stimulating in

being utilised in this study. Appreciating the extent of this diversity was a key outcome of the action research method - the importance of avoiding homogenised identities such as faith, white mono-cultural working class or for that matter, the 'extremist'.

The study's findings could be undermined by the extent that they arose from work with a small project that engaged a relatively limited number of participants. It is entirely plausible that these factors may lead readers of this thesis to conclude that so much has been made out of so little. However, the researcher argues that the small scale nature of the study is compensated for by the quality and depth of the study's findings. These were generated by utilising a range of conceptual frameworks, including social–psychological processes of group identity and protracted social conflict methodology alongside action research method. This approach enabled data to be considered through complementary but distinct methods that extended the study's range and the detail of its findings.

The study pursued five principle objectives through a review of literature and action research field work relevant to the study's five key questions and which structure the study's conclusions which follow.

CONCLUSIONS

How has community cohesion policy and strategy developed since 2001. What part has religion played? What resources can peacebuilding methods offer community cohesion initiatives?

Community Cohesion

The study's literature review found that community cohesion had undergone significant alteration in both in its definition and strategic direction since it first became a core element of mainstream government policy. Original concepts of 'people getting on with each

other' became increasingly lost in strategies to prevent violent extremism. Some policy directives resolutely denied a connection between Islam and terrorism, whilst others did make such connections – which could have been more appropriately dealt with through criminal jurisprudence.

Government policy increasingly framed problems with community cohesion as a result of ethnic difference and parallel lives that problematised ethnic and faith minorities and white working class communities. In doing so, important connections with a broad series of recommended reforms that aimed to improve the quality of governance in a multi-cultural environment, and specifically action to address inequalities and Islamophobic prejudice, were lost. Whilst government policy and community cohesion texts emphasised the importance of dialogue between communities, this did not appear to be accompanied by exemplars of practical and transferable methodology. In general terms, community cohesion was driven by top-down initiatives underpinned by performance management. It was unlikely that this would ever be a process that would engage the critical mass of ordinary people.

The researcher found that academic critiques of conceptual understandings of community cohesion and subsequent policy direction identified significant inconsistencies in the approach taken by government. These texts accused some strategists and policy makers of being in denial about the relevance of right wing extremism, and the part played in community tensions by inequalities. However, generally speaking, there appeared to be a dearth of practical solutions in the work of most critics.

The Role of Faith

This study reinforced other research findings that faith and faith identity have become increasingly prominent in the post-millennium UK,

evident in the narratives of leading politicians and establishment figures, who engage in bitterly contested debate. Vehement critics of Christianity and its role and status in the public life of the UK, vie with others whose concern is that Christians and the Christian faith are being marginalised and discriminated against. Other politicians and commentators identify the overzealous adoption of Islam as being a problematic feature of contemporary UK society, whilst some secularists and atheists maintain that no faith should have a presence or influence in public life. By contrast, other texts argue that faith groups can bring an important, 'grounded' counterbalance to these perspectives through their work in addressing concerns around social justice and commitment to work in excluded communities. This study identified an alternative role for faith than that which preoccupies narratives of the elite, the conduct of aggressive evangelists or those who support violent jihadism.

A problematic sense of 'otherness' has been identified by some writers as being significant in relationships between faith believers and secularists. Like some community cohesion strategists, these writers advocate a process of dialogue that can help to develop positions of mutual acceptance, pointing to opportunities in locally based partnership working arrangements as providing a platform that can take dialogue forward. Alongside this the study found that the work of religious and secular peacebuilders outside the UK provides learning that can support practical steps to take dialogue forward. Work in settings where cooperation between religious and secular peacebuilders is evident through a range of interventions, delivered in a variety of faith and secular environments, provides practical experience on which those engaged in developing an approach to 'mutual acceptance' can draw.

Peacebuilding and Protracted Social Conflict Methodology

This study found that peacebuilding methodology developed from and designed to address situations of protracted social conflict provides transferrable resources with the potential to address tensions in UK community cohesion. This peacebuilding methodology provided the study with an analytical framework for exploring hostility that focuses on group or communal identity and helped the researcher make connections between identity based tensions, the conflict drivers of exclusion and the absence of meaningful structural reform that inhibit the capacity of groups to meet their basic needs. The study drew on the methodology's emphasis on facilitated dialogue that seeks to engage identity groups in discussion about their views and priorities that are relevant to identity based tensions. These processes deliberately focus on a 'bottom up' approach to identifying the causes of, and solutions to, such tensions.

