Faith, Peace Building, and Intra-Community Dialogue in South Yorkshire, UK

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This paper discusses the outcomes of action research with an interfaith community dialogue project. The project was established to encourage resilience to the divisive narratives of extreme or radical right-wing groups in South Yorkshire, UK. In communities where there is antipathy towards 'outsiders', contact theory encourages intergroup interaction as a way of improving relationships. However, this research found that where people could or would not take part in inter-group contact, an alternative approach was therefore required. This research identified an innovative process of facilitated 'safe-space' intra-community dialogue that involved groups whose 'out-group' antipathy could feed extremism. Participants could talk amongst themselves about why they felt as they did without the expectation they would interact with other groups. This research identified the role of faith in challenging extremism and a dialogue process that has potential for wider application in settings where identity-related hostility is present.

Keywords: Cohesion, conflict resolution, faith, outsiders, dialogue

Introduction

This study explores findings that arose from action research with an interfaith community dialogue project established to challenge the divisive narratives of extreme and radical right-wing (ERW) support in South Yorkshire, UK. Given the 2015 general election, it may be timely to reflect on drivers behind ERW, and the extent to which support of such groups may change political focus over time.

The 2010 UK general election was thought by some to have marked the beginning of the end for ERW momentum. Nick Griffin, then chair of the British National Party (BNP), had stood in a high-profile campaign in the London Borough of Dagenham and Barking. His principal opponent was Margaret Hodge, a senior Labour politician. As in South Yorkshire, the borough had seen the BNP make significant progress in local elections (Slade 2012). Griffin came third, prompting Hodge to declare:

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> 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 (2010) 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).
However, such responses diverted attention from why ERW support had grown
and where this momentum might lead in the future. The need for such analysis was
identified in a report published by the Institute of Community Cohesion (iCoCo
2011) which 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.
Although nationally the 2010 election saw the BNP receive 1.9% of votes cast,
in the principal towns of South Yorkshire their share ranged from 2.2% in the
multicultural constituency of Sheffield Central to between 8% and 9% in Barnsley,
and 10.4% in Rotherham. Whilst nationally BNP performance and governance
has collapsed since 2010 (2014 Ford and Goodwin), the right-wing radicalism of
the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) has gained national momentum
in subsequent South Yorkshire by-elections. In 2011, whilst Labour held the
parliamentary seat of Barnsley, UKIP and the BNP were positioned second and
fourth respectively (BBC, 2010). In 2012, Labour retained its seat in Rotherham
with UKIP and the BNP positioned second and third (BBC Election Results 2010,
2011, 2012). South Yorkshire, with some localities bypassed by any New Labour
economic boom, struggled with post-2010 Coalition austerity. There is scant
evidence of change since the 2015 general election and South Yorkshire continues to
impress as fertile ground for the ERW. It is suggested that the continuing aftermath
of the 1984 miners' strike, resurfacing through the recent cessation of deep-mined
coal and continued controversy surrounding the behaviour of authorities during a
miners' demonstration at Orgreave (Conn 2015) coupled with industrial dereliction
has contributed to the rise in ERW.

Positioned in protracted social conflict (PSC) and community cohesion theory
and practice, this research explored drivers behind ERW momentum through the
inception and development of the interfaith community dialogue project (CDP)
established to challenge the divisive narratives of the ERW. The focus of the
research, the role of faith and the development of an innovative process of dialogue,
was addressed through three central research questions:

1. How was the dialogue process developed and what did it look like?

2. How does PSC theory and practice help to explain momentum that
   ERW groups appear to have gained in South Yorkshire?

3. What role did faith and faith values have in concerns about ERW momentum and the development of the CDP and the dialogue process?

The paper begins with a background of South Yorkshire and the CDP followed by a summary of action-research methodology. This is followed by an outline of the methods utilised for data collection. Then we present a discussion of the research findings in relation to the literature that addresses the paper's central questions. This is followed by our conclusions.

Background

South Yorkshire and the Community Dialogue Project

South Yorkshire has been profoundly affected by industrial decline that has had a corrosive impact on communities and their culture (Slade 2012). Associated with the loss and absence of focus arising from unsolicited change are strong feelings of hurt and resentment that centre on the strike by miners from 1984–1985 (Slade 2012). Strike action saw families and communities turned in upon themselves, with a legacy of acrimony arising from who remained on strike and who returned to work. The strike has left an aftermath of defeat and loss that ended traditional employment, eroded associated culture, and remains an embedded source of bitterness and grievance within these former mining communities.

