Music Education for Cross-Community Integration in Northern Ireland

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Aim

- **To offer some thoughts on music education as a tool for social inclusion, with an example and implications for future research**

Background of research area (Creech et al, 2014; Odena, 2010, 2018)

- **Power of music to affect human beings, e.g. marketing, psychotherapy, community studies, music psychology**

Example from Northern Ireland (NI)

- ***Practitioners' views on cross-community music education projects in NI*** **(Odena, 2010)**

- **Aimed at exploring how to develop music skills while bringing children from both main communities together**

- **NI background: *de facto* segregated system**

  - ◆ **1 - Music as a sign of identity: Catholic vs Protestant**

  - ◆ **2 - Music as means to reduce cross-community anxiety, e.g. orchestras and school projects**

The troubles in NI

3.700 deaths

segregation

post-conflict society
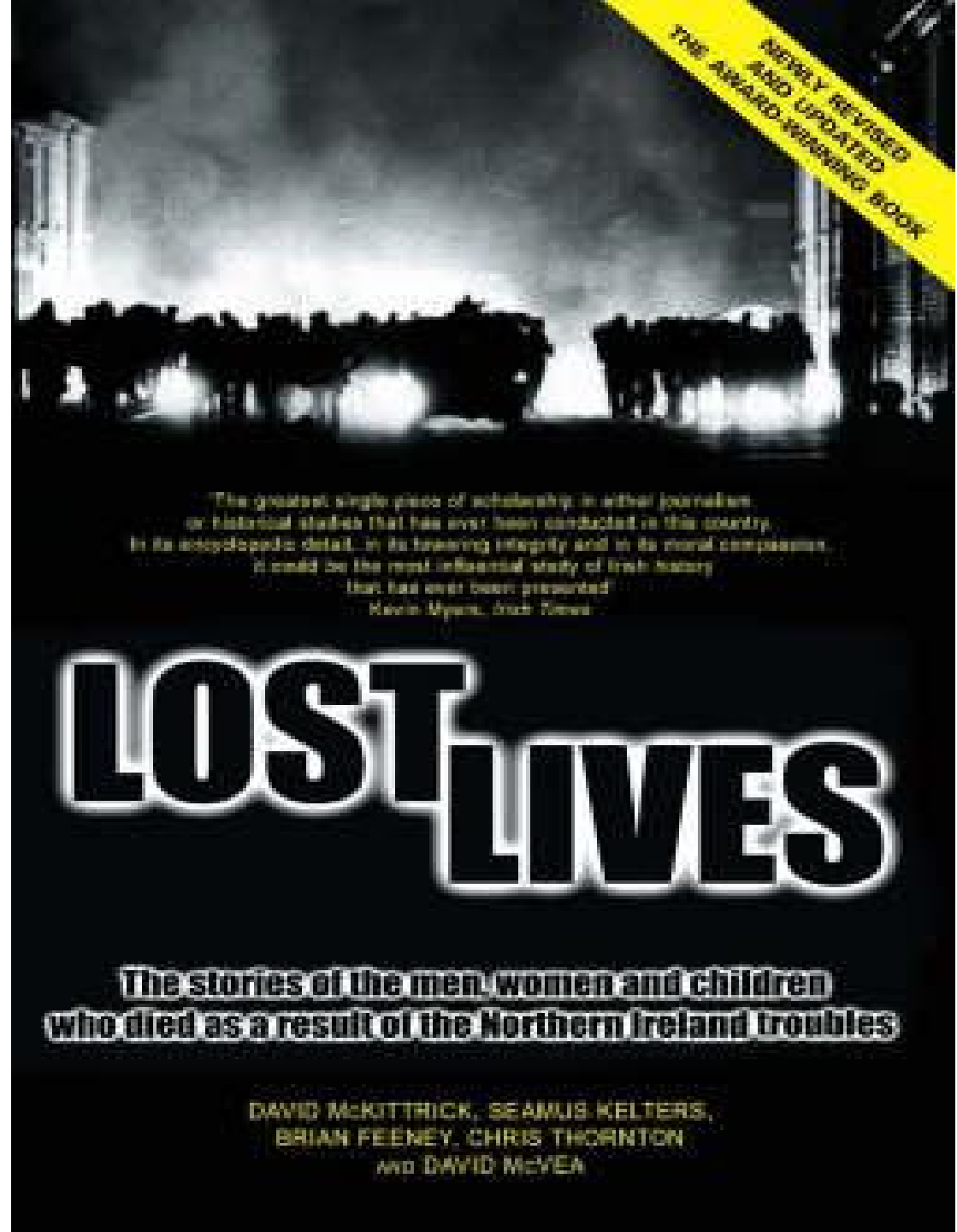
Methodology

- **Lit. review & in-depth interviews with 14 key informants, including from HE, secondary, primary and nursery, Integrated and denominational settings (maximum variation purposive sampling)**
  - **Questions around: own musical background; work; music and music education in NI; project advice.**