Whilst social-psychological theoretical perspectives of group identity were equally relevant to the study's purpose, protracted social conflict methodology was a cornerstone of the study's analytical framework. The study found that, when supplemented by other theoretical work and the experience of peacebuilding practitioners, this peacebuilding methodology provided the basis of a robust analytical framework for understanding the causes and implications of complex societal issues that were evident in the fieldwork locality. Further work is needed to develop the potential of the methodology's utilisation in a UK environment. However, this study argues that this peacebuilding process could prove a useful resource for practitioners and strategists seeking to engage UK communities in dialogue that aims to identify their perspectives on the causes of, and solutions to, inter-group hostility.

How do relevant contemporary social theories and social-psychological processes of group identity explain intergroup hostility? In the context of this theory, what does the study's action research reveal about the development of group hostility towards outsiders?

The study utilised a blend of contemporary social theory, social-psychological processes of group identity and the perspectives of action research participants to gain a deeper understanding of why communities in the fieldwork locality develop hostility. The study found that the consequences of long-term industrial decline and especially the lasting impact of the 1984-1985 miners' strike were significant. This conflict had left some communities divided by in-group and out-group hostility where a sense of anger and resentment continues to fester.

Set against this background, and applying theoretical concepts and research findings, this study found that the development of group hostility towards outsiders was contingent on three factors.

Firstly, external influences on group identity provided anxiety inducing change and uncertainty that disturbed continuity with the past and any sense of certainty regarding the future. In the absence of any significant or regular interaction with out-groups, media narratives were critical in shaping perspectives of outsiders. These external influences had a profound effect on a second factor, that of internal group mechanisms, that develop in-group and out-group identities.

Internal group mechanisms begin to function at the point where an individual seeks group membership that was important for an individual's search for self-esteem. Action research found that group membership was usually determined by factors such as class, religion and geography. Class and religious identity offered a crucial sense of stability and continuity although, these broad identities concealed a rich

and diverse community life that could act to prevent or enable hostility towards outsiders. In some working class localities the 1984-1985 miners' strike was still a source of internal hostility and bitterness.

Once membership was secured, maintaining self-esteem was dependent on mechanisms that preserved relationships of in-group dominance over subordinate outsiders. Preserving in-group resources and rejecting attempts at infiltration by subordinate outsiders, emerged as a significant factor behind the erection of rigid boundaries, defending in-group identity against any threat perceived as emanating from an out-group.

Thirdly, this study found that hostility towards outsiders appeared to develop around the interface of dominant and subordinate identity. Failure to address group inequalities was found to be a critical factor. Any group sense of inequality or deprivation appeared to lead to increasingly belligerent perspectives towards outsiders as groups held on to cultural and material resources that they perceived to be increasingly threatened by outsiders.

What socio-economic factors lie behind the growth of BNP support in South Yorkshire? What does an analysis using social-psychological theory of group identity and protracted social conflict methodology reveal about the growth in BNP support?

The study found that BNP support in the fieldwork parliamentary constituencies has exceeded their national average performance in the recent general and EU elections and that the BNP share of the vote was increasing overtime. Given this it was important to identify factors that may be specific to the fieldwork locality which could help to explain why the group had made such progress in South Yorkshire. The researcher devised an analytical framework drawn from social-psychological identity theory and protracted social conflict methodology that was

allied with the views of research participants as to drivers of BNP support. This framework was applied to an analysis of quantitative socio-economic data identified as relevant to the growth of BNP support in South Yorkshire.

Whilst the BNP overall share of the vote has increased in parliamentary and EU elections, the group have encountered a loss of seats in local elections. This may reflect the BNP's inability to engage effectively with local governance systems as well as their core membership being more suited to 'direct' action. Recently published national research found that disillusionment amongst BNP members has resulted in some individuals believing that preparations should be made for inter-communal ethnic violence. However the study found that a range of other factors might be relevant to BNP progress in the fieldwork locality. Some people provided the BNP with electoral support because they were party members, whilst some were supportive of particular aspects of their ideology, and others voted for them on the basis of registering a protest with regard to the performance of mainstream parties. Each position reflected a complex set of influences that the study analysed through a series of themes.