With the exception of Sheffield, cultural and ethnic diversity in South Yorkshire is below the national average. White mono-cultural working-class communities are typical of the area (Slade 2012). Limited geographical mobility and little chance to encounter cultural or ethnic differences have resulted with generations of the same family living in the community. In many ways, this contrasts with urban conurbations in other parts of the UK, where ethnic diversity is a constant feature of everyday life.

Research has suggested that there is a general sense of wariness in relation to anyone perceived as an 'outsider', particularly towards those considered 'Muslim' (Slade 2012). In these scenarios the term 'Muslim' could serve as a proxy identity for all 'outsiders' who were not white and especially those with an Indian sub-continent heritage (Slade 2012). Indeed, despite overall limited diversity and with some communities 96% white British (ONS 2011), research has suggested that Muslims were seen as a threat (Slade 2012; Goodwin et al. 2010). CDP inception built on a public stand taken by local faith leaders that ERW were divisively feeding and exploiting such views (Carnelley 2009). The study found continual evidence in the narratives of research participants of a sense of grievance and belligerence arising from loss of individual and community resources, a grievance that began with the

miners strike, and had become generalised towards all outsiders, especially those of different race or ethnicity, who might pose a threat to limited resources, even if their geographic location was remote.

What appeared to be important was visible evidence, either through culture and ethnicity or racial biology, that a person or group could be quickly characterised as 'not from around here' and in some way represented a broader raft of threat and uncertainty (Slade 2012). Employing charitable funding and positioned in conflict resolution, the CDP developed an underpinning vision of South Yorkshire 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' (CDP 2010). The aim of the project was to enable communities in South Yorkshire to become resilient to racist politics and divisive ideologies whilst empowering them to challenge racism and faith-based prejudice in themselves and others (CDP 2010).

The project was developed and managed by people from Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Buddhist faiths. A management committee and small team of staff oversaw the three core activities of the CDP:

1. The provision of 'safe space' 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.

Action Research Methodology

Engagement with the CDP presented an opportunity to understand more of the individual and collective role of faith values in contemporary society, the part they play in challenging radical or extreme views, and the experiences that lead to the dialogue process utilised with communities. These influences, alongside the researchers own methodological interest, pointed towards action research as a method whereby collaboration and trusted relationships could lead to productive research outcomes. Denscombe (2010) believes that action research is relevant in settings where research is used 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' (Denscombe 2010, 126). McNiff and Whitehead (2006) similarly conclude that the process is effective in settings where improved learning and social action is the focus. Stringer (1999) emphasises the method as a participatory

pathway leading to 'a collaborative approach to enquiry … that provides people with the means to take systematic action to resolve specific problems' (Stringer 1999, 17). This synergy of knowledge and change sat comfortably with the researcher's personal position and CDP's social change stance and a continual learning ethos that was embedded in the CDP processes.

Action research provides an appropriate methodology in responding to three critical factors: first, it provided resources to develop skills required of people who have to cooperate in a complex social action task. Second, whilst social action has a common contemporary faith role, doing so in the context of challenging ERW is less usual and draws on limited experience. The researcher's active engagement with the project enabled live insight and knowledge to be developed. Third, there was limited theoretical or research-based evidence on which the CDP could draw to guide the development and implementation of intra-community dialogue. Therefore the research process to support the development of learning and expertise was mutually beneficial. Fourthly, within the action research framework, the researcher made extensive use of PSC methodology (Azar 1990) that emphasises participative 'bottom-up' engagement by facilitators in dialogue between groups with strong group identities. Conflict resolution as delivered through PSC methodology is highly participative and democratic, offering a synergy with action research principles, Sectoral Social Dialogue (SSD) processes and a lens through which the ERW momentum and its consequences could be understood.

Data Collection

Ethical approval from the University of Coventry Ethics Committee was granted in January 2010. Fieldwork took place between 2011 and 2012. This period provided an opportunity to explore the impact of the 2010 general election and the effect of coalition policies, including those associated with austerity, on communities.

Participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule. The objective was to explore their experience of being invited to and taking part in dialogue sessions, their perspective on relationships within and between their community and other communities and their views on factors behind the growth of right-wing extremism. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcripts evaluated using a framework analysis method. Data collection was structured through three elements: interviews with CDP founders and Management Committee members; participation in a consortium of dialogue facilitators; and evaluative interviews with SSD participants.

