YOUNG PEOPLE –
FUTURE CITIZENS OF A SHARED SOCIETY
AND AN INTERDEPENDENT WORLD?

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INTRODUCTION:

This paper argues that community youthwork practitioners, organisations and institutions continually, and explicitly, should promote young people:

- being valued as significant citizens of the society they live in;
- being treated as gifts not problems;

- by placing hope in them through offering clear relationships, devoid of rivalry and conflict;
- by bringing them into experiences where they are at ease with 'the different other'.

Central to our practice needs to be a belief that young people can be agents of change, for the common good. It is important that youth work is future oriented and hope filled, especially with many workers having to build relationships of trust with, sometimes very diminished, angry or hurt young people. The goal of working to create a more open, trusting, respectful and creative society, where the talents of all are released may not be easy, yet it should be central to our working vision.

For me:
- As a former detached youth worker, there is nothing to compare with the experience of creating environments and groups where young people feel safe and valued (equity); where their different abilities and vulnerabilities can be expressed and safely acknowledged (diversity); and where all grow, experiencing the excitement of belonging together (interdependence) (Eyben et al, 1997).

  The fundamental principles of fair treatment, (equity), valuing difference (diversity) and promoting experiences about our mutual interdependence (interdependence), are central principles of good youth work and group work practice[1] (Wilson, 2016)

- In my society, many still have a deep ambivalence about acknowledging different others as equals and many, brought up in historically competing political traditions, still find it easier to point out how 'the others' have done violence but have great difficulty acknowledging their own side's violence.

  It is important as educators that we assert and promote, unconditionally, the need for our youthwork practice to be rooted in core practice values of respect, humility and a rejection of violence having any validity in relationships and daily civic life.

  Such a wider vision needs to be promoted relationally, in how we are with one another, as well as structurally in empowering staff, volunteers and members of governing boards to exercise their power to work towards this wider vision.

Such a vision needs shared, and agreed, across agency boundaries. It then becomes a means of hauling us up and drawing us forward when we become static or myopic.

Relationships are Central

Without any equivocation, professional educators and civil society volunteers need to continually, and explicitly, assert the central importance of building open and trusting relationships with, and between, young people.

Our personal understandings and experience need understood

Relationships are central to our personal development and identity as human beings. They become the transformative centre of the lives of young people and ours too, as practitioner,s if they are open, inclusive and accepting, If they are hurtful and diminishing, they skew us (Wilson, 2016).

Such relational understandings, when they underpin our informal educational practice and the working practices and cultures of our organisations serving young people, are that:

> *"in new relationships trust can be experienced and built; with more trust new structures that carry hope, change and a shared vision can be promoted locally and internationally."*

The dynamics of relationships in wider society

Growing up, and living and working in Northern Ireland against the background of community conflict, I cannot claim to have been completely free of moments when I have given in to narrow, excluding 'ethnocentric emotions' (*my people/ my culture before all else*) or supporting religious or political impulses associated with exclusion and the denial of different others. However such self-centred emotional responses contribute little to building a more open and shared society. Such impulses, in a wider world context, only feed extreme and excluding practices, especially when harnessed to underpin narrow understandings of religion, that deny openness and healing, and that feed partisan politics.

To move away from these responses is an adult responsibility. We need a wider vision ***for all*** to be central to our practice; we need to support a youthwork culture and a wider citizenship agenda, in both formal and informal education, that supports young people grow and develop their abilities, and that encourages them to face into a wider world that needs their hope, energy and vision.

Re-setting our Practice in a Changing Local and Global Landscape

In the late 60's and early 70's, in Northern Ireland, we were understandably consumed with developing a local practice in the midst of violence, while the wider 'enlightened Western world' looked askance at us! In the world of 2015 the international landscape is different, it is one where localism and populism may have some traction and one where the 'fear of terror' begins to move us away from the task in hand-that of building trust and an openness to different others.

Cutting the dynamics of fascination that take us away from the task in hand

To become fascinated is to be drawn away from the task in hand, the work to be done and to move into another world that is sometimes chaotic or 'otherworldly'. When applied to acts of violence or terror, the violent actions of people have a double impact-they destroy our sense of security and they take us away from the daily acts of being a citizen that embed that very security further.

Fascination is that movement 'towards the fire and the recoil when the fire is too hot'. It is a state of instability or uncertainty. Fascination is when society becomes absorbed with terrorist threats and continues to ignore the high levels of domestic violence, violence against children by other family members, high levels of young people being incarcerated, racist attacks and homophobic violence in our midst. The impact of the terrorist multiplies when I become fascinated. He or she is diminished when we stick to our task of building a more open and shared society.

The wider landscape within which we need to locate our training, organisational visions and the need to equip our young people to live constructively, and hopefully, within includes:

- **Addressing the growing gap between rich and poor within states**
  (OECD, 2014 [2]; Pew Foundation, 2014));
- **The challenges of global sustainability and climate change that impact on us all**
  UN Global Sustainable Development report, 2015 Edition
  https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/globalsdreport;
- **The emerging challenges of excluding ethnocentric political positions and the growth of religious fundamentalism** (Atran, 2010)
- **The huge population movements of those seeking new lives, asylum and sanctuary and whether they will be embraced as interdependent citizens or excluded.**
  UNHCR Refugee Resettlement Trends, 2015: www.unhcr.org/559e43ac9.html;
  Speech by Antonio Guterres UNHCR HIgh Commissioner, www.unhcr.org/55ba370f9.html

- **The needs of vulnerable children and young people in society**.
  Report of the UK Children's Commissioners, UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Examination of the Fifth Periodic Report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland UK-ccs-uncrc-examination-of-the-fifth-periodic-report-July-2015.pdf; Beckett & Warrington[3];
- **The political responses often associated with societies moving on, post conflict, when the narrative of victims is pushed aside in favour of the new political narrative.**
  There also can be a political and civil society preference to ignore, rather than engage with, the need to explicitly acknowledge and promote a 'never, never again' position.
  (Rothfield et al, 2012; Eames & Bradley, 2009; Fay, Morrissey, & Smyth, M.1998; See also Shriver, 2005.[4])

The intentions behind the 1998 Northern Ireland Good Friday Agreement Peace Accord, chaired by US Senator George Mitchell, was the creation of a reconciled, shared society. Youth work practitioners need to honour this agreement in their work, whether there is political momentum or not. My society needs formal and informal educators to be part of a reconstructive effort that promotes a contrast to those who offer security in harnessing separating identities or excluding traditions.