Firstly, the study explored the extent to which external influences of migration and ethnicity on protective in-group mechanisms were significant drivers of BNP support. Muslims and migrants were constructed by the BNP as a threat to the culture and resources of white monocultural communities. However ethnicity and migration data suggested that diversity and the number of new arrivals were not a realistic threat to community resources in the fieldwork locality. Given this, BNP progress in these areas could be seen to stem, in part, from a focus on a specific issue – for example EU migrant workers employed on the East coast of Yorkshire - becoming generalised into a dominant

Islamophobic and racist single narrative, proclaiming that all communities are being overrun by foreigners.

Secondly, the study argued the significance of employment data. When compared to regional and national averages, this data indicates fieldwork communities had significantly higher rates of unemployment, and fewer employment opportunities to meet their basic needs. This study argued that a critical issue in BNP support in the fieldwork locality is the stark reality that some communities have considerably fewer resources to share with outsiders than in other parts of the UK – and that this is exploited in BNP rhetoric which claims they are the only party who will act to protect these resources from being taken by 'outsiders'.

The study found that a third theme, European and UK Islamophobic discourses, was of further relevance to BNP progress. Some studies have found that the proximity of white monocultural communities to localities with higher levels of diversity could be a predictor of BNP support. However, this was not the case in the fieldwork locality. Low levels of ethnic diversity in these communities make the presentation of Muslims as a realistic threat to culture and resources difficult to achieve. However, Islamophobic and divisive media narratives filled the vacuum, created by low diversity, with texts and images unfiltered by positive personal and group experiences of interaction. These narratives provided an anxiety-laden background to locally tailored BNP strategies. Alongside this, the BNP has astutely adopted a Christian identity designed to distance the organisation from its overtly racist and anti-Semitic history. This strategy was relevant to the BNP's attempts to engage with church congregations and, in a peacebuilding analysis, could be seen as typical of individuals and groups assuming an identity which supports their efforts to build power and influence.

A fourth theme, that of the role of in-group mechanisms - considered through marrying social-psychological group identity theory with protracted social conflict variables - provided further insight into drivers of BNP support. A BNP strategy was to target working class communities with narratives that interact with in-group feelings of resentment, exclusion and injustice. Their approach offered continuity with the past and a more secure future that saw group cultural identity and resources returning to dominance , enshrined in national and white-Christian values. This strategy established BNP similarity with in-group identity and reinforced boundaries protecting groups from outsiders. In protracted social conflict settings, such circumstances can become the focus of hostility.

Strategies to establish similarity with in-group identity were evident in that the BNP's most significant level of support came from working class communities within these localities. However, like all meta-identities, 'white working class' should not be employed as a homogenising category. In the fieldwork locality class was by no means the only determinant of BNP support. In-group mechanisms that operated to generate group self-esteem functioned uniquely in each dialogue group. They could both draw on positive values that promote coexistence with 'outsiders' – as well as more negative norms that could dispose groups to see 'outsiders' as a threat to culture and resources.

BNP efforts to establish similarity with in-group identity were helped by the extent to which these communities were estranged from mainstream political parties, especially the Labour Party - perceived by some as having ignored the needs and interests of white working class communities. The result was that groups felt excluded from governance and influence over the allocation of resources. Social-psychological group identity theory argues that such feelings are likely to reinforce

perceptions of subordination. A protracted social conflict assessment suggests that such discomfort plays a key role in the development of identity-based hostility. Both findings were relevant to understanding why some communities have moved in the direction of the empathic response from the BNP - an organisation that offers an improvement in group esteem and the reassertion of dominance over out-groups such as migrants and Muslims.

However this study argued that the critical tipping point in BNP support were scarce employment resources and high levels of multiple deprivation. In some communities, significant numbers of children live in poverty and, as adults, grow to experience shorter life spans and higher levels of morbidity than more affluent regional and national areas. Social-psychological group theory indicated that the effect of this deprivation is likely to be poor group esteem and rigid boundaries protecting limited in-group resources from 'outsiders'. Protracted social conflict methodology sees this type of rigid group identity difference as being critical in creating a propensity for violence.

