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Fox or Hedgehog:

Alternative Approaches to

Children Affected by War and

Forced Migration

by David Kenneth Tolfree

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Department of Social Work Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences

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“The fox has many ideas but the hedgehog has one big idea”

An ancient Greek saying

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES: DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK STUDIES

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FOX OR HEDGEHOG: ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO CHILDREN AFFECTED BY WAR OR FORCED MIGRATION

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Recent conflicts and refugee emergencies have attracted a growing interest from international agencies wanting to impact on the psychological effects of war and displacement on both adults and children. The concept of post traumatic stress disorder and 'trauma counselling' continue to be the predominant discourse: however, there is a growing number of programmes which are based on alternative paradigms and which, in various ways, move away from clinical approaches based on western psychology and psychiatry. Few such programmes have been documented or analysed.

This study is an attempt to examine a range of alternative approaches. A case study is compiled of each project, using mainly ethnographic methods, and the analysis of the seven case studies identifies a range of key issues. Of foundational importance is the need to understand and respect the culture of the people concerned; to explore with them how they experience the effects of conflict and displacement; and to identify, support and build on existing cultural practices and coping mechanisms. A significant finding is that people tend to draw attention not to their inner psychological worlds but to the totality of their social, physical, economic and spiritual environment: this leads to a broad conclusion that the most appropriate, and the most cost-effective approaches are likely to consist of social development strategies which address a range of problems identified by the people themselves as priorities, and not split off specific aspects of their past experience for treatment. The study rejects the idea of universal prescriptions, arguing for a pluralist approach which builds on local knowledge, traditions and resources as well as drawing on relevant western knowledge. Participation emerges as a key theme.

The vital role of the family in helping to mitigate the worst psycho-social effects of war emerges clearly: this suggests that children who become separated from their families need to receive urgent priority, and some of the case studies raise crucial issues regarding care arrangements, programmes to trace their families and strategies to prevent further separations. Some of these are not being addressed in theory, practice or research. The role of schools and of teachers in contributing to the psycho-social well-being of children is examined, and a seven-point analysis emerges.

Several of the case studies reveal an extraordinary capacity on the part of children to cope with extremely adverse circumstances. Western constructions of childhood may tend to belie the resilience of children in other cultural contexts, and the importance of acknowledging children's agency is recognised. This leads to a conclusion that children may be exercising active agency in developing coping mechanisms, and may need to be seen as active participants in programme planning, not as passive beneficiaries or patients.

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The study examines the work of seven programmes drawn from many different countries: it would not have been possible without their cooperation, their openness and their willingness to expose their work to outside scrutiny. Again their agreement on the material being used for this thesis is gratefully acknowledged.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Acisam	Association for Training and Research in Mental Health
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Community Services Officer
DSM	Diagnostic Statistical Manual
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Organisation
Ed	Editor
FMLN	Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front
FRY	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
ICCB	International Catholic Child Bureau
ICRC	International Committee for the Red Cross
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NVCT	National Children and Violence Trust
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
SCF	Save the Children Fund
TBA	Traditional Birth Attendant
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organisation

Chapter 1: General Introduction

In a refugee camp for displaced Mozambicans in Malawi, a Save the Children project worker observed an older boy who was throwing stones at children emerging from the camp pre-school. Surprised by this culturally uncharacteristic show of unprovoked aggression, he followed the boy back to the hut where he was living. The project worker was able to engage in a constructive discussion with the boy and his carers, and the story that emerged helped to explain the behaviour that had been observed.

He was about 5 years old when the Renamo guerillas attacked his village, killing people indiscriminately, burning houses and taking captives. The boy was held by soldiers and forced to watch his parents first being killed and then being dismembered.

A soldier then asked this distraught and confused boy if he would like to talk to his parents: of course he said that he would, and was then forced, at gunpoint, to reach into the mutilated body of his mother and pull out the intestines, take them to his mouth and ear and speak to his parents as though on the telephone.

The boy somehow managed to escape from the soldiers, and eventually met up with an uncle who took him into his family: walking for several nights (resting and hiding during the day) they eventually reached the safety of neighbouring Malawi.

For the past four years they lived in a large refugee camp in a remote part of Malawi. He had no contact with his siblings. His new family had no opportunities for economic self-sufficiency, relying on minimal handouts; they had no choice but to remain in this impoverished and dependency-creating environment until circumstances in their own country might allow their safe return.

This story[1] is recounted, not to sensationalise or dramatise, but to begin this study with an illustration of the kind of extreme violence which children may experience as a result of modern warfare. It also illustrates the importance of understanding the impact of traumatic events within the current context in which children are living - in this case, the child's continuing separation from his family and the many constraints imposed by the reality of a refugee camp.

It is only in recent years that relief and development agencies have seriously considered projects which impact on the psycho-social well-being[2] of children (and adults) who have been affected by their experiences of war and displacement. Indeed, until recently the idea would have been considered an inappropriate use of scarce resources, and that the only priority was to sustain physical life and ensure political protection for refuges. The child whose story is depicted above was being supported by his extended family but he, and they, received no form of psychological help: he did not even attend school.

Beginning the thesis with a practical illustration serves to emphasise the principal objective of the research, which is to examine practical and realistic ways of intervening in the lives of children, within their particular cultural environment, and not just to explore how their lives are affected by their experiences.

Why was this topic chosen for a research degree? There were two main reasons for wanting to study the subject, one professional and one more personal. **The professional reason** concerns the strong misgivings, both about the relative neglect in practice of this area of professional concern, and about the way in which the now growing number of projects in this area are based on individualised treatment approaches derived from research in the industrialised countries of the north. Many pay scant regard to the culture of the people concerned, and do not consider alternative paradigms. There is an abundance of universalist assumptions about child development, and in particular about the impact of

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[1] Personal experience in Malawi, 1990

[2] Please see discussion of terminology in section 2.2 below.

traumatic events on children's development, and an uncritical adoption of western approaches to treatment which ignore cultural norms and existing beliefs and practices about the nature of personal problems (however constructed) and the nature of healing.

The more personal reason is that the researcher lived and worked in Vietnam during the final stages of the civil war there. Two observations from this experience have been pre-occupying for the last twenty-five years: first, the observation that the huge numbers of children who had become orphaned and separated from their families, and in many cases placed in the most appalling institutions, seemed not to have been psychologically affected in the way and to the degree that research in the west would lead one to expect. The second is that children experienced the most unimaginable horrors, from the effects of napalm or Agent Orange to sudden family and community upheaval, from witnessing killings and torture to being maimed by landmines. But at that time, the issue of the psychological effects of such experiences were rarely discussed in professional circles: was it that this was not seen as a topic of concern to the people themselves, or was it too low on the priority of people concerned primarily to ensure the physical survival of the affected population?

An ambition to study these two themes lay dormant for many years, but eventually an opportunity arose to explore, in detail, issues of separation and institutionalisation in the developing world (Tolfree 1994), and then in 1994 an approach was received to undertake a study of different approaches to the needs of children who were psychologically affected by war and displacement. This work, undertaken for Rädda Barnen (the Swedish Save the Children), also resulted in a published book (Tolfree 1996), but at the outset, permission was secured to use the material for this thesis. The fieldwork was undertaken with these two outputs in mind, and for the purposes of the thesis, a great deal of tape-recorded material was collected.

In an ideal world, the research for the thesis would have been done separately from the study contracted by Rädda Barnen: however, issues of gaining access to the highly politicised environment of refugee camps, to some other politically sensitive projects, and more generally to regions affected by war, are complex. Moreover, researching in remote and

logistically difficult areas of developing countries as an independent and individual researcher present almost insuperable problems. Hence the decision to use the opportunity of the Rädda Barnen study to generate material for a thesis provided the only feasible route to studying this topic for a higher degree. These issues will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Before beginning a review of the literature, a brief description of the aims of the study will be given. In choosing to examine the issue of the effects of war and displacement on children, the intention was to move beyond developing an understanding of how children are affected to the more difficult area of what kind of interventions are possible and appropriate. The literature provides ample reason for questioning much of the current practice but gives only limited direction to how more culturally-appropriate strategies might be developed. Nevertheless, it was Rädda Barnen's experience that there are many examples of alternative approaches, almost none of which have been written up. To find few analytical or theoretical explanations of the rationale of projects was not unexpected: what was wholly surprising is that many imaginative and innovative projects had not even produced descriptive accounts of their work.

Fortunately, what Rädda Barnen required of the research was broadly similar to the researcher's aspirations for the higher degree, though there are obvious differences in the readership and in the orientation of the outputs. Essentially the agency requirement was for a bottom-up approach to critically examine some different examples of project strategy. Seven projects were identified as the main research sites, and taking a case study approach, each one was to be examined, using a broadly ethnographic approach. The required output was for an extended report (eventually published as a book) which describes the various approaches taken by the projects, examines their rationale, and discusses the various issues to emerge from a comparative analysis of them. It was required to be produced in a form accessible to a non-specialist readership. In using the research material for the purpose of a higher degree, a more theoretical approach will be taken. The debate will take the reader into the area which is transected by psychology, psychiatry, sociology, social work and anthropology, and when these disciplines are combined some interesting questions are raised: for example, can we talk of universalism in child development? Is childhood to be

understood only in biological and psychological terms, or in cultural as well? How is illness, and more specifically, what in the west would be described as psychological illness conceived in different cultures and what are the implications of this for healing?

Chapter 2: A Critical Review of The Literature

This chapter will not only review the literature, but will attempt to analyse it critically. An analytical approach is taken because this study is founded on a strong sense of dissatisfaction with the theoretical constructions which are currently most prevalent in the field. Hence it is important to indicate what those objections are. First, however, it is worth noting the diversity of analytical frameworks, and some of the confusions surrounding the terminology commonly used.

2.1 The Diversity of Analytical Frameworks

The dominant disciplines in the examination of human reactions to the stressful experience of war and displacement are those of psychology and psychiatry. Many researchers and practitioners still adhere to categorisations based on the American Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM-lllR - which will be explained more fully on page 15) with insights drawn from psychology and psychoanalysis. In addition, however, there is a growing interest in the social aspects of the issue, with sociology and social work making a contribution. There is also an increasingly important contribution from anthropology, and it is from this discipline that a few researchers now assert the severe limitations of the positivist paradigms of medicine and psychology (see, for example, Muecke (1992)).

Before examining some of these analytical frameworks, however it is necessary to include a discussion of some of the terminology used in the literature.

2.2 A Note on Terminology

The literature tends to use terms such as "stress" and "trauma" in a very confusing way (Richman 1993a). Trauma, for example, literally means "morbid condition of body produced by wound or external violence"[3], but is frequently used to describe the **event** or events which have a traumatic effect rather than the **effect** itself, despite the fact that is clear that frightening or dangerous experiences do not lead automatically to any particular human

[3] Concise Oxford Dictionary

reactions. Trauma is not destiny: some war-affected children can and do cope with extreme forms of adversity, while others may be psychologically overwhelmed by it. Throughout this thesis, words such as "trauma" and "stress" will be used in the strict sense of the person's reactions to events. The term "traumatic events" will be used to describe a wide range of situations that are **likely** to be experienced by people as having a traumatising effect, but without the implication that all such events will necessarily have a predictable impact on affect or behaviour.

One of the dilemmas experienced in writing this thesis was whether to avoid terms such as "psychological" and "psycho-social" which, it may be argued, serve to perpetuate western, modernist constructions. The term may also tend to imply the Cartesian distinction between body and mind which may not be valid in some societies. Some writers use terms such as "personal well-being" or "wellness". It was decided that, given the readership of this work, it would have been inappropriate and clumsy to assiduously avoid terminology derived from western psychology: at the same time it is important to emphasise that care needs to be taken to understand how people construct the meanings of events they have experienced and to carefully avoid imposing assumptions derived from western experience and theoretical constructions.

2.3 The Direct and Indirect Effects of War and Displacement

Before examining the literature on the psychological effects of war on children, it may be helpful to depict the broader context of armed conflict and the ways in which it impacts on civilian populations generally and children specifically.

The latter half of the twentieth century has seen huge changes in the nature of warfare. Images of "set-piece" battles involving armies of tanks and infantry have been largely replaced by guerilla warfare involving seemingly random destruction of life and property and the use of terror as a weapon.