The modern world is an interdependent place and people, where I live and elsewhere, either learn to interdepend, lessen fear and build trust and understanding, or settle for walls and gated communities, that have to be always policed by increasingly vulnerable guardians.

Michael Sandel speaks of the modern world being one that brings us more into 'communities of entanglement' than 'communities of association'! The challenge is to create the relationships, and relational spaces, where many different young people experience deep association with 'different others', not only moving within 'spaces of entanglement and confusion'.

In my society, older people need to be willing to speak about, and acknowledge, the fear and threat that once was so real in a violent conflict and how so many citizens as well as members of police and security services bore the brunt of that reality. The impact of the conflict fell differentially on those living in lower socio-economic areas.

At the same time we need to speak about the qualitatively significant experiences that many courageous people developed, in response to threat, fear and violence. They built relationships of trust with 'different others' and secured new structures within which meeting beyond fear became a reality for many. In spite of all the fear and violence, there is still a strand of reconciling and healing practice that gave vulnerable, frightened young people opportunity; programmes that brought young adults together across lines of social class, identity and educational levels of attainment. We need to continually draw on the practice knowledge and experience that now exists.

To meet 'the different other' has been, for many, to become more open and secure together. To build shared institutions is to cut fear, however fragile those institutions are.

We have had, and are currently surrounded by, some extremely innovative and imaginative, daring and ground breaking youth work practice in Northern Ireland. However professional youth workers and civil society organisations should be in robust dialogue with our politicians, demanding they maintain many important youth work services. We need to hold ourselves to account and take our wider advocacy tasks seriously (see model 1).

We collectively need to more explicitly work to a wider vision of a society that is not divided but shared. To work for anything partial, or implicitly separating or divided, is to condemn the lives of children and young people to be one of living in an identity cauldron here, that truncates and diminishes all human endeavour to build a more open, diverse, interdependent and shared society.
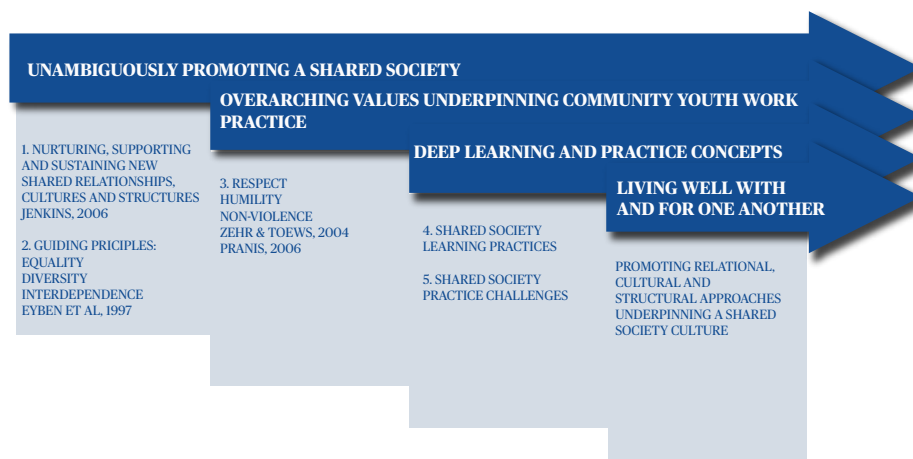

Model 1: A 360 Degree Advocacy Model for Practitioners

To build a shared society demands that we all critically engage with our favoured comfortable positions, against the glare of what a shared society would involve. Such a vision involves challenging notions of exclusive community identities; such a vision invites all to move out of our comfort zones.

For too long there has been a toleration of "we must understand ourselves better, before we meet the different others around us". Such statements are convenient alibis to do nothing; such statements fail to acknowledge that whether we live together well, or fearfully and badly, we deeply shape and influence one another to remain separate or live and work together! We are deeply interdependent, whether through magnifying the fears of 'the other' if we do not meet and trust or multiplying new, rich strands of association and sharing deeply.

It is time to re-imagine and develop the links and interfaces between informal youth work practices and those working in areas such as social welfare, first and second chance education, housing, health, mental health, business development, trades and apprentice training, policing and probation.

A MODEL OF COMMUNITY YOUTH WORK PRACTICE TO CONSIDER.

UNAMBIGUOUSLY PROMOTING A SHARED SOCIETY

OVERARCHING VALUES UNDERPINNING COMMUNITY YOUTH WORK PRACTICE

DEEP LEARNING AND PRACTICE CONCEPTS

LIVING WELL WITH AND FOR ONE ANOTHER

1. NURTURING, SUPPORTING AND SUSTAINING NEW SHARED RELATIONSHIPS, CULTURES AND STRUCTURES JENKINS, 2006

2. GUIDING PRICIPLES: EQUALITY DIVERSITY INTERDEPENDENCE EYBEN ET AL, 1997

3. RESPECT HUMILITY NON-VIOLENCE ZEHR & TOEWS, 2004 PRANIS, 2006

4. SHARED SOCIETY LEARNING PRACTICES

5. SHARED SOCIETY PRACTICE CHALLENGES

PROMOTING RELATIONAL, CULTURAL AND STRUCTURAL APPROACHES UNDERPINNING A SHARED SOCIETY CULTURE

Model 2: COMMUNITY YOUTH WORK AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SHARED SOCIETY FOR ALL, Wilson 2015.