What role did faith communities and faith values play in challenging hostile prejudice and stereotypes in the action research locality?

The study found that faith communities and faith values played a central role in project inception, development and the provision of safe space dialogue groups. In South Yorkshire, faith leaders took a public stand in opposing the BNP right-wing extremism and in doing so played a critical role in project inception. Whilst there was no evidence of any claim to be representing all faith communities, their public stance provided leadership and modelled behaviour that aimed to promote tolerance. The CD project management committee and employees

made reference to this leadership in the context of it providing encouragement and direction for CD project activity.

Inter-faith partnership working provided the leadership and practical resources for cooperation between individuals in designing a complex project that was required to evidence good quality governance. This support was evident through the provision of accommodation and support services by faith communities, and in the extent to which community-based faith groups became engaged with the project.

The CD project had a significant amount of interaction with secular organisations and partnership working. Despite the inter-faith nature of the project, this study did not find that faith and faith values presented a barrier to this engagement. Indeed, there were examples of project advice and engagement in communities being sought by public agencies and local authority members. The study found that the project benefited from extensive networking with a wide variety of public and third sector agencies. There was scope for developing these arrangements including more comprehensive engagement with Muslim communities. The study did not find evidence of reluctance on the part of the CD project to engage with any partner or stakeholder, where this was consistent with the needs of the project.

The study found that faith and other values were fundamentally embedded in CD project activity. For some people, clear connections were evident between personal faith values and practical project activity whilst others involved in the project had values that were more politically framed. A minority of participants had, from the perspective of their culture and faith, direct experience of prejudice as victims.

The majority of people engaged in the management of the CD project held personal perspectives that recognised the interaction of faith and other values. Values relevant to social justice, inclusion and an empathic knowledge of local communities were strongly evident in action research findings. The study found that this was particularly the case in identifying a relationship between poor white monocultural working class communities, exclusion, inequalities and BNP support. The study found that faith values, particularly evident in the project's work with such communities, were expressed through a non-judgemental perspective that aimed to proactively reach people and listen to their concerns.

Diverse faith identity was a feature of CD project. The study found that some people had identified common ground between different faith and denominational values. This may have contributed to the extent to which project structures held faith diversity together in the face of challenges presented by complex activities and operational difficulties. The study argued that the checks and balances likely to be present because of this diversity, and more broadly within effective inter-faith partnership working, might have prevented one faith identity becoming dominant. In general terms, the level of inter-faith cooperation, evident in CD project governance, contrasted with belligerent interactions that exist between similar faith identities in other parts of the world. The study argued that this, in itself, was a noteworthy feature of the project activity.

This is not to say that tensions did not arise, and were evident during the project inception phase when individuals argued for a specific activity they considered would be most effective in countering extremism. Difficulties were apparent in limited progress made pursuing the CD project's media activity, undermining the integrated nature of

project activities that were seen as a strength of CD project work. The study concluded that causes of difficulties in making progress lay, in part, through this activity being beyond the capacity of the CD project and it's limited resources. Furthermore, there is potential dissonance between engaging with media platforms that will inevitably generate publicity and providing safe space dialogue sessions where participant anonymity is guaranteed.

What is the role of community dialogue in challenging prejudice and stereotypes? How do people become involved? What do dialogue processes look like? What do people think about the experience of taking part?

An outcome of the study's action research processes was to collect and analyse data arising from the project's existing safe space dialogue and to apply learning to the development of an intra-community dialogue framework. At the commencement of action research, safe space dialogue was an experiential and tentative activity with limited consistent processes or appreciation of interventions that were most or least effective. Faced with this, the researcher carried out an extensive analysis of facilitator activity and dialogue participant views. The resulting findings informed the researcher's design and development of a framework of intra-community dialogue, with clear processes underpinned by theoretical knowledge and evidence based good practice. The researcher exposed formative research findings to critical peer review. Some revisions were made in light of these reviews and were helpful in guiding the development of the framework towards a coherent method for intra-community dialogue with the potential to be transferred to settings outside the fieldwork locality.

Whilst the framework reflects aspects of more usual inter-community processes, the dialogue framework was designed by the researcher to contribute to work within communities where groups are

unwilling to interact with 'out-groups' who they regard with increasing hostility. The dialogue framework devised through the action research represents an innovative resource for community cohesion and peacebuilding practitioners. Although grounded in facilitated dialogue opportunities in communities vulnerable to right wing extremism, the method may be transferable to other settings where a process of non-judgemental and respectful challenge can enable reflection and change of group positions that perceive outsiders through a prejudiced and hostile perspective.