Interviews with CDP founders and Management Committee members explored the role of faith in individual and group motivation behind CDP development and

the rationale for utilising the concept of SSD. Twelve persons were involved in these interviews. This enabled people to talk amongst themselves in safe spaces rather than the more usual approach of engaging in direct contact with those towards whom antipathy was felt. Data was obtained through a semi-structured schedule and modified Likert scoring scale and involved twelve audio-recorded individual interviews. Interviews were transcribed and subjected to framework analysis using categories that structured the interviews and which had been developed with a cooperative enquiry group established for the purposes of the research.

The second element saw the researcher co-opted into membership of meetings of dialogue facilitators that both led development of the SSD process and were the focus for critical analysis and peer supervision of each SSD session. Membership provided a key action-research opportunity to analyse and distil learning from live experience and introduce findings from other research. Two data-collection methods were utilised. First, meetings were recorded, transcribed, and subjected to thematic analysis by the researcher and facilitators. This resulted in a cycle of continuous revisions and improvements to processes and outcomes. These were then woven into the research framework. Second, this element of research concluded in a consolidation where facilitators were able to review and commit themselves to the processes as an accurate reflection of their experience and expertise.

The third element of action research was designed to understand individual experience of SSD so that a contemporaneous link could be developed between the dialogue process and the live experience of participants. This element of research was significantly limited in relation to a sample that was methodologically representative of the age, class, community, ethnicity, and faith of participants. The CDP guarantees of anonymity meant that no records of contact details had been kept and extensive networking was required to identify any participants who were prepared to be interviewed. This strategy eventually identified a sample of ten participants from a total of 84 adults giving a sample of just under 12% of the total number of SSD participants.

Participants were all white British and comprised six females and four males. Three participants self-identified as atheists, whilst all the other interviewees indicated regular attendance at Christian worship. The sample was drawn from nine SSD groups who had met during a period of twelve months. All the groups were affiliated with a Christian church either because they were faith-based or used church buildings for non-religious social-activity purposes. Assessed by voting patterns and in the account of participants, the communities in which the SSDs took place and the participants lived had an active ERW presence. The majority of communities scored above average in multiple deprivation indices and were over 98% White British (ONS 2011).

Results and Discussion

Extreme or Radical Right-Wing Supporters

The first step towards understanding the ERW momentum was to learn more about those who support such groups and the extent to which BNP and UKIP members might share common beliefs**.** Goodwin and Evans's (2012) research and analysis of BNP and UKIP members utilised a Yougov online survey of 1,460 UKIP supporters and 386 BNP supporters to establish an understanding of people who declared extreme or radical right-wing support. Their approach is relevant because UKIP have developed a strategy of openly encouraging BNP supporters to vote for UKIP candidates, thus suggesting some coterminosity of beliefs (Nuttall 2011, 93). Goodwin and Evans (2012) found that congruence between the groups was evident in their concerns and anxieties. After the financial crisis and subsequent austerity, their third joint principal concern was Muslims in Britain.

Both BNP and UKIP supporters have high levels of anxiety about Islam and its institutions and the extent to which the faith is a threat to the West. Both groups did not believe the UK benefited from diversity. Amongst BNP supporters there was a strong belief that immigrants are the main cause of crime and that certain racial groups are superior to others. Goodwin and Evans's (2012) research suggested that large numbers of BNP and UKIP supporters think that violence between racial and religious groups in the UK is inevitable. Thus, BNP supporters are most likely to consider a strategy of preparing for violence, with half the group willing to be prepared for armed conflict. Ford and Goodwin's (2014) later analysis of UKIP membership adds further insight. Whilst Conservative voters tend to be middle class and economically secure, they found UKIP draws most of its support from blue-collar workers and voters on low and insecure incomes (Goodwin 2014). European Union membership comes third behind immigration and the economy as the major cause of concern. The research also found that UKIP supporters are likely to identify with socially conservative policies that include an anti-immigration perspective, promoting traditional British values and national identity, a conservative stance on law and order, and are contemptuous of the contemporary political elite.

Three analytical issues emerged from this body of research that are relevant to the study's central questions. First, ERW supporters are struggling with pressures that have an impact on their economic security and thus their ability to meet basic needs. Second, ERW supporters feel estranged from contemporary political leaders and as a consequence their capacity for influence has weakened. Third, antipathy towards outsiders and those with a recognisably different identity is a clear feature of their attitudes towards coexistence with other citizens.