The most significant consequences in the change in the nature of warfare are, firstly, that civilians have become the main casualties: in many recent conflicts (for example, in

Mozambique, Angola, El Salvador and Kosovo), civilians have been deliberately targeted, with guerillas using terror as a strategy. Moreover, food and medical assistance (and their destruction) have been used as weapons of war. Richman (1993b) estimates that civilian casualties are typically three times those of combatants. Dodge and Raundalen (1991) estimate that there have been in excess of 1.8 million casualties from wars within Africa between 1970 and 1987: 92% were estimated to be of civilians. UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, estimate that 2 million children have died during war in the last 10 years and that a further 4 or 5 million have been disabled or wounded, 1 million separated from their parents or orphaned and 1 million made homeless (UNICEF 1996a). The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR1994) estimates a total of 27.4 million refugees[4] or "persons of concern to UNHCR", and there is a yet larger number of internally displaced people: more than half of these numbers are children.

Second, modern weapons have become widespread, including those designed specifically to inflict maximum mortality and morbidity on to civilians: these include, for example, land mines, fragmentation bombs and chemical weapons such as poison gas and napalm.

Third, children themselves have been increasingly involved as political activists (as in South Africa and Palestine) and as child soldiers in actual combat, or as messengers, porters and general assistants to soldiers[5].

Fourth, modern wars have often involved a strategy of deliberate destruction of physical and social structures. In Cambodia, for example, the entire fabric of family life was targeted by Pol Pot, while in Mozabique, physical infrastructure such as hospitals and schools were deliberately destroyed. In El Salvador, many health workers simply "disappeared". The destruction of social and cultural institutions has also been a feature of some conflicts: in

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[4] The term "refugees" is generally understood in legal terms as persons seeking refuge outside of their own country and therefore requiring international protection in accordance with UNHCR's mandate.

[5] Because of the specific issues concerning child soldiers, this large subject is beyond the scope of this work.

Turkey, for example, the Kurdish language and culture has been suppressed, while in the former Yugoslavia, places of worship were intentionally destroyed. In Guatemala, the burning of crops signified not just the destruction of livelihood but an attack on the symbols which reflected the Mayan collective identity as "people of the maize" (Lykes 1994).

Fifth, the circumstances of war may inhibit various traditional ways of coping: for example, in Guatemala to mention the names of victims would have been construed as subversive, imposing on grieving people the need for silence. Another example which emerged from fieldwork for this study in El Salvador is that the notions of "community development" and "organisation" were strictly forbidden because of its supposed political overtones.

Finally, the vast majority of wars in the last five decades have occurred in the developing countries of the south, in which a disproportionate amount of the country's wealth has been invested in imported armaments rather than much-needed services in areas such as health, education and social services.

For all of these reasons, civilian populations have been more profoundly affected than before: the war in Bosnia demonstrated the political gains that could be made by ethnic cleansing and the targeting of civilians. Children have been particularly adversely affected. In Rwanda, radio broadcasts actually incited people to target children for genocidal killings. It should be remembered that in many developing countries, children up to the age of 15 form half of the population. Oakley, P. (1995) suggests that children are the main victims of the widespread violence affecting many countries in Latin America. Hence there has been a growing interest in conducting research into the ways in which children are affected by war. An added impetus for research in this area has been the high visibility of conflicts: from the Vietnam war onwards, the dramatic and catastrophic effects of war on children have been brought into people's living rooms by television, leading to a sense of moral outrage which in turn has made funding of this area more widespread. However, research into ways in which appropriate responses to their needs can be developed has been relatively neglected.

The direct effects of war on children are considered here to be those which result from

actual fighting: these include, for example, death and injury from gunfire, shelling, bombing or mines: in the Vietnam war, for example, there were estimated to be about one million civilian casualties (Goldson 1993) while in Palestine it is estimated that more than 50,000 children (about 1 in 20 of all Palestinian children) were seriously injured, despite the "low intensity" nature of this conflict. Psychological reactions may be the result of both direct experiences (for example, witnessing a parent being killed) or indirect (for example, resulting from separation from parents): these will be discussed below.

The indirect effects of war on children can also be extremely serious and far-reaching. Severe under-nutrition is an almost universal consequence of conflict: decreases in birth-weigh and perinatal and neonatal mortality, and increase in infectious diseases are also widespread. Family and community disruption has also been extremely widespread: in Mozambique, for example, the war left an estimated 200,000 orphaned and otherwise unaccompanied children (Garbarino et al. 1991). Athey and Ahearn (1991) describe loss as a defining characteristic of refugees: apart from the loss of parents on the part of many children, refugee children, by definition, are experiencing loss of familiar people, places, things, their home, school and so on, and, to a degree, their community and culture. Refugee camps, while (usually) providing safety and at least some measure of physical security, bring with them a range of severe deprivations, especially when located in countries whose meagre resources can easily be overwhelmed by large influxes of refugees: these include minimal and repetitive diets, lack of adequate water, sanitation and health care, lack of opportunities for school and recreation and the subsequent sense of boredom, and lack of opportunities for adults to earn money or grow food. Equally serious may be the constant uncertainty and anxiety about the future, sometimes compounded by negative attitudes towards refugees on the part of local people. Perhaps most significantly of all, people have to contend with the loss of their previous community and the destruction of social networks, and in many refugee camps it takes an extremely long time before a new "sense of community" develops, especially if the camp contains divisions based on ethnicity, clanship, religious or political factors.

Another indirect consequence of war in some situations has been that ethnic or religious divisions have been exacerbated by conflict. Children of mixed marriages in the former Yugoslavia, for example, found that families and whole communities which had previously co-existed harmoniously were torn apart by the conflict[6].

As already indicated, the destruction of infrastructure (hospitals, schools, social and cultural institutions) has also been a significant feature of many of the recent conflicts. The consequences for the lives of children are obvious.

This section has given separate consideration to the direct and indirect effects of war on children: however, in reality many children will simultaneously experience both, though little research has been conducted into the interactive effects of severe events on children. One exception is the work of Pynoos and Eth (1985). For children affected by war, the effects of experiencing acts of violence may be compounded by separation from parents, poverty, loss of educational opportunities and the many privations imposed by refugee camp life.

2.4 The Psychological Effects of War on Children

The literature on the psychological effects of war and displacement on children is extensive: however, its many limitations include

- the lack of studies in some parts of the developing world, notably Africa
- the lack of long-term studies
- the lack of specific focus on children
- methodological concerns - most notably the widespread use of questionnaires and psychological tests

Some of these issues will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 11.

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[6] For a case example of a child affected by multiple stressors including those resulting from the mixed marriage of his parents, see Tolfree and Sretanov (1993)

An added complication is that warfare takes many forms and consequently may affect children in markedly different ways: for example, sudden and unexpected outbreaks of violence may have different effects from conflicts which build up gradually. Similarly, repeated episodes of violence or the experience of regular bombardment will have different effects from exposure to single or short-lived episodes. Little empirical data is available on the different typical psychological effects of these very different situations (Boyden et al. 1998).

This literature review will include studies which, though falling outside of the specific area of armed conflict may nonetheless have some relevance to the subject: for example, the reactions of children to natural disasters (especially in situations where displacement of whole populations has occurred) and, to a lesser degree, children who have suffered from violence (within or outside the family) may yield findings relevant to the situation of children in armed conflict.

In attempting to analyse the literature, Ager (1995) has found it useful to make a distinction between different types of discourse: the first tends to view children as **vulnerable**, focussing on symptoms and using the language of psychological disorder. The second discourse is that of **resilience**, emphasising children's ability to adapt to and cope with extreme adversity. After discussing these two discourses, a critique of them will be offered before going on to examine a third discourse, which is only just beginning to be heard: this takes a **constructivist approach** which views children as social actors who actively engage in making sense of events which affect them. These will now be considered in turn.

2.4.1 The Discourse of Vulnerability

Little if any research was undertaken prior to the Second World war, but studies during and after this war revealed some important findings. However, the main preoccupation with research in the UK was that of the effects of separation from parents rather than the more direct effects of conflict. Research in other countries, Poland being a prime example, suffered from severe methodological weaknesses, stemming, in part, from the fact that much of the research was politically rather than scientifically motivated, with statistics used to

persuade rather than to explain[7].

Various studies during the Second World War period reviewed by Dodge and Raundalen (1987) suggest that the most common reaction to actual or potential bombing consisted of anxiety and other psychological symptoms such as crying, aggression, headaches, eating problems and incontinence of bowel and bladder: physical symptoms were more common in older children. However, studies of the long-term effects were significantly absent, so it is not known whether such symptoms were just short-term reactions.

The most significant issue to emerge from the research in the UK was that there was found to be little relationship between living in bombed areas of the UK and anxiety responses: the greatest anxiety and distress was experienced by children who were separated from their families, the evacuation programme being based on the assumption that children would be better off in the safety of a strange family than remaining with their own families in situations of danger. Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingham's (1943) research demonstrated that the greatest effect of war on children was in situations where the war disrupts family life and causes separations. They found that children benefit not only from the presence of parents, but also peers and other familiar adults. Citing this and other, more recent research, James Garbarino et al (1991.21) conclude that "children who live with positive adults can usually cope, even with major stress; children who live with frightened and demoralized adults can be overcome by much lower levels of stress". However, it does need to be emphasised that the main impetus behind much of the research in the UK was interest in the phenomenon of separation rather than the psychological reaction to war *per se*.

There was relatively little research into the psychological effects of war on children during the 1950s and 1960s: much of the available documentation is clinical and anecdotal (Leyens and Majoub, undated). From 1968 onwards, the effects of the troubles and violence in Northern Ireland have been extensively studied, though the majority focussed on adults rather than children. Fraser (1974) noted that psychological disturbances increased considerably as a result of the unrest in Belfast in 1968: he particularly identified hysteria,

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[7] This research is helpfully reviewed by Leyens and Mahjoub (undated)

excessive crying and generalised anxiety as common reactions, but suggested that long-term reactions were relatively rare.

Conflict in the Middle East has also prompted a great deal of research work. Raundalen and Stuvland (1992) review a number of studies which identify symptoms among children which include nervousness and anxiety, hyperactivity and restlessness.

In one study, conducted by Milgram and Milgram (1976), the researchers studied the reaction of children before and after the Yom Kippur War: they noted a considerable increase in anxiety as a result of the war, but surprisingly found that children directly exposed to the war did not have significantly higher levels of anxiety than children who were more remote from the areas of conflict. It was suggested that this reflected the attention given to preparation and training which enabled parents in the conflict areas to react in a confident manner, thereby shielding their children from extreme anxiety. This finding finds echoes in research by Fraser (1983) in Northern Ireland: he found, on the one hand, that children displayed a fairly consistent range of physical symptoms (vomiting, asthma, rashes, fainting fits, epileptic fits etc.) resulting from stress: on the other hand, it was clear that these were mediated by parents. Most of the children came from families in which either one parent was absent or seriously emotionally disturbed: in other words, the child's immediate social context was as important as the stressful events themselves.

During the past two decades, the dominant paradigm for the study of the psychological effects of war has been that of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Interest in PTSD was stimulated, in part, by the treatment of Vietnam war veterans in the USA, but this framework has also been used for study into the effects of other events such as natural disasters, rape, kidnapping and child abuse.

The classification of PTSD was first introduced into Diagnostic Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association in 1980. The diagnostic criteria (American Psychiatric Association 1987) for the disorder, according to the Revised DSM lll, are the following:

- a stressful event outside of the range of usual human experience;
- persistent re-experiencing of the traumatic event in thought, imagery and behaviour;
- persistent avoidance of stimuli linked concretely or symbolically with the traumatic event or numbing of general emotional reactivity;
- symptoms of increased arousal; and
- duration of symptomatic disturbance of at least one month.

The research literature which is based around the notion of PTSD is large and diverse: it focuses more on adults than children, and the majority of studies have been carried out in western societies. These research findings will not be summarised in detail; a few examples will be given, and then in section 2.4.3 a critique of this approach will be given.

A significant landmark in the examination of stress in children was the study carried out by Newman (1976) who examined the emotional impairment experienced by children who were victims of the bursting of a dam and subsequent flooding at Buffalo Creek in West Virginia. Many of these children had experienced death and destruction as well as terrifying personal experiences. However, the research did not manage to distinguish between the impact of those actual experiences and the overall effect of the loss of their whole community. Moreover, the findings are based primarily on very subjective interpretations of drawings by the children, and the conclusion that the children may experience "after-trauma" in later life is entirely speculative.