The study found that people become involved in dialogue opportunities through a variety of social networks, both formal and informal. The latter was critical in securing initial engagement in dialogue activity and proved more effective than formal publicity arrangements. Research findings revealed some weaknesses in the initial engagement phase of 'safe spaces' dialogue that had negative repercussions for later work with some groups. Such learning fed into the developing dialogue framework. This examples the interconnected and holistic framework processes which aim to ensure continuity from initial interest and engagement through to dialogue delivery and post dialogue support.

Key issues identified and developed by the researcher included the importance of a clear aim for the framework, clarity of principles underpinning the work of dialogue facilitators and an appropriate skill match between facilitators and the needs of dialogue groups. The researcher identified a cohort of essential general and project-specific skills that require facilitation competency.

Protracted social conflict methodology and group identity theoretical positions were utilised in developing the dialogue framework. The emphasis in protracted social conflict methodology on tensions

focused on communal identity, and engaging people in discussion about issues which concern them, proved highly pertinent. Group identity processes, especially those related to external influences, and in-group mechanisms relevant to esteem, offered further useful learning. These positions were evident in framework processes that focused on appreciating the importance of external events on intergroup mechanisms and approaching groups from their perspectives - being interested in and learning about the positive features of their communities.

How do people taking part in dialogue evaluate their participation?

Evaluation of participant experience of their involvement in 'safe spaces' sessions was important in shaping the dialogue framework. However, CD project guarantees of anonymity resulted in practical difficulties in identifying relevant individuals. As a result, the number of participants involved in this element of action research was small.

The study found that evaluative methodology in community cohesion and peacebuilding activity is underdeveloped. Given this, the study adapted and utilised an evaluation framework, designed for public and third sector services, to structure the views of dialogue participants and to feed their comments into the researcher's development of an intra-community dialogue framework.

Participant evaluation of the effectiveness of a dialogue session was a challenge for this time-limited research since change may be incremental, only becoming evident on a medium or long-term basis. Consequently the evaluation was more formative than summative in its approach. Notwithstanding this, there was some limited evidence of short-term effectiveness related to changing attitudes and behaviour. The researcher recommended that the CD project, in addition to its post

session evaluation, undertake an annual cycle of evaluative interviews with participants, to assess the effectiveness of dialogue processes and gauge the extent to which any medium and long-term change relevant to CD project activity may have been forthcoming

The study found that participants were satisfied with the effectiveness of sessions in exploring the causes of racism and prejudice and the majority were positive about the role of facilitators. A number of participants commented that dialogue sessions would have been improved if there had been more emphasis on practical strategies to address racism and prejudice. Most participants were not distressed or anxious, before, during, or after the dialogue session. However this was not universally the case and the need for dialogue facilitators to ensure the well-being of participants had not been overly disturbed was an important learning point.

Research findings identified a need to enhance the capacity of the project by extending its reach through embedding a post-dialogue supportive presence within groups that would help to sustain change. The researcher developed proposals with the facilitator's dialogue consortium to recruit co-facilitators drawn from communities where dialogue sessions took place. In addition to facilitating dialogue, the role of co-facilitators would be to act as a focus, after a dialogue session, to support and sustain participants in addressing extremism and divisive narratives.

HYPOTHESIS

The study adopted the following hypothesis

'The UK is popularly seen as a largely secular society. However for some people and groups, faith identity continues to be an important artefact of cultural and ethnic identity. There is growing

evidence that religious identity is being employed by right wing extremists to promote hostility between communities. By contrast, peacebuilding processes can utilise both faith and secular values as an opening for dialogue that can challenge the prejudice on which extremist hostility draws. These processes usually involve contact between different groups. However when interaction between groups is not feasible, dialogue within communities can be utilised as a method of countering extremist belligerence.'

The study's conclusions argue that this hypothesis can be upheld. A review of literature and action research findings found that faith identity is a powerful presence in the lives of many individuals and groups and operates in a wider cultural context, beyond personal spiritual life. In contemporary UK society, despite widely held perceptions of the dominance of secularism, faith remains an important marker of cultural identity that some feel needs to be defended against secular encroachment. However, faith can be threatening if this is perceived as an overzealous activity.

