

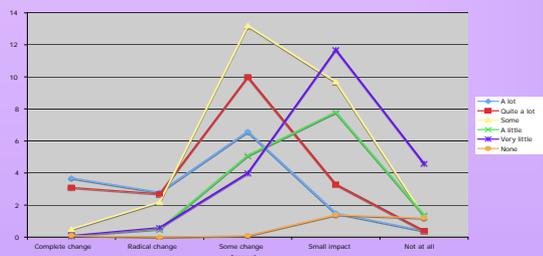
Community Violence in Northern Ireland: Categorisation of Services and Therapies for People Affected by Violence

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

Background

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

Impact of the Troubles by Individuals' Experience



(Adapted from Morrissey & Smyth, 2002, p 121)

Categorisation of Services



References

Dillenburg, K. & Keenan, M. (2001). Islands of Pain in a Sea of Change: Behaviour Analysis and Bereavement. *European Journal of Behaviour Analysis*, 2, 187-207.

Fay, M. T., Morrissey, M., Smyth, M. (1999). *Northern Ireland's Troubles. The Human Costs*. London: Pluto Press.

Morrissey, M & Smith, M. (2002). *Northern Ireland After the Good Friday Agreement. Victims, Grievance and Blame*. London: Pluto Press.

Smyth, M. (2001). The 'discovery' and treatment of trauma. In Hamber, B., Kulle, D., Wilson, R. (Eds), *Future policies for the past, (Report No. 13)*, pp. 57-65. Belfast: Democratic Dialogue.

Aims of Research

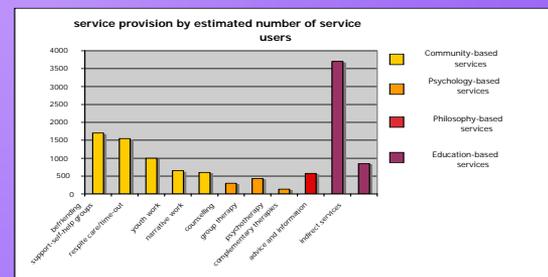
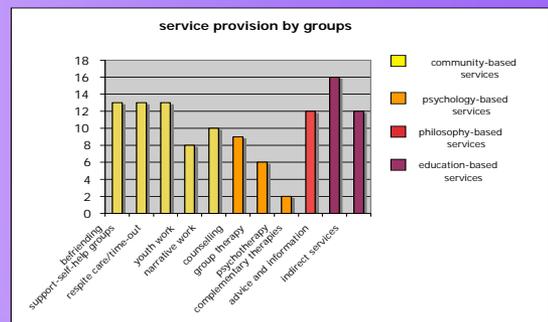
- The establishment of a comprehensive and detailed overview and categorisation of therapeutic services offered to people affected by violence in Northern Ireland;
- To explore the effectiveness of some of the most commonly used therapeutic services in regard to achieving their set aims/goals.

Method and Procedure

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

Service Provision in Northern Ireland

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



Conclusion

- Community-based services are the most offered interventions, and “can prove less stigmatising and more empowering” (Smyth, 2001, p. 63) than psychology-based services, such as psychotherapy.
- Social support is a key element when coping with traumatic experiences.
- Most people need community and family support and contact networks, as they provide protection from psychological distress.
- Education-based services, are greatly used by members of most of the groups.
- Complementary therapies are growing in popularity and are often asked for.
- Within psychology-based interventions, counselling is the service most offered. Some groups refer their members to outside counsellors or professional psychotherapists.
- There is still no clear evidence of the benefits of those interventions in the Northern Irish context.
- The rise of these groups that we surveyed is developing into a thriving *victims industry* and the need for evidence of effectiveness of the services that they are offering is undeniable.