Drawing on the above model I suggest that youth services should:

UNAMBIGUOUSLY PROMOTING A SHARED SOCIETY

1. **THROUGH NURTURING, SUPPORTING AND SUSTAINING NEW SHARED RELATIONSHIPS AND STRUCTURES** in all aspects of organisational and programmatic work. Being explicitly future oriented, in working towards a shared society, is to work for something new, something better and healthier for children and young people-it is about a movement forward into something 'completely other' than the state of our relationships today (Jenkins, 2006, 153).

2. **THROUGH PROMOTING THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES of** *equity, diversity and interdependence (EDI)* and applying them to their relational work, group work and organisational structures (Wilson, 2013, 66-67; Eyben et al, 2002).

Addressing inequality (the equity theme); challenging exclusion (the diversity theme) and promoting an openness to, and interdependence with, others are guides for the daily work of teachers, youth workers, social workers, mental health therapists, housing officers,police and community workers in diverse societies. Such principles enable them to stay free of serving partisan and narrow interests.

Conscientious workers, working to an intercultural vision, can use these principles to measure whether their practice promotes this wider vision. Board members, managers and policymakers can ensure that the vision, structures and policies associated with their agencies are explicitly and implicitly committed to building an interdependent society (Eyben et al, 1997).

3. **THROUGH MAKING OVERARCHING VALUES UNDERPINNING YOUTHWORK PRACTICE EXPLICIT**
Through Promoting respect, humility (Pranis, 2006; Zehr and Toews, 2004) and *challenging violence* as overarching values for work with children, young people, parents, carers, practitioners, agencies and governance boards to hold themselves to account by.

Respect means not only treating all parties as persons with dignity and worth but also as people with wisdom and other valuable contributions to offer.

Humility includes, but is more than, the idea of not taking more credit than one should. It means having a profound awareness of the limitations of one's knowledge and understanding that it is possible to remain open to the truth that other's lives are not the same as one's own and that therefore they may have insights one does not yet possess. (Van Ness & Johnstone, 2007,19).

Not tolerating violence as part of any relationship or civic endeavour means, no force being used *to bring about political or social change. (Oxford Dictionaries)*

Such an unambiguous commitment to build a shared society, based on the above principles and values, unashamedly aligns the youth service with creating a new future, reducing fear, standing with young people who are especially vulnerable and empowering all to become active citizens committed to the wider common good.

SUSTAINING DEEP LEARNING AND PRACTICE CONCEPTS

4. SOME SHARED SOCIETY YOUTHWORK LEARNING PRACTICES

The worker's task is to assist children and young people experience relationships and mixed environments marked by the values of respect, humility and no-violence in the groups or organisations they work in, where each person has his or her place and does not have to rival for it (Girard, 1977 & 1987). In such dynamic, value shaped spaces, children and young people, staff and Board members, experience an openness to and ease with difference, gaining freedom to imagine new activities and make new choices.

***Adults have to acknowledge their part and commit to be critically reflective***
In my 50 year experience of reconciliation practice, and in my professional education experience, I am still shocked at the professional and institutional evasion around youth workers, social workers, teachers and public servants learning together in depth about dealing with sensitive political, religious and cultural issues associated with life in my society. Without adults learning such ways we do not break out of the circles of fear, antagonism and hopelessness (Wilson, 1994).

It is imperative that such learning practices are not left to children and young people alone. When adults are more at ease with these themes, our children and young people will come into that more open and mature, hopeful environment.

Learning Practices That Embody Experiences Of Living In A Shared Society Involve:

4.1 Learning to meet 'the other' and trust beyond the ways of separation, avoidance and politeness.

To live separate lives and to participate in avoidance and politeness is neither respectful of others or expressing humility. Such actions work against the core guiding principles of promoting fairness in relationships, acknowledging difference and building interdependencies between people.
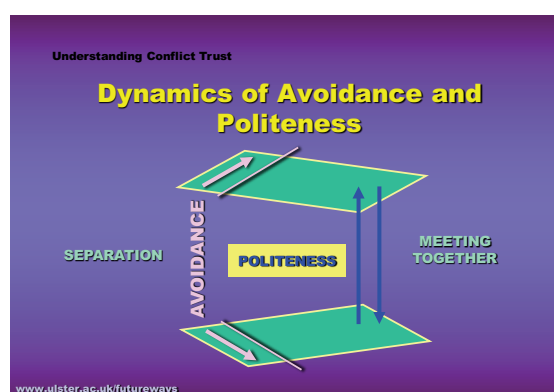
**Model 3: Dynamics Of Avoidance And Politeness**

New ways of being together and learning together need established where people meet respectfully and with humility and openness, engaging in robust discussion about their different experiences, aspirations and even hopes for a shared society, post conflict. (Morrow & Wilson, 1996)

In such experiences people can:

• Learn to trust one another beyond antagonism and violence.

• Meet different others and move out of, and beyond, conflict together.

• Develop new more inclusive cultures within civil society, public institutions and political life.