This research found evidence to support the relevance of these issues. Firstly, 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 (ONS 2001).

Secondly, the decline of traditional heavy manufacturing and mining has been accompanied by the decay of institutions such as trade unions and working men's clubs that traditionally linked white working-class communities and the Labour Party and which might have been able to provide a counter narrative to the ERW. In our study, feelings of unwarranted change, powerlessness, loss and bitterness, and experience of class prejudice surfaced regularly during interviews. Articulating these feelings of resentment and of being ignored, allied with significant experience of deprivation, has been an effective strategy of the ERW. Both UKIP and the BNP have pointed to neglect by mainstream political parties as an explanation for why communities are deprived of resources that have flowed instead to the 'other'.

Thirdly, the antipathy towards outsiders can be understood through a coalescence of the first two issues expressed by one participant in the following terms:

> Where I come from, 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. The [ERW] 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.

Again, this provides the ERW with 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. However, viewed through the lens of protracted social conflict theory (Azar 1990), it could be suggested that the ERW can be seen to draw hostile boundaries around communal identity groups, framing malevolent out-groups as challenging disadvantaged white indigenous in-groups.

Protracted Social Conflict Resolution and Contact Theory Literature in the Context of South Yorkshire

Protracted Social Conflict Resolution can be defined as a facilitated dialogue-based peace-building process developed to address actual or potential social conflict where tensions between groups become embedded. The protracted element can be observed where the aftermath of real or perceived incidents or concerns lingers, forming the basis of hostile stereotypes of 'out-groups' who are held responsible for individual or group misfortune. Contact theory can be defined as a similarly

dynamic process and aims to bring groups together through facilitated dialogue to explore and move on from such stereotypes.

Azar's (1990) methodology for working with protracted social conflict (PSC) was developed to address situations where identity groups are engaged in a struggle to meet basic needs such as security, recognition, acceptance, and fair access to governance (Azar 1991). Whilst the focus is religious, cultural or ethnic identity, tensions are driven by the need to satisfy 'basic needs such as those for security, communal recognition and distributive justice' (Azar 1990, 2). These underlying causes are exacerbated by external intervention and manipulation of local grievances.

Arguing from human need theory (Maslow 1959), Azar found that grievances arising from basic needs being unmet or unfairly disregarded combine with individual and group identity to create deep-seated resentments. He found that people strive to meet basic needs both individually and collectively through the formation of identity groups. This can give rise to a clear link between personal resentment, arising from unmet individual need, becoming generalised into group identity experience. These individual and group unmet needs become drivers of antipathy, leading to tensions between communal identity groups. This in turn creates a vicious circle of actual or anticipated fearful and hostile interactions between contestants, where conflictual positions lead to attitudes, cognitive processes, and perceptions of 'them' becoming ossified. Failure to address resentment provides a niche for lingering group grievances and anger. The process is rooted in feelings and perceptions rather than rationality. This can lead to a search for the 'guilty' based on fear and 'otherness' (Azar 1990, 17–19).

Using the above definitions, it could be argued that the roots of PSC developing in South Yorkshire are becoming embedded; this may be evidenced by momentum in voting support for the policies of ERW groups, underpinned by the sense of grievance and resentment identified in this research. This combination of factors could well have been of concern to Azar. However, our study did not find that South Yorkshire is ready to erupt in identity-based conflict. Despite levels of deprivation, cultural change arising from the decline of traditional industries, and a sense of exclusion from governance and influence, lower than average ethnic diversity could mean that PSC is less likely. However, our study found that what was significant was not what might be objectively identified but rather perceptions of outsiders. In particular, the research found that in the absence of day-to-day interaction people drew knowledge from media platforms that described distant and often un-contextualised events. This contributed to an atmosphere where Muslims and Islam were a frequent focus of anxiety and 'otherness'. One participant commented, 'Within the press, they are presented as a threat. You know, they take our jobs, they cost a fortune, they live in luxury, etcetera.' This notion of feeling threatened was

echoed by another participant: 'I read somewhere the other day there will soon be Muslims on the North Yorkshire moors … I was in [name of a local town] and was in a lift with someone who was dressed like a terrorist.'