By contrast, Terr (1981) studied a group of children who had been kidnapped and buried alive in a bus in California - an experience which was not compounded by the loss of family or community. She found that post-traumatic symptoms such as recurrent dreams of death, chronic anxiety and compulsive play were present even after four years.

Other studies - including those specifically related to refugee children and the child victims of war - highlight the particular consequences of loss (of parents, homes, possessions, community, supportive relationships and community structures).

One of the limitations of the PTSD framework is that it tends to pre-determine certain types of response. A good illustration of this is the work of Menvielle (1992) who describes his work with children who had fled to the USA from the violent war in El Salvador.. Despite acknowledging the significance of problems within the children's *current* living situation (separation from parents, lack of emotional support, parental unemployment, insecurity, lack of language ability etc.) the main treatment emphasis is on working directly with the children and enabling them to talk about their *past* experiences.

This particular example is taken from war-affected children living in the USA, but throughout the developing world there are innumerable examples of programmes which are based entirely, or almost entirely, on the perceived value of enabling children to talk through their experiences, unburdening themselves emotionally, and exploring the meaning of their experiences[8]. Section 2.4.3 will explore some of the limitations of this approach, which treats the child in a de-contextualised manner.

Many studies of children and adolescents who have had traumatic experiences of war and/or displacement have been carried out in many parts of the world. Kinzie et al (1986) studied a group of adolescents who had had severe traumatic experiences, and they related their symptoms to their current living situation in exile. They found that major symptoms of PTSD persisted for half of the sample even after four years: however, the evidence linked the persistence of these problems more with their **current** living situation than with their reported experiences in Cambodia. In particular, the nature of their immediate family support was significant.

This finds some echoes in the work of Pynoos and Eth (1985) who found that, in respect of children affected by other types of violence, children were found to be particularly vulnerable if they experienced the additive effects of both grief and traumatic event - the one complicates the other, making successful resolution more difficult.

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[8] See, for example, UNHCR (1993), UNICEF (1995b), Bürgin (1993), Adam and Riedesser (1993), WHO (1998).

Some researchers in situations of conflict in developing countries have observed a striking **lack** of symptoms of PTSD, despite children experiencing horrifying events: writing of Mozambican refugee children, for example, Felsman (1994.12) writes "Despite the large numbers of children in the camps and the pain and sorrow embodied in their collective history, we have found a surprisingly small percentage that actually meet the diagnostic criteria for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder". Similarly, Richman (1995) observes that "the measures of PTSD do not usually look at the way children function. Those who have met children in war zones, recognise their distress, but would not identify many of them as having a psychiatric illness needing psychological treatment: most of them are functioning at home and school, in spite of their distress". This may find echoes in the Kinzie study (Kinzie et al. 1986), which underlines a key issue in the literature: why is it that some children and adolescents cope relatively well with experiences to which other people react extremely adversely? The notion of **coping** has been developed as a means of exploring the relationship between the impact of negative or dangerous experiences and their outcome by reference to various factors which facilitate coping.

2.4.2 The Discourse of Coping and Resilience

It has already been noted that as long ago as the early 1940s (Freud and Burlingham 1943) it was observed that children affected by bombing (or the threat of bombing) cope better if they remain with their families rather than being separated from them by evacuation away from areas of danger. Similarly, the Kinzie research referred to above places importance on the child's **current** living situation in determining his/her responses to experiences of violence. It is clear that there is no simple relationship between the nature and magnitude of the stressful experience and the nature or degree of psychological response (Ager 1993). While the discourse of PTSD tends to be deterministic, the discourse of coping attempts to account for the wide difference in responses of children to dangerous and potentially traumatising situations by focussing on those factors within the child and within his/her social world which enhance resilience.

The early 1980s saw some significant research and writings on the themes of stress, coping and resilience. Michael Rutter (1981) provides a useful overview of research findings in

relation to children's responses to a range of different types of stressful experience (Rutter acknowledges that the term "stress" is difficult to define, but no definition is attempted!): these experiences include hospital admission, the birth of a sibling and parental divorce. The concept of stress is more easily understood experientially than intellectually, but has its basis in complex endocrine systems of human physiology (Brett, undated). Rutter adopts Lazarus and Launier's definition of coping -"efforts, both action-oriented and intrapsychic to manage (i.e., master, tolerate, reduce, minimize) environmental and internal demands, and conflicts among them, which tax or exceed a person's resources" (Lazarus and Launier 1978). In looking at different coping responses, the following criteria are identified:-

- Individual characteristics:
  - age
  - sex
  - genetic factors
  - temperament
  - intelligence and other skills
  - prior experience of dealing with stress
- The presence of acute versus chronic adversity
- Vulnerability and protective factors -
  - Social Networks
  - Close personal relationships
  - Cognitive Appraisal of the Stress Event
- Coping Processes

The kind of stressful events which Rutter concentrates on are far removed from the experience of children caught up in modern warfare, but the attempt to identify the kinds of factors which may have the effect of shielding children from the worst effects of their experience is clearly transferable to other types of stressful situation. Research into the particular effects of war and displacement sheds further light on this framework.

Individual characteristics: Research in some situations of conflict does tend to confirm the

idea that individual reactions vary according to individual characteristics, family circumstances and the nature of the stressful experience. Fraser (1974.99), writing of Northern Ireland, writes "the way in which each child reacted to riot stress seemed to depend on three main factors. There was, first, the degree of emotional security enjoyed by the child both before and during the period of acute stress. This related not only to his (sic) own psychological resources, but also to those of his immediate family. Secondly, there was the role of the stressful experience itself. Thirdly, each child's response was idiosyncratic, or unique, depending on his own usual way of responding to new experiences".

Individual traits which may have a bearing on coping include gender, age and maturity, health, cognitive capacity and so on. One study on the effects of war on children (McCallin and Fozzard 1990) reported that boys appeared more nervous and fearful in the presence of strangers, while girls tended to be more fearful of the dark, sought approval, affection and reassurance more frequently. In general, however, gender issues have been relatively neglected in the research.

With regard to age, Leyens and Majoub (undated), in reviewing the research, comment that children aged between 2 and 5 years, and adolescents, are consistently found to be the most susceptible to war trauma, while Thompson (1993) suggests that, in certain respects, children become more vulnerable with increasing age: for example, events which pose a threat to self-concept become more stressful with increasing age, while for younger children, cognitive and experiential limitations may sometimes buffer them against harm to which older youngsters may be more vulnerable.

Intelligence and temperament both have a bearing on coping. Garbarino et al (1991.19) suggest that "intelligence means the ability to figure things out, to read situations and people, to create alternatives... The same intelligence helps shield the child from simplistic interpretations of experience that are self-defeating and socially destructive in the long run".

Ressler et al (1993) suggest that disposition, "nurturant strength" and past experiences all

have a bearing on coping: Punamaki and Suleiman (1990) shows that if children remain hopeful for the future, are flexible and adaptable, have problem-solving skills and actively try to exercise control over their lives they are likely to be less vulnerable.

Vulnerability and protective factors: the research suggests that among the most significant factors in children's resilience is the presence or absence of supportive relationships within and outside of the family. Bettleheim (1986) highlighted the importance of supportive networks within and beyond the family - including belief systems. The crucial role of the family emerged particularly clearly in Mc Callin's research (McCallin, 1992) : it was found that children were profoundly affected by their mothers' emotional well-being, and this, in turn, depended significantly on the social support they received. Many studies demonstrate that the presence or absense of the care and support of a parent or other carer is highly significant in determining the ability to cope with stressful situations - see, for example, Punamaki, 1987, Turton et al. (1991) and Kirby and Fraser (1997). As long ago as 1943, Freud and Burlingham (1943.67) stated: "The war acquires comparatively little significance for children so long as it only threatens their lives, disturbs their material comfort or cuts their food rations. It becomes enormously significant the moment it breaks up family life and uproots the first emotional attachments of the child within the family group" . Kirby and Fraser (1997) also emphasise the importance of feeling supported and having the personal resources that stem from caring relationships help to promote development in children facing various stressful situations.

Supportive relationships outside of the family are also important, whether from teachers, peers, neighbours or others in the community. McCallin (1992) comments that "caring and supportive relationships in health and educational services can make a considerable difference" for children in a refugee camp situation.

Cognitive Appraisal: As already noted above, Rutter acknowledged the importance of the individual's appraisal of stressful events. To give a simple illustration of the importance of appraisal, a child's reactions to a personal injury such as a broken leg will vary greatly according to whether he/she appraises it as being caused by falling downstairs or by being

hit by a parent. The importance of appraisal is particularly stressed in the work of Lazarus and Folkman (1984.19), though their work does not particularly focus on children. They define psychological stress as "a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being".

They examine appraisal from a phenomenological point of view - cognitive appraisal is seen as a "process of categorizing an encounter, and its various facets, with respect to its significance for well-being" (page 31). Appraisal is not just about the actual event or situation, but a judgement of what might be done about it, and they place particular importance on the individual's ability to control the event as a determinant of how the event is appraised, and consequently on coping activity.

In examining coping resources, they particularly emphasise the importance of positive beliefs about oneself and one's ability to control the situation, social and problem-solving skills, social support and material resources.

The writings of Garmezy and Rutter and of Lazarus and Folkman are helpful to those involved in assisting children affected by war in directing attention to those aspects of the social milieu ("protective factors") which might be strengthened in order to enhance the child's resilience.

Other researchers have taken up the theme of the individual's ideology which provides a context in which events are appraised. Bettelheim (1943) noted that those who coped best with life in concentration camps were those with strong ideological commitment which provided meaning to what was being experienced.

The continuing conflict in the Middle East also provides interesting confirmation of the importance of ideology: while Pines (1989) demonstrates that ultra-orthodox Jews suffer less stress than more secular Jews in respect of the Palestinian uprising, Punamaki (1987) sees the same phenomenon among Palestinians in occupied territories and refugee camps,

where the people draw strength from political and ideological commitment.

The idea of **resilience** has been taken up by a number of researchers and practitioners as providing a framework within which it might be possible to develop programmes to bolster coping mechanisms rather than focussing on pathology. The case of Anne Frank offers a classic illustration: she was a Jewish girl who lived in Holland at the outbreak of the Second World War and spent a long period hiding under the most extremely difficult conditions. Her diary which was published after her death revealed a number of factors which were subsequently confirmed by researchers as contributing to her extraordinary resilience: these included the importance of a trusting relationship and of an open and mature religious faith (Vanistendael 1995).

Resilience is a term derived from the physical sciences and literally means the capacity to recover one's shape after being stretched or stressed: or, more colloquially, the ability to "bounce back" after difficult experiences. Research has shown that resilient children tend to have certain "protective factors" in their lives which serve to shield them from the worst effects of the stresses which confront them. These protective factors can be summarised as follows[9]:

- a **stable emotional relationship** with a parent or other care-giver
- **social support** within and beyond the family - e.g. relatives, neighbours, teachers, peers etc
- **an educational climate** which is emotionally positive, open, guiding and norm-oriented
- **role models** which encourage constructive coping
- an appropriate **balance of social responsibilities and achievement demands** (e.g. as between domestic responsibilities and school work)
- **cognitive competence** - a reasonable level of intelligence, skills in communication and realistic planning etc.
- **a positive sense of self-esteem**, self confidence and self-control

[9] Derived from Losel (1994).

- an **active coping style** rather than a passive approach
- a **sense of structure and meaning** in one's life, often informed by religious or political beliefs, a sense of coherence etc.

As a framework for intervention, the concept of resilience is useful on a number of levels: on a general level, it serves to direct attention to people's strengths rather than their weaknesses. More specifically, it underlines the need to identify and strengthen existing support networks within the community, both formal and informal, and possibly to reinforce cultural characteristics and practices that seem to facilitate resilience. It may identify the need to direct attention particularly to those children for whom personal and social resources may be lacking. It may also help to identify existing resources which might be developed in a way that provides additional supports to children.

2.4.3 A Critique of the Dominant Paradigms

Before moving on to examine the beginnings of a more **constructivist** paradigm in examining the effects of war on children, it is appropriate to pause and consider, in some detail, the appropriateness of the dominant paradigms. In particular, the utility of the PTSD approach will be examined.