- **Thematic analysis of 216 pages of transcripts using specialist software for qualitative data analysis (NVivo)**

- **13 categories emerged; the following four were most relevant across interviewees:**

  - ***Stereotypes and alienation, Socio-economic factors, Project advice, and Music education potential***

Table 1: Transcript appearances of the four main categories

Category	Number of quotations categorised	Number of interviewees
'Project advice'	51 (16 in subcategory 'Barriers for cross-community education')	14 of 14
'Music education potential'	29	14 of 14
'Stereotypes and alienation'	23	10 of 14
'Socio-economic factors'	12	8 of 14

Some pictures of the two main traditions…

Quotations: *'Music as a sign of identity'*

- *The historical background of brass bands is in the British military system…they tend to attract more Protestants; similarly Irish traditional music is part of the folk culture of the Catholics.*

- *Flute bands petrify me because to me they signify the Twelfth of July and marching...for many it's a very appropriate way of being part of the community, but it still frightens me because it's an alien culture.*

- *Like any stereotype, once you start to dig into it, you see that that's not the case, but music has been used as a weapon to sort of define communities…it's like gang mentality.*

'Socio-economic factors'

- **Participants acknowledged their views were influenced by their upbringing**

- **The normalization and slow disappearance of segregation in more affluent areas brought with it a wealth of (*de facto* cross-community) music and music education activities:**

  - ◆ *It works on the professional level and the leafy green suburbs...and to a certain extent in grammar schools*

- **But cultural alienation remained in poorer areas**

'Project advice'

- **Practical activities: singing and composing regarded as ideal to engage all children: '*that's when they get interested…when they're getting involved in actually doing rather than listening or just watching'*.**

- **Consensus to ignore any type of music that could be related to two main communities (except Integrated schools & affluent areas)**

- **Non-competitive activities, e.g. *Music Makers*, an innovative series of music workshops for all schools (which consequently brings together children who would not normally meet)...**

- **Barriers for cross-community music projects:**
  - **School teachers' insecurities**
  - **The 'extra work' involved**
  - **Insufficient funding for transport**
  - **Reluctance of parents in more polarised neighbourhoods**
  - **...and some school Principals were curiously perceived as obstacles too:**
    - *A number of Principals do not understand the value of Music; [they] see it as getting in the way of teaching English, Maths and Science.*

'Music education potential'

- **Schools with good music reputation attracted parents regardless of their denomination (arguably in more affluent areas)**

- **Nevertheless, the potential to develop music skills while bringing children together regardless of area was acknowledged in many positive experiences:**

  - ◆ *[Music] is a superb tool for encouraging children to work together…they throw themselves into it wholeheartedly and are quite prepared to work with other people in doing that.*

  - ◆ *They can inspire people like no other group of people can.*

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Inter-group Contact Theory as framework

- **Pettigrew (1998) proposes 3 stages to reduce conflict between communities:**

- **(a) <u>Initial contact</u>: more anxiety; emphasis on personal identity and inter-personal interaction (in an effort to 'de-categorise' the individual);**

- **(b) <u>Contact well established</u>: with less anxiety, the old categorization of belonging to a particular group is highlighted, resulting in weakened prejudices that are generalised beyond the activity;**

- **(c) <u>Final stage</u>: after extended contact, individuals begin to think of themselves as part of a redefined new larger group that comprises all communities (development of the idea of a new community, or a 're-categorisation' of the old ones).**

- **SOME IMPLICATIONS:**

- **Analyses illustrate the need for:**
  - ◆ **Schools/institutions to get involved in project design**
  - ◆ **Provision of CPD and appropriate funding**
  - ◆ **Focus on deprived areas**

- **Focussing on young children appears to maximise impact: participants remembered 1st time coming across youngsters from across the divide = diluted stereotypes**

- **In post-conflict areas in NI with on-going tensions, projects would need to entice children (fun), parents (quality) and schools (status), focussing on quality (with 'respect' to develop naturally)**

References

- **Creech, A., González-Moreno, P., Lorenzino, L. & Waitman, G. (2014). 'El Sistema and Sistema-inspired programmes: principles and practices'. In O. Odena and S. Figueiredo (Eds.),** *Proceedings of the 25th International Seminar of the ISME Commission on Research, João Pessoa, Brazil* **(pp. 77-97). Malvern, Australia: International Society for Music Education.**

- **Odena, O. (2010) Practitioners' views on cross-community music education projects in Northern Ireland: alienation, socio-economic factors and educational potential,** *British Educational Research Journal*, *36*(1), 83-105.

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References

- **Odena (2018) 'The power of musical creativity for cross-community integration'. In O. Odena, *Musical Creativity Revisited: Educational Foundations, Practices and Research* (pp. 80-104). Abingdon: Routledge.**

- **Pettigrew, T. F. (1998) Intergroup contact theory, *Annual Review of Psychology, 49*, 65-85.**