Christian faith identity has been adopted by some right wing extremist organisations, as a way of developing support from faith congregations and, more broadly, indigenous white communities. However faith identity and inter-faith cooperation, when joined with secular perspectives, were highly effective resources for engaging with communities who have feelings of marginalisation and exclusion on which extremists feed.

Some communities were unable or unwilling to interact with outsiders towards whom they felt hostility. In these circumstances intra-community dialogue provided opportunities for people to talk about why they feel as they do. This approach has the potential to avoid in-group hostility being exploited by extremists.

FUTURE RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES

Role of faith

A common narrative amongst dialogue group participants was that 'nobody listens to us - nobody is interested in us.' Faith communities could play a lead role in developing and implementing a structured programme that would proactively engage with communities, enabling them to feel their needs and concerns were listened to and articulated to those involved in governance. This is not to recommend that mainstream political systems should be sidestepped. Rather, it acknowledges that some people in some communities feel let down by and excluded from systems of governance that evidences scant engagement with ordinary people. Given the search for scapegoats in a growing climate of austerity, developing such a programme, through collaborative research with faith groups, would be timely.

Protracted Social Conflict Methodology and Intra-community Dialogue

The study found that protracted social conflict methodology has realistic potential for use as a community cohesion resource in both secular and faith contexts within the UK. However, further research is required to develop and refine processes so as to customise the approach to UK localities and develop mainstream opportunities for wider implementation.

Intra community dialogue

The intra-community dialogue framework devised by the researcher, has the potential to be an effective form of intervention. However further testing and development outside the fieldwork locality is required. Furthermore it would be useful to undertake further research and development in a variety of faith and secular environments. In a human security context the process has the capacity to serve as a

preventative measure and with this focus could be usefully tested and developed through further research in settings outside the UK.

Evaluation

An element of the study involved adapting and utilising an evaluative framework developed for public and third sector services. This kind of approach – applying learning and experience from other fields of study - is underdeveloped in community cohesion and peacebuilding activity. Although this study's limited use of the approach was set in a small sample, the researcher found the method to be a practical analytical tool. This suggests the relevance of more extensive research that would support strategists and practitioners in identifying an evidence base for the appropriateness of policy and practice interventions.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

A significant outcome of the study was the extent to which some communities remain profoundly gripped by disabling inequalities. Protracted social conflict methodology argues that unless such factors are tackled, then resentment and bitterness will remain and fester. Whilst the BNP may be subsumed by organisational decline, the stimuli that this study found to be drivers of extremism remain and, in increasingly straitened economic times, are likely to thrive. Any successors to the BNP, for example organisations such as the EDL, are likely to encounter increasingly fertile ground on which to feed.

During the course of preparing this thesis, evidence emerged of factors likely to exacerbate the situation. Far right groups are already exploiting the conviction of paedophiles of south Asian heritage for the grooming and sexual abuse of white children and young people. Harassment of Muslims and street disturbances that have already taken

place in Greater Manchester, are unlikely to be isolated examples of reactive behaviour as a cohort of similar trials make their way through the criminal justice system over the coming twelve months. Whilst the paramount need is to ensure the safety of children and young people, there are few more fundamental racist discourses than the biological contamination of racial integrity by alien outsiders. The need for activity at a local level – perhaps modelling the CD project's learning in conducting 'difficult conversations' – and that can diffuse inflammatory discourses arising from this and other austerity drivers of extremism is pressing.

Together, faith values and peacebuilding methodologies offer rich and relevant resources that can help communities deal with change, uncertainty and austerity. Intra-community dialogue processes represent a practical opportunity to combine these positions to positive effect. This approach will not, in itself address structural inequalities or substitute for restorative measures that may help communities come to terms with a turbulent past. However, intra-community dialogue does provide a means for ventilating anger and resentment that extremists can exploit. Proactive and non-judgemental listening could engage people in considering how and why they feel as they do in the present. Furthermore such an approach would reveal grounds for developing community focused regeneration strategies that seek a tangible improvement in circumstances that lead to exclusion and deprivation – and on which extremism can be seen to thrive.

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