One dialogue facilitator reported to the researcher about one participant recalling a journey on a tram:

> [He was] sitting opposite a 'foreigner' on the tram who, in their opinion, behaved very strangely, looking anxious and over his shoulder. He 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.

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 fair conclusion would take into account anxieties about security arising from terrorist incidents well beyond the small, safe and white mono-cultural community setting where the dialogue session took place.

The resolution of PSC situations lies in dialogue facilitated by independent mediators and facilitators who interact with groups by focusing on participant issues at a pace appropriate to their needs. Azar (1990) found that prejudicial behaviour is learnt, can be modified through such, and that listening to people through facilitated dialogue and addressing their issues and concerns is a fundamental tenet of resolving conflict. His emphasis on dialogue as a conflict resolution strategy argues synergy with the CDP process of SSD. However, the project's approach lay in groups talking amongst themselves about their antipathy rather than bringing different people together. The validity of this seemingly counter-intuitive method can be assessed through theory and practice exploring conflict resolution between belligerent groups.

Interventions in conflict arising from identity-based belligerence between individuals or groups usually focus on bringing people together in facilitated dialogue (Allport 1954; Pettigrew 1998; Scott-Appleby 2000; Cantle 2008). Allport (1954) found that 'in-group' attitudes of hostility towards 'out-groups' could be reduced through intergroup contact leading to a reduction in prejudice. Pettigrew (1998) developed Allport's approach by identifying outcomes of inter-group contact that included new learning about other people that could correct negative stereotypes, which underpin prejudice. However, he found that optimal inter-group contact was essential in modifying behaviour that would lead to changed attitudes, positive expectations of the 'out-group', reappraisal of in-group norms and positive attitudes towards out-groups generally.

Cantle (2008) sees inter-group contact as crucial in addressing the separateness and 'parallel lives' of communities in multicultural societies, divisions that he believes extremists can exploit. In general terms proponents of these approaches would endorse an inter-community approach to dialogue, rather than the intra-community process developed by the CDP.

Peace-building research in Northern Ireland provides a direct link with the CDP's work. Church et al. (2002) describe an approach to conflict resolution as 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 debate whether inter-community contact is the only way forward, arguing that 'increased intergroup contact has not rendered viable, reconciliation in this [Northern Ireland] society' (Church et al. 2002, 8). They suggest that what is needed in some circumstances is a process that will engage those most steeped in their own traditions but which may still be supportive of eventual contact with other communities.

Other writers have explored similar processes that implicitly question the approach advocated by contact theory traditionalists. The work of Hewstone et al. (2008), also based on segregated communities in Northern Ireland, found that indirect contact between group members can have a positive impact on the group overall. Chris and Turner's (2009) development of 'imagined contact' also has resonance. Their methodology is likely to be applicable 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.

Set against this analysis, opinion is divergent in relation to the CDP intra-community approach. Research in Northern Ireland describes practice that echoes the CDP assessment of the need for such a process in South Yorkshire communities. Yet contact theory and community cohesion advocates would be likely to recommend interaction between groups as the way forward. However, the CDP faced a number of challenges in following such a route. In some communities with growing levels of support for the extreme or radical right wing, people would not or were not ready to meet with 'out-groups' towards whom fear and hostility was directed.

Allied with this was lower than average ethnic diversity and inward migration (ONS 2011) making the development of the optimal contact recommended by Pettigrew challenging and resource intensive to sustain. The position was further complicated by traditions of limited geographical mobility and deep-seated attitudes of wariness towards 'out-groups' summed up in a typical perspective by one SSD participant as

'fear of the outsider … people who aren't like us and don't come from round here
… it's drummed into you at birth.'

Additional challenges in adopting an inter-group strategy were evident. First, direct
contact is resource intensive and would have exceeded the CDP capacity. Second,
CDP networks had identified an urgent need to provide some opportunity for
people to talk about difficult issues such as race, and racism and other stereotypes
of 'otherness' and difference: as noted by a CDP founder [to enable people to
talk about] 'what everyone is thinking about but not talking about – they don't
talk because they might be accused of being racist'. The sense of urgency arose
from awareness that extreme and radical right-wing groups were actively engaged
in such conversations and that these interactions were critical in their developing
a power base. ERW groups were observed to be keen to listen to people's fears and
anxieties and in doing so built an empathic portal to their group narrative of hostile
stereotyping.