4.2 The challenge of the ethnic frontier society is not the irreconcilable differences of religion or identity, but the antagonism and violence that have shaped our relationships.
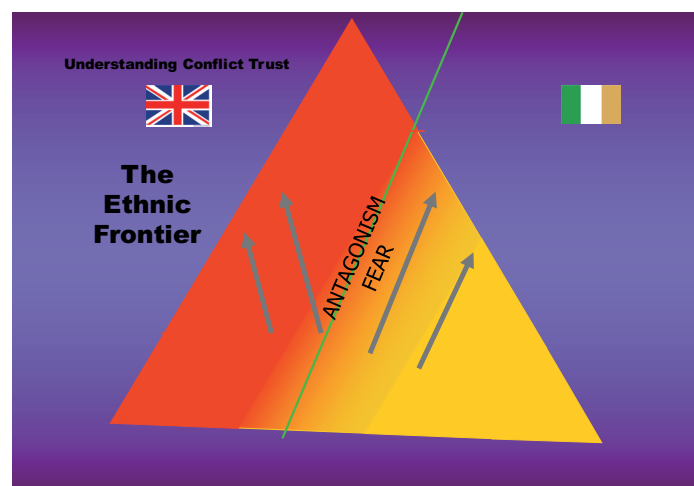
Model 4: The ethnic Frontier of Northern Ireland/ The North of Ireland (Frank Wright, 1987)

Learning about the dynamics of this ethnic frontier means that, in political science terms, each identity tradition is unable to finally dominate the other. It is important that people here learn deeply about the need to end all ambivalence to violence. In a post conflict society the dynamics of *antagonism, violence and insecurity* continually separate people, skew our day-to-day relationships and draw energy and resources away from future oriented, shared society agendas.

 "Violence may seem justified as a means to avenge past wrongs but such actions, far from generating justice, set in train an escalating cycle of revenge (Morrow, 2014)".

4.3 Learning that connects the addressing of poverty, the building of trust and our common security.

There is a symbiotic relationship between addressing trust and tackling poverty.
The need to develop trust impacts on our ability to then focus on the most vulnerable citizens in this society; and the need to focus on the vulnerable is disabled, if we cannot trust one another.

> *'It is not sensible to separate community cohesion (dealing with intra- and inter-community tensions) and social inclusion (tackling inequalities and long-term poverty) policies - indeed, doing so can inadvertently exacerbate, rather than reduce, community tensions'* (Gaffikin and Morrissey, 2010).

Facing into what agreed policing and justice structures would be like.
In an annual review of our Peace Process in 2014, it was argued that *'front line police have been the human shock absorbers for failures elsewhere'* (Nolan, 2014, Theme 7). In all societies there is a continual need to ensure that policing is, as far as possible, agreed and enjoys the assent of all. This social contract, when strong, underpins a more open and shared society developing, primarily because each person experiences themselves as an equal and valued citizen.

When citizens feel insecure, they readily move towards those they think they are like, and so communal, or partisan, groups become primary points of identity. As long as resources associated with developing good day-to-day community policing practices are hostage to the interfaces between identity groups, the development of good policing with the community becomes truncated, our common need for justice and security is impacted and the moves to a shared society are diluted.

Youthworkers cannot ignore the need to engage with developing and sustaining good policing practices or stand apart from holding police accountable where they experience poor practice with young people. It is important that civil society engages with the need to address unresolved conflictual policing matters, if they exist, because when emergency policing issues dominate, there is less finance for mainstream policing, teaching, nursery, health and youth facilities.

5. SOME CRITICAL SHARED SOCIETY YOUTH WORK PRACTICE CONCEPTS

Quality youth work practice should be informed by clear concepts. Three levels of concepts are outlined below. They belong to a wider group of restorative society concepts (See ALTERNATIVE [5]).

• The **guiding concepts** are central quality markers.
• The **bounding concepts** are minimum good practice guides.
• The **outcome concepts** are what, above all else, we should be striving to promote and secure (See Braithwaite (2003: 9-13).

In a future oriented youth service it is important to continually critique the concepts that we use to guide our practice.
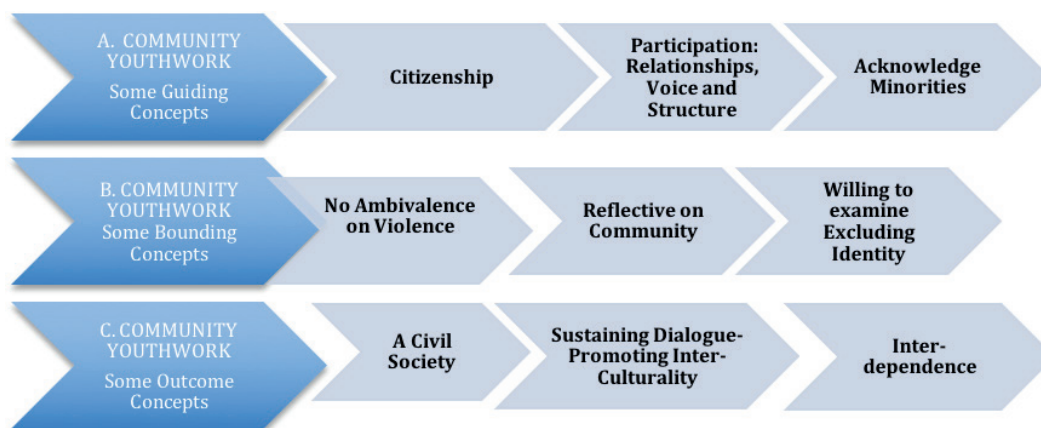
Model 5: SOME SHARED SOCIETY YOUTHWORK PRACTICE CONCEPTS, Wilson, 2015