The construction of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder continues to be the principal paradigm, which is reflected in the literature [10] as well as in innumerable programmes in war-affected regions: in Rwanda, for example, Unicef sponsored a large-scale "Trauma and Recovery" Programme, while other UN agencies have supported similar approaches in West Africa, Tanzania, Angola, and with Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. Practical examples were also encountered during the fieldwork for this study - e.g. during a seminar for refugee workers in Karagwe, Tanzania (Case Study 4) and during a conference held in respect of refugees

[10] See, for example, Muhumuza, R. (undated), Raundalen, Magne and Dyregrov, Atle (1991), UNICEF (1996a), UNICEF (1996b), WHO and UNHCR (1992), UNHCR (1993), Adam and Riedesser (1993), Bürgin (1993), UNICEF (1995), Bartsch (1995), Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (1988), Kinzie and Sack (1991), Espino (1991), Lima (1992), Rakic et al. (1993), Beiser et al. (1989), Tyhurst (1977), Westermeyer et al. (1983) etc. . See also critique in Bracken, Patrick J. and Petty, Celia (eds.) (1998).

from Sudan (Case Study 5). Although recent years have increasingly seen a questioning of this approach, the prevailing discourse is that of trauma and psychological rehabilitation. To cite two recent examples, the Senior Community Services Officer for UNHCR recently undertook a three-month mission to Kosovo, and during that time she received requests for cooperation from eight agencies all wanting to initiate intervention and/or training programmes in respect of trauma recovery[11]. A second example comes from Angola: the following appeared in a recent edition of *The Guardian*: "When (the) Senior Policy Advisor for Save the Children Fund was in Angola recently, the people told her what their children needed to rebuild their lives after three decades of war: houses, schools, parents, a football field and a cinema. As she was leaving the country, she watched the passengers disembark from their incoming flight. Half of them were from trauma counselling programmes"[12].

The critique of PTSD which now follows draws particularly on the work of Richman (1993a), Ager (1995), Muecke (1992), and Bracken and Giller (undated) as well as the author's own reflections and observations from the field. The main objections to the PTSD approach are as follows:

1. Reductionism and de-contextualisation

It has already been stressed that people's psychological reactions to experiences of war are closely linked with the overall context, whether the supportive families which enabled children to cope with bombing in the Second World War (Freud and Burlingham 1943) or the effects of township violence in South Africa (Turton et al 1991). PTSD reduces complex and interacting circumstances to psychiatric categories. PTSD seems to sanction neglect of the broader context which may include racism, poverty, disadvantage etc. in a country of resettlement (Menvielle, 1992), the continuing constraints imposed by refugee camp life in a neighbouring and probably impoverished country or the continuing threats if children and their families remain in zones of conflict. Straker et al (1998) in their analysis of township violence in South Africa, and Naomi Richman et al (undated) talk of the

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[11] Personal communication.

[12] *The Guardian* 26.11.97.

particular issues facing children and their families when they are responding not to a single episode of stress but rather to situations of chronic and continuing violence, often compounded with other problems such as bereavement, separation, poverty and so on. Gorst-Unsworth and Goldenberg (1998), looking at refugees from Iraq who have suffered torture and organised violence, conclude that lack of social support is a stronger predictor of depression than the severity of the trauma they have experienced.

2. Medicalisation

One aspect of this reductionism is the medicalisation of complex problems by the construction of PTSD. Writing in the context of virtual civil war in South Africa during the Apartheid era, Andrew Dawes (1992b) suggests that biomedical language tends to suggest a view of the child as a "passive and helpless entity set upon by traumatic events". In another paper (Dawes 1992a) he emphasises the need to see the behaviour of young people involved in the conflict within the broader socio-political context of an extremely violent political system.

Other researchers who do perceive the limitations of the PTSD construction and argue for a more culturally sensitive and holistic approach nevertheless retreat into medicalised language. Brett (undated), for example, clings to terms such as people "developing" PTSD and "sufferers" of PTSD.

The use of diagnostic terms such as "traumatised" or "mentally ill" may tend to reinforce labels which imply abnormality and sickness. Most clinical approaches, and even some community-based approaches which use the language of "mental health" carry connotations of illness and mental illness. In most societies, mental health is equated with "crazy people"; the more positive connotations of mental (good) health are not very convincing to the lay person. Hence treatments may serve to further increase a sense of powerlessness: bearing in mind the significance of an active coping style, this may serve to further reduce resilience.

Many clinical intervention strategies[13] tend to isolate "traumatised" individuals from among the large number of people who have faced similar experiences. Not only does this tend to ignore the large numbers of people who, though not necessarily seriously impaired by their experiences, might nevertheless benefit from programmes designed to impact on their sense of well-being: by tending to focus on problems, pathology or symptoms, an unintended consequence may be to highlight the individual's sense of sickness or abnormality rather than building on strengths and personal resources. Moreover, as Boothby (1992b) points out, in situations particularly of intense and prolonged conflict, the dynamic between the individual and the society has changed to a point where the "abnormal" becomes "normal" which renders traditional definitions of mental health and normality inadequate.

Most clinical approaches are oriented towards illness and still tend to create helper-helped, doctor-patient dichotomies which tend to vest power in the professional, and to emphasise in people a perception of having an illness or abnormality. The literature on resilience has the advantage in adopting a "salutogenic" perspective by concentrating on those factors which promote health and well-being rather than an emphasis on sickness and pathology.

3. Universalism and ethnocentricism

The application of the PTSD diagnosis to people affected by war in countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America assumes that the forms of mental disorder found there are broadly the same as those found in Europe and North America. This assumption is open to challenge and is what Kleinman (1987) describes as a category fallacy - "the reification of a nosological category developed for a particular cultural group that is then applied to members of another culture for whom it lacks coherence and its validity has not been established".

Bracken and Giller (undated) state that this mistake is made when it is assumed that a phenomenon is universal simply because it is identified in different cultural situations. Clinicians no less than researchers will perceive and identify what they have been trained to perceive and identify. The issue of the use of inappropriate research methodologies will be

[13] See footnote 10 for examples.

discussed in Chapter 11. Certainly it is true that through interviews and questionnaires, people in countries affected by wars have elicited information which suggests that they may be experiencing symptoms which, in other contexts, might be labelled as indicative of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. But the crucial question is not whether such people have such symptoms, but *how do they themselves perceive and understand those symptoms*? Recurring nightmares could be variously construed as irrelevant and unimportant, a sign of psychological distress or as the receipt of important messages from ancestors.

Similarly, the use of the PTSD framework tends to assume that once the diagnosis is made, the use of treatment modalities used in the west also have universal applicability. Menvielle (1992.21) provides a good example of the introduction of counselling and cathartic techniques with children from El Salvador who have sought refuge in the USA. However, despite the acknowledgement of the many problems in the children's *current* situation, therapy appears to focus entirely on traumatic events in the past.

Based on field experience in Mozambique, Boothby (1992a) argues that interventions based on western approaches to "talking cures" developed in the west have been largely unsuccessful in different cultural contexts. The idea of "emotional ventilation", of "re-living and talking-through" previous traumatic events may not be effective in some cultures, though it has not been possible to find much evidence on this issue from the anthropological literature.

PTSD presents a typical positivist paradigm, yet the evidence, even in western countries, for its efficacious outcome, is equivocal, to say the least. The clinical literature on PTSD related to war is rich in observation, and recommendations for treatment, but there is almost no systematic and controlled data regarding outcome. Raphael et. al.(1995) comment that despite the widespread use of such approaches there is no objective evidence of the efficacy of "debriefing after trauma", while Summerfield (1998.29) describes UNICEF assertions of the need for trauma rehabilitation programmes for the alleged 10 million war-traumatised children as "fanciful and self-serving".

4. Individualism

A further aspect of the implicit universalism of the PTSD paradigm is its focus on the individual as the unit of study, diagnosis and treatment. How far this is appropriate to circumstances in other cultures is questionable. It is necessary to turn to the literature of social anthropology to explore this area.

The unit of study for the western psychiatrist is almost always the individual. This individualistic approach tends to lead to a focus on intrapsychic rather than interpersonal processes: this does not fit the circumstances of societies with a different conceptualisation of the self and the relative importance of individuality and collectivism. As White and Marsella (1982.28) suggest, "the use of 'talk therapy' aimed at altering individual behaviour through the individual's 'insight' into his or her own personality is firmly rooted in a conception of the person as a distinct and independent individual, capable of self-transformation in relative isolation from particular social contexts".

The existing literature only gives a few glimpses of what this might mean for assisting war-affected children, but Neil Boothby (1992b.80) comments that "in Mozambique survival is a collective act, rooted in community compassion and care. In endangered zones, extended families and neighbours employ a number of collective measures to try to protect their children from Renamo". This is a potentially fruitful area for future research and one which the present study will attempt to pursue further.

5. Neglect of the resources of affected populations

As already noted, the construction of PTSD medicalises the problem in a way which tends to focus on illness and pathology rather than the individual's health and strength. But from an anthropological perspective too, it may ignore, or even over-ride resources contained within the culture. As Wilson (1989.6)) asserts, traumatic events are never "culture free" and it is important to understand "how cultural differences affect how a person perceives, interprets and assimilates such experiences".

Again the existing literature is not very extensive, but there are some useful and relevant

writings which give some useful clues. Writing generally about refugee populations, Salole (1992.6) says: "When we assume that people are disadvanted, we rush to create a development programme to deal with their disadvantages, instead of a programme based on the skills people have at their fingertips..... To build on people's strengths one must appreciate and acknowledge people's proficiency and skill in everyday life..... Unfortunately, rather than actually encourage people in what they are doing, we have tended to undermine and thwart them by by-passing them and setting up our own institutions".

Brett (undated) makes the surprising comment that "The cultural archive of the community may proffer no answers in times of chaos and rapid change, no solutions in social and behavioural terms when challenged by exceptional conditions of turmoil". Other researchers perceive a wealth of resources contained within the community, though these may not be very visible to the unperceptive outsider.

One traditional resource which is widely available in many traditional societies is the traditional healer. In the field of traumatic stress, the potentially beneficial effects of traditional approaches to healing may lie in the importance which has already been discussed (see 2.4.2 above) of the **meanings** ascribed to events. If a person experiences symptoms which a European psychiatrist might associate with post-traumatic stress are appraised by the person as caused by the spirits, it is more likely that the appropriate traditional ceremony would be more effective than imported and alien approaches to treatment. Unfortunately the available literature on traditional healing offers us little more than individual glimpses into particular cultures. It has not been found possible to identify literature which offers a more systematic and non-localised approach to incorporating traditional practices into strategies for responding to the needs of communities affected by war. However, it was anticipated that the present study might provide some useful examples of the role of traditional healing.

2.4.4 Varieties of approach within the practice-based literature

Before moving on to examine the beginnings of a more constructivist approach in the literature, it may be helpful to consider how some of the more practice-based material

responds to some of the objections of the dominant PTSD paradigm. Several approaches can be identified.

First, much of the literature is either completely oblivious to the reservations outlined above, or acknowledges the importance of contextual issues while still emphasising the universal validity of western approaches. Hence, for example, Dyregrov and Raundalen (1987.125) acknowledge the importance of children receiving support from their families and community, and in particular enabling them to lead as normal life as possible. But they continue to assert that "there is need of more professional guidance and help.... In the early post-traumatic phase crisis victims (sic) have a need for talking through the event.... Rapid intervention is therefore needed to prevent long-term psychiatric disturbances".

A second approach is one which can perhaps best be described as ambivalent: a prime example of this is a Manual on Refugee Mental Health produced by the World Health Organisation and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (WHO and UNHCR 1992.3). On the one hand, this manual recognises that refugees should not be seen as "helpless people who totally depend on the help that is provided. Refugees are often people with strong survival power": it acknowledges the importance of a supportive family and the importance of play. It even recognises the role of traditional healers. On the other hand, it medicalises the issue, referring to people who have had hurtful or frightening experiences as "patients" who are "suffering" from "mental illness". The problem is seen entirely as an individualised one, emphasising the role of counselling and group work: but there is no attempt to examine the issues from a collective, community standpoint: the role of community leaders is not mentioned. Mental health issues are seen as the concern of professional workers and not of the refugee community.

Similarly, UNHCR Guidelines (UNHCR 1993) recognised the need to foster coping and resilience but continues to fall back on universalist prescriptions such as helping people to talk about their experiences.