The issues appear more clear-cut in relation to a central element of the CDP intra-
community process. The provision of SSD for this method is clearly evident in
conflict resolution and peace-building theory and research-based learning. The
UK-based St Ethelburga's Conflict Resolution Centre has drawn on experience of
reconciliation work with groups that own strong communal identities to provide
guidance in relation to safe-space work (St Ethelburga's Conflict Resolution Centre
2009). Their approach emphasises the crucial role of listening to perspectives
in a non-judgemental way and facilitating new understandings of other groups.
Similarly, Reychler (2001) finds clear connections between 'in-group' dialogue
and non-judgemental listening that encourage people to address stereotypes and
the importance of such strategies in conflict de-escalation. This analysis suggests a
theoretical and practice-based endorsement of the concept of SSD.

How was the dialogue process developed and what did it look like?

Against this background the CDP began to develop and implement a method of
intra-community dialogue SSD, in a process where personal values came together
with learning and practical action. One interviewee remarked, 'We're dealing with
something at a strategic level, at a practice level and it's also intensely personal. …
That gives it energy.'

The focus of development was the consortium of dialogue facilitators where members
with Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and atheist perspectives met to reflect on and
learn for live experience. The SSD groups that gave rise to this experience comprised
nine groups involving 98 participants who met in specially convened or already

established groups. Four of the groups were Christian-faith focused and five were atheist, although they used church buildings. From the outset SSD took place in white communities. Whilst the CDP sought opportunities for activity with other faith groups in the words of one interviewee, 'We should be targeting people in danger of voting for the BNP – Muslim people are not in danger of voting for the BNP.'

Each group provided a different experience that was captured through reflective facilitator analysis and learning explored in consortium meetings. Key features of this learning placed emphasis on empathy, starting from where people are, and working within the unique identity and cultural context of each SSD group. Starting from a group's position, their view of the world and their narrative of their community proved essential in facilitators' developing a relationship with participants that enabled difficult conversations to progress towards an outcome. Exploring personal participant experiences of discrimination and prejudice was found to provide valuable insights for an SSD group discussion in relation to how others also experience hurtful discrimination. One facilitator encapsulated the approach as follows:

> The starting point is a presupposition that when there are fixed views, that is, a pattern that is relatively stable over time – for example, that a particular social group is the problem – then [dialogue facilitation can] 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.

In conjunction with the outcomes of the facilitators' dialogue consortium, eight interviews with SSD participants provided further formative data. One SSD participant felt sessions had built on their experience of working with other communities and that for other members of their dialogue group, who had not had such experience, the sessions had a similar positive impact. Another participant was already committed to addressing prejudice and described examples of doing this as they went about their daily life, since the SSD session. A further participant said sessions had reinforced their view that the subject matter was one of importance for their community and that people had been prepared to meet and discuss the matter reflected a similar priority of views in their group. However, this participant expressed disappointment that sessions had not gone further. One interviewee said the experience had made them more aware of prejudice, particularly in the media, and a further participant thought they understood prejudice better, how it could work 'in them' and that they had developed a practical strategy to respond to racism and prejudice as a result of the dialogue session. This participant believed that both for them, and their group, the experience had given a greater understanding of and commitment to challenge prejudice.

However, evaluations were not universally positive. Whilst 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 commented that sessions would have been improved if there had been more emphasis on practical strategies to address racism and prejudice. One participant believed CDP aims and objectives had not been achieved because in their view the sessions failed to explore issues in sufficient depth. Whilst most participants were not distressed or anxious, before, during, or after the dialogue session, two participants engaging with the CDP felt it had caused distress that reverberated for some time. Their dialogue group 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 participants, appeared steeped in denial that any element of this phenomenon was present in their group or community. This provided important learning in relation to ensuring that permission to work with a group was freely given and that communities were not labelled as racist – a process of stereotyping the CDP aimed to counter.

The Intra Community Dialogue Framework

The intra-community dialogue process may be transferable to different settings. It is not a prescriptive formula but has a strong resonance with elements of person-centred work described by Rogers (1986). In dialogue situations where qualities of respect, empathy, warmth, and immediacy are assessed as relevant, the approach may be useful. The framework can be understood as having two stages: stage 1 involved working with individuals and groups to seek out opportunities for dialogue; stage 2 could then be followed over several sessions. Stage 2 involved an introductory phase, a dialogue element, a reflective phase, and a concluding session focusing on outcomes including whether people might act differently towards outsiders in the future. Here, the stages are considered in relation to the study findings.