5 A. SOME GUIDING YOUTH WORK PRACTICE CONCEPTS -FOR COMMUNITY YOUTHWORK

5A1. The Concept of Citizenship

Restoring citizenship as being primary (Wilson, 2013)-working to a mental model that each of us, young and old, is primarily a citizen, whatever our political identity-is a central youthwork task. The practice challenge is to promote citizenship as a primary guiding concept and support young people explore whether it is possible to understand their identity as citizens in a more complex manner. This is to engage them inrespecting the richness and texture, the history and culture of the 'different other', and experiencing what it is like to be more humble in each other's presence. We waste our human talents and creativity reduced to single, often competing identities. Each of us is a richer, more complicated and diverse person than just a single identity.
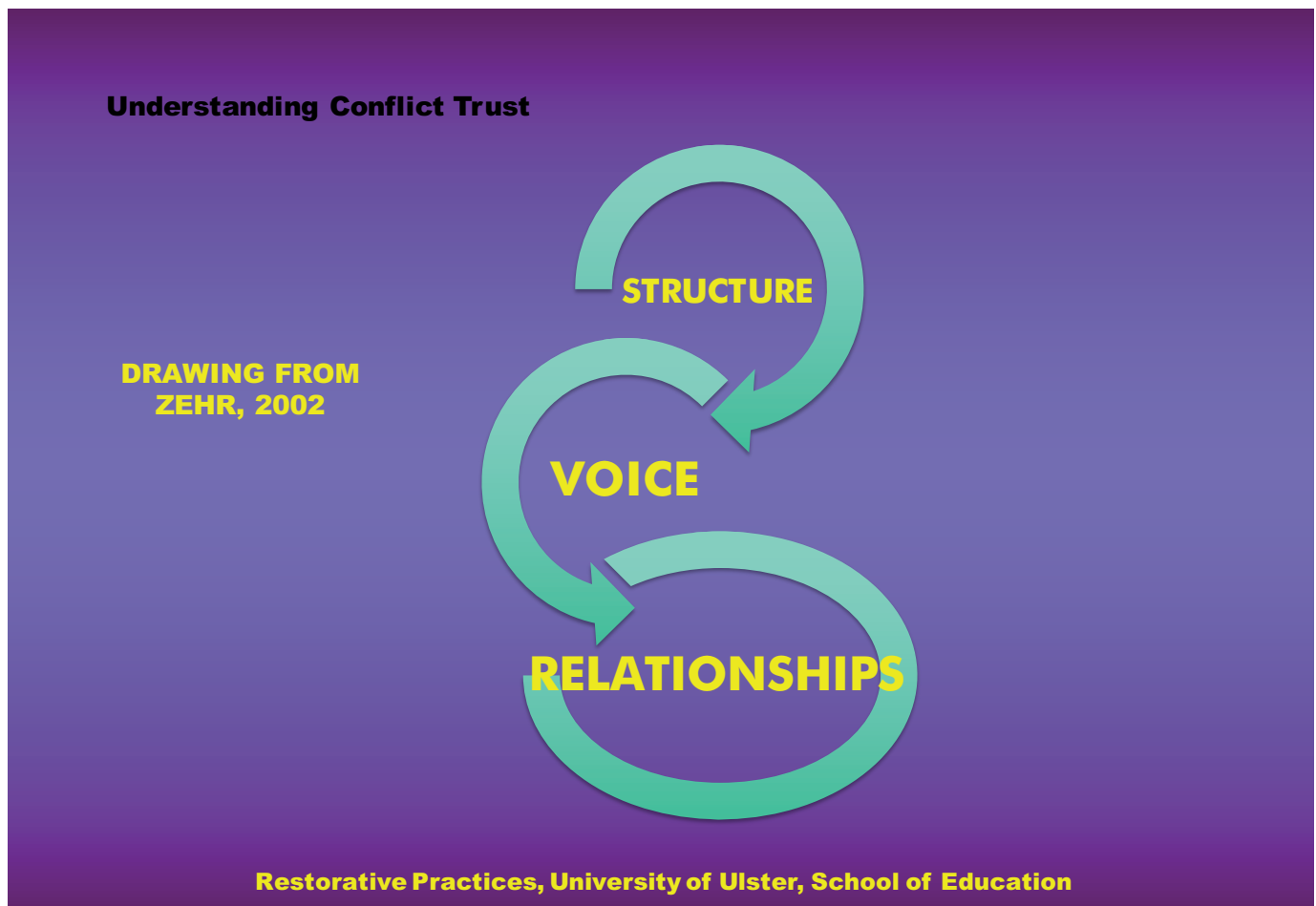
To work for a society of different and equal citizens means there is no place for condoning behaviors that demean others or that promote fear, hatred or the violence of scapegoating different others. This means that each of us, as practitioners, cannot work in a manner that ignores such actions between young people. We cannot airbrush or deny personal or structural aspects of our past history that, unacknowledged, continue to disturb the present. Unacknowledged histories of inequality, discrimination, violence and rejection between people with different experiences of life in one society, will continually disturb our present possibilities to meet and work together constructively. When such acknowledgements are shared, however difficult, they lay down stepping stones towards a new shared future together.

In innovative reconciliation programmes I have worked on, we have always sought to create space where discriminatory actions, violence and hatred can be acknowledged, questioned and challenged, from whatever quarter it comes. It means that in all our dealings we tried to model an appreciation of the different others we work with and meet and support our young people in doing the same.

A more secure society depends on individuals primarily experiencing themselves as individual citizens, enriched by their second and third level experiences of being members of identity groups, cultures and traditions. Societies where identity traditions are primary are eventually insecure places.

5A2. The Concept of Participation: Voice, Relationships and Structure

Relationships, Voice and Structure (Zehr, 2002, 32-21) are three elements that are important in moving us all beyond fear and violence and building a more participative, open, shared and safe society.

