Community Violence in Northern Ireland: Categorisation of Services and Therapies for People Affected by Violence

Dr K. Dillenburger, Mrs R. Akhonzada, & Ms M. Fargas
School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work
Queen’s University Belfast, UK

Background
Community violence in Northern Ireland, locally known as the “Troubles”, caused the death of more than 3600 people (Fay, Morrisey, & Smyth, 1999). This is just one example of recent man-made or natural disasters that caused large-scale traumatic death. Today, there is a previously unmatched awareness of the physical and psychological impact of violence. Health and welfare professionals have become aware that the experience of violent, conflict related physical and psychological injury and bereavement is much more complex than previously thought. A range of theories has been developed in an effort to explain the psychological health consequences of the Troubles (Dillenburger & Keenan, 2001) and a large number of voluntary groups have been formed aiming to help those affected by the Troubles.

Aims of Research
• The establishment of a comprehensive and detailed overview and categorisation of therapeutic services offered to people affected by violence in Northern Ireland;
• To explore the effectiveness of some of the most commonly used therapeutic services in regard to achieving their set aims/goals.

Method and Procedure
The project comprises two main phases. In phase one we conducted a survey on 49 voluntary groups using a questionnaire. The second phase of the project involves an in-depth exploration of the effectiveness of these services.

Service Provision in Northern Ireland
The most frequently used services were befriending, advice and information, support and self-help groups. A substantial number of groups also offered complementary therapies and narrative work. Fewer groups offered structured therapeutic services such as counselling or psychotherapy.

Categorisation of Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philosophy-based</th>
<th>Education-based</th>
<th>Community-based</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complementary therapies</td>
<td>Indirect services</td>
<td>Respite Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice &amp; Information</td>
<td>Befriending</td>
<td>Narrative Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Therapy</td>
<td>Self-help groups</td>
<td>Youth Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychotherapy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References