Introductory Phase

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 began when people felt safe in being able to look at their feelings in relation to difference and antipathy towards others. A non-

judgmental approach, whilst challenging views when relevant, was found to be a key ingredient of effectiveness. 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.

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.

Dialogue Session 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.

Facilitator skills

Research identified a range of skills required by SSD facilitators. Some are common to all group-work situations; for example, skills in joint working, communication and co-facilitation were crucial. 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. In some groups, facilitators were required to have skills and knowledge in applying aspects of theology relevant to issues of prejudice and stereotyping. In all groups, facilitators required a working knowledge of, and skills in, understanding and working with concepts of racism and prejudice. In addition, a subset of skills were identified that included 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, and harnessing the impact of personal experience of prejudice, usually in relation to class, gender or disability.

How does Conflict Resolution Theory Explain ERW Momentum in South Yorkshire?

Azar (1990) emphasises the importance of cultural identity and access to resources to meet basic needs as critical factors in groups' developing of animosity towards outsiders. This research found that the traditional cultures and way of life of many people in villages and towns have been profoundly affected by industrial decline and change. Some communities are marooned in surroundings dominated by industrial dereliction and decay. Associated with loss of culture and consistency surrounding traditional employment are strong feelings of loss and bewilderment centred on change that was neither sought nor consulted upon. This decline has eaten into the cultural composition of communities and is particularly evident in the decay of institutions such as trade unions and working men's clubs. These institutions had enabled communities to interact with each other and linked them with the Labour Party and some political influence.

This sense of being ignored is allied with communities scoring significantly above the UK national average in economic, social and health deprivation that undermines the capacity of individuals and communities to meet their basic needs. High levels of unemployment and lower than average job ratios for people of working age are common for a majority of the population in each of the principal towns who live in the most deprived areas (NOMIS 2013). In some parts of the locality significant numbers of children are living in poverty and life expectancy for men is on average nine years less, and for women eight years less than in more prosperous areas (Public Health Observatory 2013).

Based on this analysis there appears to be evidence of unmet need and resource insecurity that would add to concerns arising from identity-based antipathy. Allied with this is a sense of exclusion from the levers of influence, a factor Azar (1990) believes is critical in precipitating PSC. However, interlaced with hostility towards outsiders and the challenges of meeting basic needs is a narrative discernible in many conversations that occur when people are invited to talk about their community.

Within a few moments, discussion will often focus on hurt, resentment, and deep feelings of unresolved grievance that arose from the 1984–1985 strike by miners. One SSD summed up the consequences of the win-lose conclusion of this industrial conflict with communities remaining bitterly divided: 'There are people who don't speak to each other because they went back to work. There are massive feuds between people because of that.' Another participant remarked: 'This village was wonderful until the miners' strike, and everything went downhill after that.'

For many communities this industrial conflict and the manner of its resolution remains a live and bitter experience in the culture, day-to-day lives, conversations, and expectations of communities. Peace-building theory and practice underline the danger for long-term cohesion of terminating conflict with an imposed win-lose situation leaving unresolved resentment and hostility in the triumphalist wake of the victor (Ramsbotham et al. 2005). Lederach (2005) argues the enduring consequences of such a solution: 'The past was alive and kept showing up on the doorstep of constructive change' (Lederach 2005, 138).

The sense of grievance arising from this bitter conflict remains a powerful force, adding to a collective sense of exclusion from the levers of influence and resentment that resources are distributed unfairly and to the disadvantage of local communities. Communities with a sense of exclusion, struggling to meet their needs, bypassed by the New Labour economic boom, and with a strong sense of 'the outsider' were looking for somebody to blame. The developing CDP approach reflected a belief amongst project founders that people were increasingly turning towards 'them' – Muslims, migrants, Gypsies – as the perpetrators of their discontent and that they found there was little opportunity to talk about their fears, felt inhibited in doing so, and feared opening themselves up to accusations of racism if they did. By contrast, ERW groups had no compunction in encouraging such discussion and exploiting subsequent divisiveness.