Understanding Conflict Trust

DRAWING FROM ZEHR, 2002

STRUCTURE

VOICE

RELATIONSHIPS

Restorative Practices, University of Ulster, School of Education

Model 6: Relationships, Voice and Structure, Wilson 2012

Embedding the principles of participation in youthwork, and having your voice acknowledged are central youth work tasks. Experiencing relationships in which young people accept responsibility relationally, with and for one another, enables them to engage with their *distant other*. Such acts become a new reality that supports a more shared society culture.

Let us never forget that our youth work is potentially life changing.
To bring young people into important new friendships; to support them develop relationships where old fears or lacks in confidence are dissolved within new, animated group relationships, where each has their place secured, is transforming.

5A3. *The Concept of Acknowledging Minorities*
When people from minority ethnic, religious or *other* (Levinas, 2003*)* backgrounds do not experience having their place as equal citizens, such dynamics work against citizenship being a transcending principle in how societies are structured and different voices are valued.

Often the minority experience is that *minorities negotiate* whereas *majorities assume*. Such a dynamic needs challenged. In such dynamics there is limited respect shown to members of minority traditions and little humility. We are all the poorer because the talents and creative energies of all are diminished.

5 B. SOME BOUNDING PRACTICE CONCEPTS - COMMUNITY YOUTHWORK

Bounding concepts are minimum good practice guides.
Northern Ireland, or the North of Ireland, has been a political 'ethnic frontier' society, dominated often by antagonistic and fearful relationships. To move towards a shared society in the new political dispensation requires that all are bound, or held, to some fundamental boundaries.

For me, having been a youth worker through the conflict, these bounding concepts must include:

5B1. *No ambivalence on violence*
Ethnic frontier societies harbour ambivalence around violence. Often people from one tradition excuse their side's violence as *provoked* while condemning the other side's violence as *unwarranted.* This is a theme acknowledged in the Belfast Agreement[6].

It is important that non-violence is revisited and re-asserted explicitly. There can be no justice or citizen security when each side might excuse members of their tradition being violent. Violence destroys and is not an action associated with the values of respect and humility. Violence means that a relationship has broken down. Violence does not have a place in promoting a more open shared society. A rejection of violence must be a central, explicit, youthwork practice concept.

5B2. *Being critically reflective on the concept of 'Community'*
In modern society homogeneity can never be justified and protected by force and the abuse of different others. To stand up for this principle needs civic courage (Shriver, 2007) [7]. Identity based (homogenous) communities, especially in a conflict, leave little room for different others. A more open shared society needs concepts around an open, diverse, fair and welcoming understanding of community that move us beyond the stranglehold of partisan, single identity, conceptions of community [8] (Pavlich, 2001).

When the concept of community is opened beyond single identity notions, space can be generated for people in diverse communities to: personally gain some critical distance; be open about the limits on their freedom; understand the pain that many have endured when they have been rejected or excluded from different communities; be more involved in making community facilities safer. (See Critchley, 1992; 219).

We need the courage, as insiders of our various different faith, political, locality, cultural and sporting communities, to question fixed or absolute images of community that fail to question the accepted divisions of insiders and outsiders. Without this critical interrogation of the term, the boundaries of our ethnocentric political or religious identities still too readily dominate political, public and civic life in NI, and there are only small spaces of contrasting actions that act as invitations to choose another direction (Wilson, 2015).

When community is about being homogenous, closed to different others, it adds little in terms of building a more open and shared society.

5B3. *The Concept of Identity*
In ethnic frontier societies there can be no eventual outright winner. Peace within the boundaries is an uneasy tranquillity and left/ right politics is usually trumped by identity politics, unless a forward joint momentum towards a new, shared society can be developed. Homogenous identity groups tend to move people towards those they think they are like, and away from different others.

An ethnocentric identity is based on *my people, my culture, my land before all else.* It is a system that wishes to establish supremacy, it is a system that rips respect off others and shows no humility. Post conflict, ethnocentric identities are not compatible with developing more open, diverse and shared societies.

Beyond a conflict it is often possible to get the space to drill into the history of identity communities, seeking elements in them that are often hidden through fear and conflict. It is an important task to explore whether more open and welcoming strands can be found in diverse identity traditions and bring these to the fore. Wright (1994) often identified reconciling and healing actions in many historical traditions in Ireland that were 'omitted' when tensions increased. He pointed out that they did exist and needed acknowledgement.

5 C. SOME OUTCOME PRACTICE CONCEPTS - COMMUNITY YOUTHWORK

The outcome concepts are what, above all else, we should be striving to promote and secure.

5C1. The concept of a civil society

'The synergy between a strong state and a strong civil society is one of the keys to sustained poverty reduction' (Edwards, 2004, p13)

Promoting 'ease with difference' and 'decreasing levels of inequality' (Gaffikin & Morrissey, 2011) as core societal values are key to promoting sustainable, diverse, and inclusive regional economies that will be more just and secure. They argue that it is essential to promote a more robust and diverse civil society dialogue that critically understands the need to move beyond narrow partisan identity communities and that critically engages with government on longer-term social issues of poverty and inequality.

Michael Edwards, a major civil society thinker, adds:

> *Motivating large numbers of people to shift to more co-operative behaviour and persuade those in power to create more inclusive institutions goes against the heart of the current economic order. Without personal change towards more caring and compassionate ways of being and dealing with each other, it will be very hard to generate the momentum to bring about such a shift.*

> *However, the vision of a world that manages the costs and opportunities of an integrated economy to mutual benefit provides a powerful leitmotif for the century to come. True freedom is attainable only through relations with others, since in an interconnected world I can never be safe until you are secure; nor can one person be whole unless others are fulfilled. That is only possible on a cooperative world. Is that the kind of world we want to live in and bequeath to those we love? If so, our responsibilities are clear (Edwards, 2004).*

5C2. The Concept of Sustaining Dialogue-Promoting Inter-Culturality

With identities in a conflict, there is a myth that our identity is simple and homogenous. In reality we are a mixture of so many relationships and environments, we are much more complex in our identities than conflicts permit us to acknowledge. In my society it is time to acknowledge that 'we are much more than our beliefs!'