Finally, there are a few examples (Felsman, 1994; McCallin (ed.), 1992) of approaches

which attempt to take on board the issues as outlined above. Nicole Dagnino (1992) writes about the creative use of play and activities with children within a programme based on a holistic approach to mental health in which the needs of children are viewed broadly within their family, community, social, economic and cultural environment. Fozzard and Tembo (1992) stress the importance of using and developing resources which already exist within a refugee community in order to promote culturally-appropriate and effective interventions. They place emphasis on enabling communities to develop a common understanding of their experiences, the ways in which these affect daily living and what they themselves can do to alleviate some of the problems which result. Working through existing social systems such as pre-schools, schools and women's clubs, and through new social structures which are created by the programme in order to reach more isolated villages, the programme makes use of culturally-familiar forms of self-expression such as play, dancing and singing.

Unfortunately some of the most progressive writings are theoretically-oriented, with few examples of more practically-based work or research which examines how some of these ideas might be translated into practice. There are virtually no comparative studies which attempt to draw general principles from a variety of more community-based approaches. It is also clear that many of the more imaginative programmes now being developed in the field are extremely poorly documented and studied.

2.4.5 Towards a More Constructivist Approach

Finally, a few writers and researchers are moving towards a more constructivist approach. Rather than seeing children as passively reacting to the events they experience, this approach views them as "actively processing their experiences, incorporating them into an already constructed social context" (Richman 1993a). Many studies which examine the concept of resilience report that active coping strategies are generally more effective in relieving stress than passive or defensive ones (Fraser and Galinsky 1997).

Ager (1995) reacts to the coping and resilience approach, which he sees as rather mechanistic and positivist. He criticises what he sees as a "balance sheet" approach which weighs the stressors experienced by children in situations of conflict with the protective

factors. A more constructivist approach conceptualises children as actively engaging in a process of negotiating meanings about their experiences.

In an excellent paper by Andrew Dawes (1992b), this more constructivist approach in linked with dominant images of childhood. He argues that in the west, childhood tends to be seen as a period of care-free innocence, with children perceived as relatively passive. However, such a construction of childhood is far removed from the realities of childhood in many more traditional societies. Based largely on his experiences of South Africa during the Apartheid era, he comments that South African children inhabited an extremely violent world, one in which many forms of violence were seen as normal and legitimate, and these various sources of violence (in school, within the family and within an inherently violent political system) were the source of a great deal of stress quite apart from the direct involvement of young people in political and township violence. In this context, political violence is seen as part of the normal condition of life which requires the development of various strategies to enable them to cope - "an essential feature of coping is the discourse of coping to which children are exposed, which becomes part of their social understanding" (page 5). Contrary to the western conceptualisation of childhood, many adolescents in South Africa were active and committed members of a particular political movement, and this fact helps them to "frame" experiences of political violence. According to Dawes, "Children's understandings develop through a process of social negotiation in a context of discursive practices" (page 12). He quotes Prout and James (1990, page 8) - "children are and must be seen as active in the construction of their own lives and the lives of those around them. Children are not just the passive subjects of social structures and pressures".

Swartz et al (1990) suggest that where children are described as "innocent, passive victims" it is because they have been labelled as such, not because of what they have experienced. This might lead one to believe that some types of therapeutic intervention might actually damage people by reinforcing helplessness and powerlessness. One issue to emerge from Dawes's analysis is that children's reactions to particular events are shaped not just by the discourse of those events but also by other discourses which have meaning to them within the context of their entire social world. This might suggest that responding to "traumatised

children" for special treatment isolated from other significant aspects of their social world is totally inappropriate. Moreover, there is growing evidence that a vital aspect of resilience is the child's capacity to be able to exercise some control over events and to achieve a sense of competence or personal mastery in difficult situations[14].

What are the implications of this constructivist approach for practical intervention with children affected by war? Dawes (1992b.24) concludes as follows:

> *The social constructivist framework is disturbing and disruptive. It challenges basic assumptions about our psychological nature and how it develops and in so doing breaks all sorts of conventional prescriptions about how we study children. It recommends that we spend more time talking to them so as to unravel the sense they make of things. It suggests that we pay more attention to the way in which adults produce forms of truth for children as they talk with them and interact with them in ways which signify what the social world is like. To do this we have to observe them in everyday situations and in situations of violence.*

It has not been possible to access any literature which consciously takes these ideas into the practice arena: however, by examining a number of projects, it is hoped that some illustrations will be found where children themselves are considered to be active agents of growth and change in their lives.

2.5 Towards a Strategy for this Study

PTSD represents a positivist paradigm which attempts to define, in precise, objective and universalist terms, the characteristic human response to traumatic experiences. Some of the limitations of this approach have been discussed in this chapter. The literature abounds with top-down approaches based on such universalist assumptions, while there are relatively few studies which start from the people themselves, with minds open to hearing how they themselves perceive and understand events and their effects on them and their children.

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[14] See, for example, Turton, R, Straker, G. and Moosa, F. (1991).

There are, however, many programmes which, at grass-roots level, attempt to develop programmes based around people's articulation of their particular problems and priorities: few of them are written up in any way.

This study attempts to examine the subject from the perspective of what some theorists would describe as a post modern approach. A starting point is the rejection of universalist assumptions that make no concession to culture and which minimise people's individual and collective understandings of the meaning of stressful events within their own particular context. The study is an attempt to adopt more of a "bottom-up" approach, not by deploying research methods directly with people affected by war, but by exploring the work of organisations which have attempted to work closely with people, within their particular social, cultural, economic and political contexts, in order to define approaches which build on their own understandings of the problem and the measures which are most likely to promote healing (in its widest sense) within the particular cultural context. The quest, therefore, is not for a typical positivist universal or objective reality, but rather, a post-modern search for "the multiple forms of otherness as they emerge from differences in subjectivity, gender and sexuality, race and class, temporal and spatial geographic locations and dislocations" (Huyssens 1984). The intention is to use a diversity of theoretical frameworks - psychological, sociological and anthropological - in order to further analyse some of the issues to emerge.

From the literature review, a number of key issues can be identified. Although this study is not attempting to test specific hypotheses, a number of questions emerge which it is hoped the study will be able to explore. These key issues include the following:

- Do some programmes conceptualise the problem in collective or community terms rather than just individualistic ones? If so, what are the implications of this?
- Do some programmes base their work firmly in a community context, and if so how?
- How do problems reach children whose problems of traumatic experiences are compounded by loss of or separation from parents or other carers? If these are potentially the most vulnerable of the vulnerable, how can their needs be addressed as a matter of urgency and priority, especially in refugee emergencies?

- What features of the people's culture and tradition can be utilised within programmes? Are there cultural characteristics which tend to facilitate resilience, and if so can these be reinforced by programmes?
- Is it possible for children and adolescents themselves to be actively engaged as participants rather than merely as patients or subjects? If so, how?
- Do the programmes completely reject approaches based on the "vulnerability" discourse as outlined in this chapter, or is there scope for blending knowledge derived from western psychology with local understandings and approaches?

Chapter four examines the rationale of the study and outlines the research strategy: first, however, it is necessary to digress into a discussion of some of the issues and constraints involved in researching within this exceptionally difficult context.

Chapter 3: Problems and Constraints - Researching in Zones of Conflict in Developing Country Contexts

The area chosen for study presents many difficulties and constraints, and before moving on to consider the objectives and strategy of the research, this short chapter offers a brief examination of some of these difficulties. Chapter 12 of this thesis will give particular attention to the issues encountered: at this stage, it is important simply to note the way in which the research design had to accommodate itself to some of these constraints.

Undertaking fieldwork in areas of conflict is virtually impossible without the support of an agency having a legitimate presence in the areas concerned, and able to provide logistical support and, if necessary, physical protection. The present research was undertaken for an international non-governmental organisation (NGO), Rädda Barnen, the Swedish Save the Children. Rädda Barnen actually implement few projects of their own: in the main they work in partnership with local NGOs by providing funding and, to a lesser extent, technical support and organisational development.

They commissioned the research, though allowed a considerable freedom to the researcher in designing and carrying out the research. From the outset, the agency gave their permission for the data collected to be used for this thesis, though the principal output, from their point of view, was a report for the agency, and as the research progressed it was decided that a published book should be the main product (Tolfree 1996). Rädda Barnen assisted in negotiating access and in providing logistical support: the latter was absolutely vital - for example, the case study undertaken in a refugee camp in Tanzania would have been impossible without the researcher having his own transport, obtained by renting a truck in neighbouring Uganda and driving it down to the refugee-hosting area.

While on the one hand Rädda Barnen provided the opportunity of researching in an area in which gaining access would be otherwise almost impossible: on the other hand, a number of constraints were also imposed. These included the following:-

1. Gatekeeping constraints: securing access to case study sites involved negotiation with various gate-keepers, in Rädda Barnen headquarters in Stockholm, in Rädda Barnen regional and field offices, in their partner agencies in each country, and in organisations such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees who have an overall mandate to work in refugee situations. Although careful and diplomatic work with the relevant gatekeepers generally succeeded in gaining access to the projects which were sought for inclusion, there were some occasions when compromises had to be made.

2. Issues to do with the "ownership" of ideas and experience. One of the most interesting projects had already been written up in a way that left the director of that particular project feeling that she had not been given credit for the work she had done. This led to an insistence that she herself should compile this particular case study, and in turn this raised questions about detachment and objectivity. This will be discussed further in Chapter 12: at this stage, it needs to be noted that the problems were partly overcome by the researcher undertaking a considerable amount of fieldwork as a means of triangulating the data gathered by the case study compiler.

3. Other factors led to decisions that particular case studies should be "contracted out": in some cases this led to the entirely satisfactory engagement of appropriate case study researchers, but in other cases, less independent and detached researchers were deployed. There were good reasons why the researcher - a white male - should not undertake the fieldwork for a case study which examined a programme impacting on township violence in the latter stages of the Apartheid era in South Africa, so it was decided that an independent black woman be hired to undertake this case study. It was not possible to negotiate the deployment of an independent Swedish-speaking case study researcher to examine Rädda Barnen's refugee children programme in Sweden, for a range of political reasons. After protracted negotiations, two members of staff (both having a reasonable degree of detachment from the programme) were contracted to undertake this case study.

Various other safeguards were introduced: these included the compilation of a detailed Protocol for each case study. A second safeguard was for the researcher to closely supervise

these case study researchers. Thirdly, and significantly, the researcher undertook some fieldwork in respect of each programme, which served as a means of identifying issues which might have been missed or avoided by the case study researcher, and which served as a form of triangulation of data. Finally, all of the case studies were edited by the researcher, and in some cases it was necessary to ask the case study researcher to include additional material.

The final decision was for the researcher to personally undertake three of the case studies and for four to be undertaken by others.

4. Time and cost constraints. The majority of case studies had to be undertaken within limited time-frames for reasons of cost. In the event, experience proved that the fieldwork for a satisfactory case study could be undertaken in an intense period of about 3 weeks, but this clearly demanded that ethnographic approaches be used within a "rapid appraisal" frame. Moreover, time did not permit the possibility of doing a pilot first, and though there was some phasing of work on the case studies, there was pressure to set them all running as quickly as possible.

These constraints led to the adoption of what might be described as a pragmatic approach (Trinder 1996.236) requiring a "trade-off between what is desirable and feasible". On the other hand, undertaking the research for a highly respected agency had many **advantages**: in particular, in gaining access to research sites which otherwise would have been impossible. Securing access to the politicised environment of refugee camps would have been extremely difficult without this agency backup. The provision of practical support in otherwise extremely difficult circumstances was also vital - for example in arranging visas, providing accommodation and transport facilities (essential in some of the remote and inaccessible areas).

Chapter 4: the Research Strategy

4.1 Introduction

The literature review tends to confirm the need to question the formulation of PTSD and the clinical approaches which stem logically from it as an adequate basis for analysing the effects of conflict and displacement on children and as a framework for developing appropriate responses. It has also provided some possible pointers for this study and for future research in this area.

In planning this study, it was decided to begin with a "bottom-up" exploration of selected examples of practice which seem to offer some alternative approaches, usually based on locally-designed methods of intervention, and to raise questions such as:

- What is being done by local and international organisations in response to the needs of children and families psychologically affected by conflict and displacement?
- Why is it being done - what is the rationale for the particular approach?
- What knowledge (or assumptions) about the effects of war and displacement are the interventions based on?
- What information is available about the outcomes of these various approaches?
- From a comparative analysis of a range of practical experience, what issues can be identified that may help to enlarge our knowledge in this area? More specifically, and on the assumption that the imposition of western paradigms is not appropriate, how can psychological, sociological and anthropological knowledge be combined in order to create theoretical frameworks which build on local culture - traditions, customs, practices and belief systems - which might under-pin further programmatic interventions in this area?
- What further research is required in order to develop further our understandings of how conflict affects children?