The Role of Faith in the Development of the CDP and the Dialogue Process

The CDP's inception built on a stand taken by South Yorkshire faith leaders during 2009 in publicly opposing the BNP (Carnelley 2009). This interfaith civic leadership was critical in CDP inception and interviews and was regularly referred to by CDP committee members and staff as a stimulus for persevering in addressing a complex challenge. Those engaged in many forms of partnership working will recognise the need for leadership of the sort presented by the faith leaders as an essential ingredient for success. In this context the high-profile position adopted by faith leaders modelled values of tolerance and coexistence in a climate where political ambition and hostility were prominent ingredients.

The CDP's vision of a resilient, interconnected society was evident and modelled through the CDP Management Committee and in the project ethos and culture. Made up of Anglican, Methodist, Muslim, Jewish, Catholic, and Buddhist perspectives, the group represented a spectrum of faiths that in other places face each other from positions of hostility and violence. On one level the extent of 'connectedness' was evident in the way the group addressed many of the challenges that are familiar elements of partnership working such as governance, priorities, roles, processes, and uncharted learning.

However, interviews found that individual faith values were critical in sustaining personal motivation that fed into the 'connectedness' underpinning progress. These individual values were evident in perspectives articulating a commitment to social justice, concerns about deprivation and the poor self-image of some communities. The comment of one interviewee encapsulated a commonly held position:

> 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.

Allied to such values was a clearer faith-based desire to find and build common faith ground evident in one participant's comment that 'in major faiths like Islam and Christianity there is common ground, values and principles … if we work from there – from the human aspects rather than say Christianity says this – because Christianity saying "Be kind to your neighbour" is exactly the same in Islam.' Another interviewee commented, '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.'

However, what appeared significant was that this search for common ground also had a clear objective. This involved challenging the strategies of extreme and radical right-wing groups that had been observed to be adopting religious identity as a way of forming relationships with communities and building difference and hostility towards 'outsiders'. A number of participants expressed fears that such groups, in a search for a more 'respectable' form of racism, were using Christian identity as a platform from which to develop their affinity with communities so as to build and exacerbate hostility towards easily identifiable outsiders, such as Muslims. One dialogue participant living in a community where extreme and radical right-wing groups were active may well have reflected the effectiveness of this strategy when they commented, '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.'

This suggests that the role of faith in public life has the potential to introduce new categories of 'otherness' (Dinham et al. 2009). However, the research findings offer a counterpoint to this position where faith, belief, a commitment to social justice, and a concern to resist faith becoming used as a badge of hostility that jarred with personal values were harnessed to resist intolerance and aggressive doctrinaire narratives. Rather the CDP can be seen to reflect Scott-Appleby's (2000) description of faith in 'bottom-up' peace building that does not undermine confessional ties

but promotes 'forgiveness and reconciliation rather than … the nourishing of grievances' (Scott-Appleby 2000, 173).

Conclusion

The dialogue process identified through this research consists of a two-stage model with clear aims and principles. The dialogue stage comprises five distinct but overlapping elements and requires knowledge and experience of a skill set for its implementation. The dialogue process described has the potential for development and transferability in settings where people who are locked in tensions and animosity cannot, will not, or are not ready to meet with 'outsiders', and where hostility is exploited by others.

The study has argued that ERW groups draw on disaffection with mainstream political parties and exclusion of deprived communities from influence. A decline in traditional employment and associated culture has limited the capacity of people and communities to meet their needs, both in relation to basic resources and for individual and group esteem. It is suggested that the aftermath of industrial conflict remains an embedded and unresolved grievance.

The study also found that faith through leadership, interfaith cooperation, and interventions focused on social justice and community engagement brought faith-values into a secular, politically contentious realm and made an innovative and practical contribution in a complex field. The level of interfaith cooperation was of a high order and brought about good quality governance and a dialogue process developed through sophisticated and productive learning arrangements. However, given the small-scale nature of the CDP, its impact across the locality is likely to be limited. Whilst exploration of similar initiatives and resources was outside the remit of this research, and might arguably merit further study, the CDP impresses as a lonely figure on an increasingly hostile landscape. This should be of concern to social cohesion strategists and planners.

However, two aspects of learning stand out that are relevant to the intra-community dialogue process. First, telling individuals and groups that their views were pejorative did nothing to stimulate an alternative view of 'the other'. Rather it was more likely to enhance alienation and feelings of poor self-esteem. In the research context people could keep quiet if they felt unfairly challenged. Second, participants commonly experienced personal prejudice in relation to age, gender, disability, and especially class and community. Exploring their personal experience of hurtful stereotyping gave important insight into how others might experience prejudice and hostility on the basis of race or religion.

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