We are also moving within a new global climate, sometimes slowly and hesitatingly, and at other times quickly, towards an intercultural society. It is a theme in modern societies as people from diverse identities move in and through one another. It is an important theme in local communities that are becoming, slowly, more diverse also.

We cannot build a shared society if we tolerate, or are quiet, when some members of mixed or intercultural relationships are abused, distrusted or attacked. Where such 'across identity relationships' do develop, they become carriers of new ways of being together that are important for the wider society. Because of the effort people in such relationships have to invest to make them work against the partisan grain, mixed relationships accumulate precious knowledge about how an intercultural society might be built respectfully.

Youth work agencies need to sustain such engagements and value the intercultural agenda. Sustaining meetings between different others, and promoting inter cultural understanding, must be a central mental model in our youth work practice.

5C3. The Concept of Interdependence

Promoting interdependence as an aspect of building a new, *inclusive* sense of *citizen security* is a youthwork practice challenge. Security in a conflicted society has often meant that one person's call for security has made *a different other* feel insecure. The security that might come as a result of diverse people experiencing belonging to an interdependent society has to be worked towards, experienced between different people, and promoted centrally as a governmental policy goal and a civil society aspiration. Interdependence needs to become embedded in public and private institutions, locally and regionally. Interdependence needs experienced together, by each one of us, in the day-to-day practice of work together with, and for, young people

CONCLUSIONS

LIVING WELL TOGETHER

'Living Well Together' is the overarching theme under which the revised and re-envigorated strands of youth, schools, family, community, volunteering, faith and inter cultural programme work of the Corrymeela reconciliation community, with which I am involved, are now being developed. These programmes promote equity and fairness, an openness to difference and an experience of interdependence, when they work well (www.corrymeela.org).

Living well together, in a post political agreement society, is the search for, and experience of developing, *a shared values approach,* based on *respect, humility and non-violence.* A shared values base is the social theory underpinning the training and practice of community youth work. (Hardin, 2008).

It is important that, coming out of conflict, we explicitly, and without any equivocation, articulate some transcendent fundamental values. We need experiences of meeting different others and moving out of, and beyond, conflict together, experiencing new more inclusive cultures within civil society, public institutions and political life.

In a post conflict society, new experiences of being together and at ease with *the different other* are still few and fragile. Such new experiences need patterned, repeated time and time again, until they become part of the new *revisionary structures* (Pavlich, 2004,179) associated with a shared society.

In such experiences together of being given hospitality by others and giving hospitality to others, important glimpses of what a more open society offers are experienced. These are experiences on which good youth work practice depends. They are challenges and invitations to all children, young people, parents and carers, professional youth workers, political leaders, civil society organisations and the wider public service.

A shared future challenge is to imagine what this society would be like if these were the characteristics that dominated our relationships and daily civic and political culture?

Open, affirming and trusting relationships are:

the fundamental human origins that build open, tolerant, accepting and forgiving human beings;
the means through which people express love, affirmation, support, motivation and encouragement to one another;
the arbiter of basic human values of respect and humility, not demeaning or being violent to others.

Such relational understandings, informing our work, hold out a wider vision that children and young people of today might more openly embrace and build a better world than my generation has built. This vision is marked by: a more just culture; an openness to different others; a world that is interdependent, not dominated by ethnocentric political or religious identities that fuel distrust and hatred.

We need a hard nosed, future oriented, 'hope filled', forward looking practice of youth work that understands that young people are not feral (Wilson, 2012) and that challenges such feral statements in public discourse.

We need services supporting young people exercise their power of human agency-the potential they have to create changes in their lives and in the lives and systems around them.

There is much use of apocalyptic language at this time by diverse religious and political fundamentalist ideologies. It is time to offer a challenging contrast to these groups. The real meaning of apocalypse is to reveal or make clear-it is not about doom, it is about possibility. It is not about the end, but a new beginning. That new beginning is to work more deliberately toward such a shared society vision (Kirwan, 2015) This is a vision youth workers and the organisations they belong to, should turn themselves towards.

The new beginning we wish to reveal through our work is the futility of war-like actions and violent practices. We wish to stand for young people being citizens of a wider world, where the beauty and wonder of the world around them is harnessed and gives their, often fragile, lives strength and purpose through people working together-not separated.

We wish to harness the energies of all to support a common vision of living well together; living justly with and for one another in an interdependent world. This is often the world that very young children experience; a world that we adults often very effectively erode and destroy.

In my society, I exhort community youth work practitioners; senior managers of staff; board members of voluntary agencies and members of the public service to be more explicitly committed, and continually return to, a base of:

Principles that promote and assert the need for a more fair, diverse and interdependent society here-knowing deeply that to settle for a divided or partial community loyalty will continually undermine the achievement of a more open, shared one.

Values that position themselves and their agencies within a wider global commitment- promoting good citizenship experiences at home and preparing our children and young people to be citizens of a more open and international world.

It is time to explicitly commit ourselves to engage with people working outside the more traditional partnerships. There is a place for linking with all sporting, artistic, cultural, faith, citizenship, and political education practices that promote relationships, groups and organisational cultures that support people learning anew what it is like to be comfortable with different others.

Imagine how it feels to be treated with respect, given value and to live hope filled, fulfilled, lives? As workers we often know this, deep in our being.

I invite each one of us to re-commit our energies to make these same experiences deep realities in those we work with.