It will be clear from the foregoing that the research methodology adopted needs to incorporate elements of **description** (e.g. what kind of interventions have been evolved?), elements of **exploration** (e.g. what are the constituent parts of these interventions, how do they operate, what is their philosophical and theoretical rationale, what evidence is there

about outcomes, and so on?) and **explanatory** or **analytical** (e.g. what can be derived from the experiences that may help to develop new paradigms and inform new approaches?) - i.e. theory development.

The approach and methodology called for is something of a hybrid. The ultimate design reflects four main theoretical approaches to research. The case study approach will be adopted as a broad strategy, with a central objective of developing theory grounded in the data, within which a broad reflexive, ethnographic methodology will be adopted. In addition, some features derived from feminist research approaches will also be adopted.

This section falls into five sections: first, an elaboration of the case study approach and why it seemed suited to the research. Then comes a section which elaborates the approach taken in attempting to develop grounded theory. This is followed by a section which introduces the range of methodologies grouped under the heading of ethnographic research, and a fourth section examines some of the features which were adapted from the feminist research literature. Finally comes a section which describes the overall design and rationale of the study.

4.2 The Case Study Approach as a Research Strategy

The case study is an approach (Allen and Skinner (eds) 1991), or a strategy, rather than a method: within the case study approach, a variety of different methods can be used as a means of collecting both qualitative and quantitative data.

Yin (1994) suggests several conditions for the use of the case study strategy -

1. Where the research questions being posed are "how" and "why" questions: (one might also add "what" questions where the aim is partly exploratory)
2. Where the researcher has little or no control over the events and situations being studied
3. Where the main focus is on contemporary events within their real-life context

Perhaps surprisingly, Yin offers no definition of "a case": it may be helpful here to adopt

Platt's (1988) definition of a case as "a bounded system" - whether an individual, an aspect of a particular society, a polity or other form of organisation and so on. Yin's analysis provides an extremely useful framework for planning the research strategy. It does, however, tend to be a little too restrictive, for example in its exclusion of historical analyses. In this study, a historical component, derived from archival data and interviews with key informants, may shed light on evolving programme rationale and theory development.

The research being outlined here fits these criteria almost exactly: the primary focus is on the actual operation of programmes (condition 3) within their wider political, social, cultural and economic context: the researcher clearly has no control over what is being studied (in contrast, for example, to experimental research designs) and the questions comprise primarily "what?", "how?" and "why?" issues.

Yin's analysis continues with three further conditions:-

4. The inquiry is into technically distinctive situations in which there will be more variables of interest than data points. One result of this is that -
5. The inquiry relies on multiple sources of evidence, with a need for data to converge in a triangulating fashion. One result of this is that -
6. The inquiry benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis

Again, the requirements of this research fit neatly into these categories, the fifth of which tends to converge on an ethnographic set of methodologies, which will be discussed in the next section.

The last of the above three points clearly applies less to exploratory and descriptive case studies. In the case of the present research project, although there is an element of both description and exploration, the research work has been preceded by, and results in further, theory development. The prior theory development has consisted less of "developing theoretical propositions" than of attempting, in a broader fashion to delineate potential

theoretical frameworks within which the data gathered by the case studies could be analysed.

The case study approach has sometimes been criticised as lacking in rigour, the propensity for researcher bias, and an inherent weakness in providing a sound basis for scientific generalisation (see, for example, discussion in Yin (1994)). Mitchell (1983.207) comments that "Many of the criticisms (in terms of validity and reliability) of the case study approach are based on a misconception of the basis upon which the analyst may justifiably extrapolate from an individual case study to the social process in general". The three potential objections identified by Yin will now be examined in a little more detail.

First, case studies can, and sometimes are, conducted with a striking lack of rigour. Yin (1994.9) comments that "too many times, the case study investigator has been sloppy and has allowed equivocal evidence or biased views to influence the findings and conclusions". However, steps can be taken to undertake case studies in a systematic and rigorous manner: moreover other research methods are also open to similar criticism. The steps taken in this research will be outlined in more detail in Chapter 12.

The second criticism of the case study research strategy relates to the tendency for researcher bias. But such bias is also to be found in other strategies (for example, in questionnaire design), and again the disciplined researcher will be constantly striving to keep bias to a minimum.

Finally the issue of generalisability is worthy of a more comprehensive response. One of the fallacies about case studies is that generalisations can be derived from them on the basis that they are "samples" from which generalisations can be made to other populations or universes: this is entirely false. As Yin (1974) emphasises, case studies are generalisable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes, the goal being to expand and generalise theoretical understandings and not to enumerate frequencies: they provide analytic and not statistical generalisations. Or as Mitchell (1983.200) puts it, "extrapolation from any one case study to like situations in general is based only on logical inference".

The case study can be a floppy, imprecise piece of work that is ridden with subjectivity and bias: but the case study can, and the good case study must, be otherwise. As Yin (1994.16) concludes: "Paradoxically, the 'softer' a research strategy, the harder it is to do". The experience of this research is that compiling a collection of case studies is a an exceptionally demanding and difficult exercise. Some of these issues will be expanded in Chapter 12.

4.3 The Development of Grounded Theory

The area of study chosen for this thesis is generally lacking in theory, the major exception being the proliferation of writings which attempt to apply the concept of PTSD and writings on resilience.

The grounded theory approach is defined (Glaser and Strauss 1968.24) as the discovery of theory from data. It places strong emphasis on comparative analysis: as Glaser and Strauss state, "By comparing where the facts are similar or different, we can generate properties of categories that increase the categories' generality and explanatory power", and in this sense the approach is consistent with a comparative case study approach which attempts to explore and analyse data from the ground up.

This study has, as its primary objective, the development of theory in an area which is generally lacking in both conceptual frameworks and theory: and although the researcher does bring to the research a number of tentative concepts and hypotheses, the research strategy adopted clearly needs to allow the data "to speak for itself". Glaser and Strauss (1968.253) acknowledge that "no sociologist can possibly erase from his mind all the theory he knows before he begins his research", but a key issue is the use of a wide range of qualitative sources of data within the case studies, coupled with the use of a coding system which allows the emergence of new categories, as uncontaminated as possible by existing concepts and theories.

The issue of a multiplicity of data sources and the need to have an effective coding system brings us neatly into a discussion of the principal methods source, namely that of ethnography.

4.4 Ethnographic Methods

The term "case study" is descriptive of an approach to research rather than indicating a particular method. Within an overall framework of a multiple case study design, a variety of different research methods could potentially be deployed.

One of the principal requirements of this study is to "get under the skin" of projects which may be (and usually are) poorly documented in order to understand what they consist of, what their rationale is, what various activities comprise their programme and what their impact is. These objectives call for the use of a multiplicity of methods, principally qualitative, and it is in this context that the broad approach, commonly referred to as ethnography, seems particularly suited to this study.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983.2) defines the role of the ethnographer in these terms "The ethnographer participates, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned".

Ethnographic approaches are closely associated with the work of social anthropologists who frequently spent very long periods of time, totally immersed in a particular situation (e.g. a small village) where they would deploy a range of research methods, often with a particular emphasis on participant observation. Although this study has some features in common with classical anthropological approaches - not the least of which is the need to understand the wider culture within which the project is set, as well as understanding the "culture" of the project - the time-frames are very different. A practical requirement of this modest collection of case studies is that the fieldwork for each be condensed into a short period of time - usually around three weeks.

There are some precedents for this approach, sometimes referred to as "rapid ethnography". Pelto and Pelto (1990.292), reviewing what some disparagingly regard as "quick and dirty" research methods, conclude that "despite some trepidations concerning rapid ethnographic

research, the 1980s saw a substantial increase in sophistication in systematizing this type of data gathering".

Some ethnographers have seen their work as something of a reaction to positivism and emphasising the need to study the social world in its "natural" state, as unaffected as possible by the researcher. Naturalism may be helpful in emphasising the need to move beyond trying to understand social events in terms of causal relationships or by reference to universal laws: it emphasises the need to build understandings of the *meanings* which guide people's behaviour, and in turn this requires not only an understanding of the culture of societies but also a phenomenological perspective in trying to see the social world through the eyes of the various social actors engaged in it. This is helpful in the context of the present research, but naturalism sometimes seems to propose that it is possible for the researcher to construct an account of what is being observed which is external to and independent of the researcher: this is an overstatement and may indeed conflict with the principle of reflexivity which is discussed below.

A number of features of ethnography will now be identified and linked with the design for this study. First, ethnography generally calls for the use of **multiple data sources**. This helps to avoid the danger of findings being accused of being method-dependent, and provides a basis for cross-checking or triangulating data. The study needs to draw on a wide range of sources of information in order to achieve a rounded and balanced view of each project: these will include -

- Documentary and archival sources of information - project reports, planning documents, correspondence, articles, videos, evaluations etc.
- Semi-structured interviews with a wide variety of key informants - project staff, people involved in the project (sometimes - but not altogether appropriately - referred to as project beneficiaries), the parents of children involved, community leaders, personnel from other related organisations, government staff and so on.
- Field visits, observation (and, where appropriate) participant observation of project activities.

- Group discussions - e.g. with project staff and, occasionally, focus-group discussions e.g. with groups of children, parents etc..

A second feature of ethnography which is particularly significant for this study is its **flexibility**: as Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) emphasise, because ethnography does not require extensive pre-fieldwork design, "the strategy and even direction of the research can be changed relatively easily, in line with changing assessments of what is required by the process of theory construction. As a result, ideas can be quickly tried out and, if promising, followed up. In this way ethnography allows theory development to be pursued in a highly effective and economical manner".

A third characteristic feature of ethnography is its **reflexivity**. Both positivism and naturalism tend to be somewhat obsessed with the need to eliminate researcher bias, but ethnographers tend to take a different view by recognising that researchers are a part of the social world they are studying, and that it is not possible (nor necessarily desirable) for the researcher to be a "fly on the wall" and detached from the events being observed. Rather ethnographers accept that they are participants, and turn this fact to their benefit by deriving additional information from analysing how and why the people being studied react to the researcher as they do. With this in mind, observation always has an element of participation, though clearly there are degrees of participation. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983.25) conclude "By including our own role within the research focus and systematically exploiting our participation in the world under study, as researchers, we can develop and test theory without placing reliance on futile attempts to empiricism, or either positivist or naturalist varieties".

These issues of participation and reflexivity are considered further below, under the influence of feminist approaches to research, and are considered in more detail in Chapter 12.

4.5 Feminist Research

The past decade has seen the beginnings of a "feminist methodology" in social research: and while many of the writings on the subject have tended to fuse methodological issues derived

from this incipient research approach with more specific feminist concerns regarding the subjects of research, some of the former have direct relevance to this study.

As already indicated, research undertaken by ex-patriate Europeans in developing countries (especially those with a colonial past) may raise specific issues regarding the dynamics of the relationship between the researcher and the researched. It is in this context that feminist approaches are particularly relevant because of their focus on the dynamics of dominance and the need for approaches which minimise their effects.

The writing of Mies (1993) has been particularly illuminating, and she made this connection between third world research and feminist research. Three particular themes emerge from her paper: first, she challenges the ethics of detachment of the researcher resulting in "an indifferent, disinterested, alienated attitude towards the 'research objects'". Second, she emphasises the need to replace a vertical relationship between the researcher and the researched with a "view from below", accompanied by an attitude of "conscious partiality and reciprocity". Third she talks of the need for feminist researchers to move out of their academic "ivory tower" and engage with people by means of active participation in the struggle for women's emancipation. Finally, Mies talks of the need for researchers to attempt to change the *status quo* and to be directly concerned with processes of change.

Writing in a somewhat similar vein, Oakley, A (1981.58) suggests that personal involvement on the part of the researcher is "the condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives".

How are these concepts to be applied to a (male) researcher undertaking research in (mainly) developing country contexts? First, the need to narrow the distance between researcher and researched is particularly important in contexts where the subjects of the research (be they project staff or beneficiaries) may be inhibited by the presence of a white, male foreigner. A sense of power differential and the inhibitions which may result from it may well be exacerbated if the researcher is identified with an organisation which is funding the project. This links with a second point, namely the need to avoid the sense of the

researcher "viewing the project from above". This is especially significant in respect of the danger of this approach in tending to elicit "expected behaviour" rather than "real behaviour" (Berger 1974). The researcher's previous experience of researching in developing country contexts has revealed the powerful wish on the part of many project staff for dialogue with interested and informed outsiders: so often there is a feeling of professional isolation, of the lack of opportunities for critical feedback and debate.