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Some Additional Notes of Interest:
A. Report of the UK Children's Commissioners, UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Examination of the Fifth Periodic Report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland UK-ccs-uncrc-examination-of-the-fifth-periodic-report-July-2015.pdf

B. The Good Friday Agreement 1998
Paragraph 4 of the 1998 Political Agreement states: *We reaffirm our total and absolute commitment to exclusively democratic and peaceful means of resolving differences on political issues, and our opposition to any use or threat of force by others for any political purpose, whether in regard to this agreement or otherwise.*

C. Pavlich explores how community might be welcoming, future focussed, inclusive, equitable, fair and just and contrasts this with other concepts of community that 'worship' community as being more fixed, judgemental, backward looking and excluding. See Pavlich, G., (2001), The force of community. In Restorative Justice and Civil Society, eds. Strang and Braithwaite. Cambridge: CUP.

D. Frank Wright argues that religio-political identities are generated in ethnic frontier societies as sacreds.

E. Drawing from Sloane Coffin *Credo,* John Knox Press, 2004 p84, Shriver identifies three kinds of patriots. The good patriot carries on a lover's quarrel with their country. In discussion in 2007 in Belfast he named these as 'critical lovers'. On page 9 he quotes Niebuhr who argues "A democratic society requires some capacity of the individual to defy social authority on occasion when its standards violate his

conscience and to relate himself to larger and larger communities than the primary family group." *The Irony of American History,* 1952, pp 125-126

F. Zehr in Weitekamp, Journey to Belonging Chap 2, pp 21-32 introduces three restorative levels of the restorative process with victims being characterised by the the movement from: **Structures** of disorder to order; **Relationships** that are disconnected to a sense of connectedness; **Voices** that are disempowered to empowered.

Endnotes

1.   These principles were developed from a fundamental research programme on what characterized good community relations practice in Northern Ireland. Eyben, Morrow & Wilson, 1997. EDI are organisational culture principles. An organisation could review its goals against the extent to which they address inequality (the equity theme), challenge narrow practices that exclude (the diversity agenda) and consider how they could secure a shared society (the interdependence drive), the end point to which everything else works;
     They are also social group work principles in learning together across traditions and as principles infusing learning spaces. Applying the themes to innovative social group work with people and groups is to see equity (fairness plus justice) as the structure of the space the worker creates for people to come into; diversity (being different and having a place) as the stimulus and ease which different people gradually sense when they enter the group; and interdependence (being valued as a person and valuing others with you) as the increasingly open engagement between members about living in this place and elsewhere. Interdependence is the experience when a group comes to life and engages.

2.   Does income inequality hurt economic growth? OECD Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs. Widespread increases in income inequality have raised concerns about their potential impact on our societies and economies. New OECD research shows that when income inequality rises, economic growth falls. One reason is that poorer members of society are less able to invest in their education. Tackling inequality can make our societies fairer and our economies stronger.

3.   iii Helen Beckett and Camille Warrington of the International Centre at the University of Bedfordshire. Children and young people experience much higher rates of crime than police data suggests.
     Research shows significant levels of crime and victimisation amongst children and young people.
     Approximately one-third of 11-17 year olds, for example, report experiencing physical violence
     within the last year. One-quarter of 11-24 year olds say they experienced some form of abuse or
     neglect during childhood (Radford et al 2011). Evidence indicates that children and young people are at higher risk than adults of experiencing certain forms of crime. Females aged 16 to 19 years, for example, are the age group at highest risk of being a victim of a sexual offence (MoJ et al 2013)
     Existing vulnerabilities, such as a long-standing illness or disability, appear to significantly compound
     children and young people's vulnerability to crime. The majority of crimes against children and young people are not reported to the police. Only 13% of violent offences and 15% of thefts are reported by young victims (ONS 2014a). Similarly, retrospective accounts of childhood sexual abuse show only 5-13% of victims reported this to an adult at the time.

4.   Here the example of Germany stands above all others as a society who does not ignore the past and through treaties, bi-lateral arrangements, political and civic rituals and school curricula insist that 1939-45 is never forgotten in the public consciousness- Shriver, 2005)

5.   ALTERNATIVE is a six Country Framework 7 Research Programme the Restorative Practices Team at Ulster are members of. These concepts are part of a larger body of concepts associated with this programme. See http://www.alternativeproject.eu

6.   The commitment of all parties to the 1998 Agreement, commit all to refrain from using violence in any form.

7.   Shriver offers many examples of actions that political leaders needed to take such as in Germany, post war; (71) in the USA, post civil rights (210-217) and currently around Black-White relations (218-233). They are all examples of civic courage.

8.   Pavlich questions fixed or absolute images of community that, for him, can hide totalitarian hints and fail to question the accepted divisions of insiders and outsiders. He warns about, too readily, accepting the uncritical use of community as an immutable, fixed reality that privileges insiders and disenfranchises outsiders. Without this critical interrogation of the term, the boundaries of ethnocentric identities still too readily dominate political, public and civic life in NI, and there are only small spaces of contrasting actions that act as invitations to choose another direction.

The Understanding Conflict Trust (UCT) grew out of the work of The Corrymeela Community in 1987 (www.corrymeela.org).

The charitable purpose of UCT is:
The advancement of Education, in particular, to promote the understanding of conflict in the community.

Our work gathers around:

Pursuing: " the study of the role of traditions in community conflict and the place of tradition in the development of reconciliation in the community."

Developing: "the exercise and development of a training, supervisory and consultative relationship with community and professional groups"

Publishing: "the authorship, publication and distribution of materials, videos films, papers, books and other documentation... in compliance with the objects."

UCT Papers in this set are in support of the "Living Well Together' theme in Corrymeela's current programme.