A further point to emphasise here is that one of the most effective ways of avoiding research bias is the adoption of a reflexive approach. This implies a degree of transparency on the part of the researcher, a willingness to share perceptions and interpretations with project staff in an open exchange based on mutual trust and the avoidance of what Mies refers to as a "view from above". Oakley compares feminist research with anthropological research and the need to "get inside the culture": in this study, it is clearly necessary to get inside the culture of the programme - its ethos, value system and history in addition to its activities - as well as the need to get into the culture within which it is set.

A reflexive approach provides a valuable form of triangulation in order to test out emerging ideas and to share impressions and tentative conclusions : it seeks to engage project staff in what Oakley describes as a joint exploration of the programme and the issues it raises. The approach seems to meet the needs of staff who are often eager to enter into this kind of open debate. It has been the frequent experience of the researcher that if this kind of debate can occur, the results are both an enrichment of the research data and a change in the *status quo* within the project. Examples of this will be given in Chapter 12 .

4.6 The Research Design

The research ultimately took the shape of a collection of seven case studies of programmes drawn from around the globe.

The selection of cases, as is often characteristic of the case study approach, was made on the basis of "representativeness in terms of a qualitative logic..... rather than a quantitative logic of sampling" (Rose 1991). It was made on the basis of three principal criteria: first,

while it was neither possible nor desirable to select cases on the basis of representativeness, there was a logic of selection on the grounds of **diversity of approach**. As Platt (1988) asserts , the logic of diversity can be valuable where multiple case studies are designed to be descriptive or exploratory as well as explanatory. As with Buchanan and Boddy's (1993.33) research, case study sites were chosen with the aim of finding examples of work providing data that were "rich and interesting , rather than rigorous, and to generate hypotheses for further research". The greater the diversity of cases, the greater their explanatory power (Mitchell 1983). In pursuing the need for diversity, it was decided to include both projects which impacted on refugees and those which targeted other war-affected populations. While the study has a particular emphasis on children, programmes which impacted on a broader segment of society were chosen: most have a family focus and many have a strong community orientation. Insofar as there is a strong emphasis on refugees, it seemed important to examine work which collectively spans the refugee experience - i.e. from the initial emergency through to repatriation/return or settlement in a third country.

A second criterion was that of **regional diversity**: although generalisation across cultures is always difficult and potentially dangerous, there seemed to be merit in choosing the widest possible diversity of countries and cultures. This criterion was, however, limited by a third criterion, namely, **issues of access**. Access to case study sites was limited by a number of factors: most obviously, projects had to be in countries currently (or recently) affected by war or displacement, and they had to be within the range of programmes supported by Rädda Barnen. Issues of consent by the implementing organisation were also a potentially limiting factor. In practice, it proved possible to select case study subjects from Central America, Africa, Central Europe and Scandinavia: the Asia region was an unfortunate but unavoidable omission, and there was an inevitable concentration in Africa, reflecting the high incidence of conflicts and the priority given to work in this continent. As Buchanan and Boddy (1993) point out, opportunism is a valid approach for certain types of study so long as the approach taken is made explicit. Hence it is important to re-emphasise that because of the absence of rigorous sampling frames, the study, like case studies generally, does not attempt to generalise to populations or universes: but by selecting on the grounds of diversity, this does facilitate analytic and theoretical generalisation.

Agency requirements were such that it was not possible to pilot the approach: in any case, because of the diversity of research sites, and hence of methods, piloting would have been of limited value. The process of the study involved several of the case studies being undertaken by contracted researchers at the same time as the researcher was undertaking his three case studies sequentially. This phasing did make it possible, in some cases, to take ideas and issues from one situation and pose relevant questions in others. This process will be examined in more detail in the Chapter 12.

Each case study was undertaken in the form of a "snapshot" which examined the work of the particular project as a particular point in time, although, as already indicated, a historical element was built in by undertaking an archival review and by interviews with key informants.

4.7 Managing the Research Study

The final decision on the seven research sites were taken in discussion with Rädda Barnen staff in Stockholm and after extensive negotiations both with the local Rädda Barnen staff and with staff within the chosen projects. As already indicated in Chapter 3, for various reasons it was not possible for the researcher to undertake all of the case studies himself. This means that the research was managed in two different ways.

First, where it was possible for the researcher to undertake the fieldwork himself, a "prime contact" (Clark and Causer 1991) or focal point was identified within the Rädda Barnen office in order to facilitate logistical arrangements, and similarly a focal point was identified within the chosen project as the key person for negotiations over access, planning the research, feeding-back perceptions and observations and more generally dealing with problems and issues as they emerged. Where appropriate, interpreters were hired and an induction session was held in order to plan out the appropriate style of translating. The field visits, interviews, group discussions etc. were planned in discussion with agency staff and usually field visits were accompanied by staff members. Detailed field notes and a research diary were compiled, and in addition many interviews and group discussions were tape recorded. Most of the material for Chapter 12 (Reflections on Research Methods) is derived

from the case studies that were undertaken in person and many of the issues raised above will be elaborated in some detail in this chapter.

Where the particular case study was contracted out to another person, a different management system was adopted: this had several characteristics. First came the task of identifying an appropriate researcher: this sometimes proved difficult - especially where there were particular requirements such as the desirability of deploying an independent, black researcher in South Africa. Second, each of these projects was usually the subject of a short but usually very intensive period of fieldwork by the researcher and the contracted case study researcher: this visit had a number of important functions. It helped to raise some of the key issues to be raised in the case study and provided important first-hand experience for the researcher which was vital in the overall analysis of the seven case studies. It also provided opportunities for providing some training and orientation for the case study researcher, and for more detailed negotiation with agency staff. These field visits were especially important in those case studies where the case study researcher did not have the degree of detachment which would have been ideal. The field visits provided a vital opportunity for the data to be cross-checked and enabled the researcher to point out gaps, issues not adequately addressed and so on. In these cases, the researcher also undertook to review all the available secondary data as an additional safeguard.

Although with ethnographic research it is not possible to pre-design the case study in detail, it was nevertheless important that a protocol was compiled for each case study, setting out the objectives of the study, an indication of some of the issues to be covered and outlining the principal methods to be used.

The individual case study researchers were supervised (from a distance, in most cases), problems and issues discussed over the telephone, and an early draft was presented for discussion: in some cases this resulted in substantial revisions to the draft and sometimes in additional fieldwork in order to fill gaps or cross-check information. Finally the researcher edited each case study, returning it to the case study researcher for final approval.

In all cases, drafts of the case study were shared with project staff and comments invited. Not only did this contribute to the atmosphere of openness, it also provided an important means of cross-checking for factual accuracy, and of exposing interpretations and analysis to scrutiny.

Within each of the case studies, sampling decisions had to be made: and given that the fieldwork was usually undertaken during one brief period, longitudinal time sampling approaches were not possible. Moreover, because of the scale of some projects, coupled with geographical distances, very often the fieldwork had to be restricted to certain sites. Hammersley and Atkinson's (1983) comments that "all ethnographers have to resist the very ready temptation to try to see, hear, and participate in everything that goes on" was reassuring!

Detailed information on the analysis of the data will be given in Chapter 12. At this stage, it is important to note that, given the overall aim of theory development, the process of analysis of the data sparked off a great deal of additional reading as a means of pursuing in more detail some of the key issues raised by the case studies.

Chapter 5: An Introduction to The Case Studies

This chapter gives a brief description of each of the programmes depicted in the seven case studies and a summary of the main issues which each one raises. This chapter is printed on coloured paper so that the reader can readily refer to it when encountering references to individual case studies in the text.

Case Study 1: From Clinic to Community: The Work of Acisam in El Salvador

Acisam (Association for Training and Research in Mental Health) is an organisation which was born during the most critical years of political repression in El Salvador. Initially, Acisam offered counselling and psychotherapy to individuals, but the primary focus of the organisation gradually shifted from clinical intervention to preventive approaches, and following the peace agreement in 1992 it decided to concentrate its energies on training and supporting volunteer Promoters in village communities, whose task was to offer a range of activities broadly described as mental health promotion. The task of training and supporting Promoters is undertaken by a cadre of Facilitators, most of whom who are professional psychologists.

The role of the Promoter is a diverse one, varying according to the characteristics and needs of the local community, the interests and abilities of the individual Promoter and the pattern of coordination and cooperation between local organisations. The principal focus is a wide range of community organisation activities which include, for example, organising sports and activities for young people; raising awareness of such issues as domestic violence, grief and loss, and alcoholism; giving talks to schools and other groups; adult education; organising cultural and recreational activities and celebrations; identifying local needs and negotiating for resources (e.g. wells and water pumps, road-building, health facilities etc.). Promoters also undertake more individual work such as counselling and supporting self-help groups. Although Promoters have a role and a range of tasks to perform in that role, Acisam's intention, in providing training and support, is also to introduce understandings of mental health issues into their broader work and life in the community.

Acisam also deploys Young Promoters, and Child and Youth Leaders, who are usually older adolescents or young adults. By using sports and other recreational activities, music, dancing, video etc. as a means of gaining the interest of young people, they often then try to progress into other areas which may include, for example, workshop events (e.g. on topics such as alcoholism, health issues, sexuality, grief and loss etc.), and the development of modest economic enterprise. The aim with all of these activities is to help young people to be organised and active, to take responsibility within their local community for gaining resources and achieving change, and to be involved in promoting mental health in its broadest sense.

An important aspect of Acisam's work is the production of videos on diverse mental health topics (both for training purposes and for television transmission to the general public), designing and running training courses and seminars and the production of a journal on mental health issues. A book has also been produced in conjunction with psychologists in the region. Through these means they attempt to influence public opinion, promote awareness of mental health issues and encourage the development of non-traditional approaches.

Although retaining the language of "mental health", Acisam's approach is highly significant in moving away from individualised conceptualisations of mental health and seeing, for example, the importance in identifying the effects of war in community terms. An interesting feature of Acisam's experience is that it is not found to be useful to respond to the reactions of individuals and communities to their experiences of war and conflict in isolation from other issues being faced in rural communities. The specific effects of conflict and violence, and the implications of the peace accord are inextricably inter-twined, making it necessary to respond to the totality of people's experiences and not one particular aspect of them.

The approach can be described as an attempt to achieve widespread impact by diffusing psychological knowledge and understandings into local communities through the deployment of volunteer Promoters. By this means the costs of the programme are

relatively low, while strenuous attempts are made to maintain high standards largely through the work done by Facilitators to train, support and supervise the Promoters. A dilemma currently being faced, however, is how to maintain the commitment of Promoters without offering any financial rewards.

An important aspect of Acisam's attempt to achieve maximum and widespread impact of their work is the need for coordination with local structures. Integration with village committees and with Municipal authorities (where this is possible), coordination with other NGOs (especially those which also deploy Promoters), liaison with churches and coordination with other local organisations are all seen as vital. The increasing emphasis on working with the Government (considered as unthinkable until comparatively recently) is an important aspect of maximising their influence and impact. The fact that Acisam has been closely associated with the FMLN (the former guerillas and now a political alliance) has both positive and negative consequences. In the former Liberated Zones (areas under the control of the FMLN), Acisam has been able to build up trust more readily and to work extremely closely with local authorities; on the other hand, working in areas where the FMLN are less strong can be more problematic. Many communities in El Salvador are very polarised politically, and the lack of trust and the fear of betrayal continue to be extremely strong in many of them. The need for community reconciliation is a very real one, but because Acisam is identified with a political movement, this may be a particularly difficult area in which impact can be achieved .

Case Study 2: A special Form of Social Interaction: the Work of Hi Neighbour[15] in Yugoslavia

The conflict in the former Yugoslavia began in 1990 when parts of the Federation attempted to secede. The most serious and widespread fighting occurred in Bosnia-Hercegovina, and though what remained of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) comprising Serbia and Montenegro had little direct involvement in the fighting, they were hosts to large numbers

[15] Hi Neighbour is a not entirely satisfactory translation of of the Serbian "Zdravo da ste", a traditional form of greeting which is more accurately translated as "I wish you good health".

of refugees. Most of them lived either in host families or in Collective Centres, (usually large institutional buildings). Hi Neighbour has its roots in events in 1992 when a group of developmental psychologists, based in the University of Belgrade, became concerned about the effects of war on all children in the former Yugoslavia, and in particular about the issues facing the growing number of children and families seeking refuge.

When they came into closer contact with children in the Collective Centres, what they observed was that many children were simply unable to play, many having experienced violence, sudden uprootedness and separation, as well as facing an uncertain future in a very constraining living environment. They also found that many parents (mainly mothers) displayed a reduced level of parental competence as a result of their experiences. They also found that refugees felt a loss of a sense of individuality and personal identity. Moreover, because of the loss of their homes and the experience of displacement, compounded by the lack of privacy and permanence in the Collective Centres, the lack of, and need for, a sense of "personal space" was striking.

When it came to developing their methodology, Hi Neighbour had no model to build on, though they did have experience of running workshop groups with children, and decided to develop this approach, and the methodology grew and evolved with experience. The central part of the programme consists of workshop groups, run in Collective Centres, on a weekly basis. Unlike therapy groups, the rationale is based on a Vygotskian child development framework.

Two or more psychologists are deployed in each group, and typically a group for children, one for adolescents and one for adults operate concurrently, with periodic joint workshops for all ages. The groups are open, refugees are free to join and leave at will, and an important aspect of their work is the wish for the workshops to reflect realities of life within the Centres. Workshop sizes vary greatly, from 2 or 3 people to as many as 60 or more attending a joint workshop event. Each workshop group, which takes up to about two hours, usually involves a wide variety of different activities. They usually begin in a large circle, with the theme of personal names, personal signs and faces which serves to validate

individuals and emphasise personal identity and individuality. The main content of each workshop follows a particular theme, chosen by the psychologists, sometimes following requests from participants. Within each workshop, however, participants have a great deal of scope to raise and work on issues of their choice. Workshops also end with participants in a large circle with some sort of experience which, often in a ritual-like manner, draws the workshop to a conclusion. The workshops are usually preceded by a period of informal interaction, over coffee with the refugees: part of Hi Neighbour's aim is befriending, and on some occasions the psychologists will assist the refugees with practical tasks such as harvesting or preparing meals.

The whole approach is based on the belief that all refugees are deeply affected by their experience, but by avoiding labelling people as "traumatised" or as "having problems", they are able to work in a way that builds on people's strength rather than weakness. No attempt is made to "solve" problems, to offer interpretations or to suggest action which they can take: rather the aim is to provide a special form of social interaction and the "tools" with which people themselves can discover and build on their own and each other's personal resources.

Media such as drawing and painting, clay modelling, story telling, movement and human sculpting, creative and expressive games and exercises all facilitate individual and group expression and exploration of the reality they are in and its emotional significance for them. One particularly important medium is that of "performances"; these comprise role-played enactments which are usually minimally-prepared and performed by small groups in front of the whole workshop. By such means, children (and sometimes adults) can creatively and imaginatively work on issues which they select.

There are some obvious differences between workshops for children and adults: the latter, for example, rely rather more on discussion and less on activities, though drawing and a range of other media are used. Sometimes the workshops for children, for adolescents and for adults in the same Collective Centre will pursue the same theme, sometimes sharing what they have done with each other at the end of the workshop.

In contrast with more traditional therapeutic groups, the openness of the groups is designed to enable the workshops to reflect on the issues actually being faced in the real-life world of the Collective Centre, rather than removing participants from that context into a more artificially-constituted group. The "prolonged workshop effect" is a way of describing the intended outcome of the workshops in helping refugees to change the pattern of interaction among themselves - for example, in encouraging the expression of feelings, in achieving a high level of caring and tolerance, in developing non-violent means of resolving conflict. The leaders strive to help the participants to actively work on the here-and-now issues facing themselves: this is particularly the case in workshops for adults. This was vividly demonstrated in a workshop in a Collective Centre for recently-arrived refugees; despite many expressions of despair and hopelessness, a large group of participants mobilised energy to actually deal with some of the current problems and frustrations they were facing, culminating in decisions about concrete actions that some of them resolved to take.

The programme operates on a multiplicity of levels: at a basic level it provides simple friendship, cultural and recreational activities which are valuable for their own sake. At another level it offers a conceptually complex approach to child and human development, based on the work of Vygotsky which calls for very precise, purposeful and sophisticated work but which, in practice is implemented in a relaxed, friendly, non-confrontational manner. The willingness of the psychologists to work within the real-life situation of the Centres rather than withdrawing people into a "special" group situation is also a hallmark of their work.

Case Study 3: Promoting Community Healing Networks: the Work of the National Children and Violence Trust in South Africa

The period between the late eighties and the early nineties was marked by an escalation of political violence in South Africa. The political strategy for bringing about the downfall of the National Party Government entailed putting children in the forefront of direct action. Young people were the victims of state-initiated violence: often they were both the victims and the perpetrators of factional violence. Domestic, sexual and school-based violence were all indicative of the "cycle of violence" which had developed. The situation became

tantamount to a state of civil war.

The initial response of the founder of the NCVT, a black psychologist working in an academic context, was to offer individual consultations and counselling to those affected by violence, whether victims or perpetrators; however, there was a growing realisation that clinical approaches were inadequate, especially in view of the lack of black psychologists, and as the numbers of people seeking assistance increased, she realised that a different approach was needed. She came to realise that communities were not "empty terrains" and that a variety of approaches would be needed in order to work in a more neighbourhood-based way, utilising people and resources from within those communities. She took such a challenge with enthusiasm and pioneered the project now called the National Children and Violence Trust. Initially relying entirely on part-time psychologists, it now has its own staff team which, in turn, supports a large number of neighbourhood-based colleagues working on a part-time basis.

A core aspect of the work of NCVT is the setting-up of Community-Based Networks, which are formed by individuals from local communities who organise themselves into resource groups that respond to the psychological needs of traumatised children in their neighbourhoods. Sometimes referred to as "networks of front-line child care workers", they address the psychological effects of violence on people, facilitate reconciliation between children and adults, and bring together diverse people in the communities to respond to any problems concerning violence. Violence prevention - for example in schools - may be as important as assisting individuals directly affected by violence. A strong emphasis is placed on the affirmation of communities as sources of knowledge and empowering people to take collective action in response to the problems.

Each network is encouraged to examine the nature and manifestations of violence within its area and to consider the specific effects on people. They are encouraged to draw up detailed action plans to ensure a systematic and considered response to the issues identified. Various campaigns are conducted to draw awareness of the problem; workshops are held on a whole range of related issues, using a highly participative methodology, in order to sensitise

people and to train them in appropriate responses. At national level, the Trust is active in organising national campaigns, preparing documentary films and participating in media coverage of issues related to violence. They also advocate with Government for policies and regulations, and for social programmes for those who are vulnerable and at risk of violence. Research is carried out to inform the development of policies and programmes.

The project encourages traditional approaches to healing and traditional healers are incorporated into the Community-Based Networks. A variety of religious practices are encouraged where these appear to have therapeutic value, and various traditional children's games are used and adapted as a medium through which children can express themselves and their experiences of violence. Clinical approaches to counselling continue alongside these more community-based strategies, utilising both headquarters- based and local psychologists.

Although the primary focus of the fieldwork for the study was the observed contemporary situation, the findings are contextualised within the historical context in which the project was born - i.e. the late Apartheid era in South Africa.

Case Study 4: Timely Social Work Intervention in Refugee Emergencies: the Work of the Standby Team

The Standby Team is a group of highly experienced community social workers who are seconded by Rädda Barnen to join, as Community Services Officers (CSOs), the Emergency Team deployed by the UN High Commission for Refugees at the very earliest stage of a refugee emergency. Their principal tasks are to provide early and rapid assessments; to begin to facilitate the setting up of refugee structures and encourage maximum refugee participation; to encourage their active involvement in responding to the needs of particularly vulnerable refugees, especially those of children and women, and to identify and support NGOs which might play a part in the development of community services in the camps.

For the purpose of this case study, it was felt important not just to examine the work of the

CSO, but also to consider the "legacy" of the deployment by examining the subsequent development of community services in the refugee camps. With this in mind it was decided to visit a group of camps in Karagwe, a remote and inaccessible part of Tanzania, and containing about 110,000 Rwandese people who had fled following the genocide and civil war. The researcher was accompanied by the person who had undertaken the CSO mission commencing about four months earlier. This visit therefore combined an examination of the work she had already undertaken, with an exploration of subsequent work, primarily by Save the Children Fund UK (SCF) who had taken the lead role in providing and coordinating community services.

This case study raises many issues relevant to this research: it raises the whole question of the need for early assessment and intervention in relation to various social problems, including children separated from their families or who are vulnerable to separation; it considers a range of issues to do with the care of separated children and the tracing of their families; it identifies the dangers of organisations initiating inappropriate responses to the needs of separated children such as opening institutions; it examines the need for and rationale of a community mobilisation approach; it raises issues to do with facilitating the re-establishment of leadership structures within the refugee community and the empowerment of refugee women. The case study discusses the issues surrounding the eliciting of socio-cultural information on the refugee population and the need to understand the pattern of leadership and other social structures in Rwanda. The study examines questions about the importance of re-establishing, for children, a sense of structure and routine in their lives, and it considers some of the issues involved in the early planning of schools and recreational activities in the camps.

The Rwandese refugees had experienced a high level of exposure to violence as well as a range of frightening experiences both before and during flight from their country: the case study looks at the way in which psychological needs were conceptualised and addressed. By focussing both on what was being done, and on what was not being done, some important issues are raised to do with the role of religion and traditional practices, the need for more collective responses and the importance of diffusing psychological understandings broadly

among the refugees and the various organisations working in the camps.

Case Study 5: Building on Traditional Strengths: the Unaccompanied Refugee Children from South Sudan

The context of this case study is the extraordinary exodus of some 14,000 separated children (almost all boys) who fled from the civil war in South Sudan, their settlement in Pignudo, Ethiopia and their subsequent flight, back through Sudan to seek refuge in the Kakuma camp in Kenya. The latter move was prompted by a change of government in Ethiopia which led to a heightened sense of insecurity. As well as experiencing the civil war in Sudan, these young refugees had to contend with separation from their families and repeated displacement which in turn required them to walk incredible distances under the most extremely dangerous and adverse circumstances. Many perished along the way.

From an early stage in the Pignudo camp in Ethiopia, and subsequently in Kakuma, Rädda Barnen initiated a comprehensive programme designed to respond to the whole range of non-material needs of these children. Strenuous attempts were made, at the outset, to base the programme on a thorough understanding of the culture of these refugees, to work in close partnership with the refugee leaders and to build on the many traditional practices which seemed to facilitate the children's psychological recovery from their many potentially traumatic experiences.

The case study examines the care arrangements for these children, comprising both group care and varieties of foster care, both of which were planned and implemented in accordance with some distinctive customs. In particular, group care was planned in accordance with the tradition of Sudanese boys spending long periods of time away from their homes in groups, while they sought pasture and tended cattle.

Their culture also has a rich range of traditions such as writing and reciting poems, various art forms relating to the colour of each individual boy's bull, recounting dreams, singing, dancing, story telling etc.: many of these traditions were utilised, and adapted where appropriate, as media through which children could be helped to express their feelings in a

culturally-sanctioned manner, and to come to terms with their experiences of violence, separation and flight. The close integration between school and caretaking arrangements also contributed to the strategy to facilitate children's psychological recovery. Although a rigorous assessment of the impact of the programme on children was beyond the scope of the study, the available evidence suggested that, in general, these young people were coping extremely well, despite the extreme hardships and dangers that they had experienced.

A particular feature of the programme, from the beginning, has been the very high level of involvement by the refugees themselves, particularly the involvement of refugee leaders in planning the programme and monitoring and assessing its achievements. The active involvement of young people has also been a notable feature, especially the responsibilities given to older youngsters in caring for younger children and the use of a child-to-child approach in areas such as health education. Again these reflect peer-group responsibilities which are a feature of the culture.

Case Study 6: Psycho-Social Care for Children with Refugee Background in Sweden: the Work of Rädda Barnen's Swedish Department

Sweden has had a relatively generous immigration policy which has meant that it has received more refugees than any other European country relative to its size. The Swedish Department of Rädda Barnen offers a range of approaches, broadly designed to help ensure that children with a refugee or immigrant background have the same rights and opportunities as Swedish children. There is a particular emphasis on children separated from their families. The many components of the programme, some of which are offered in partnership with other organisations, include the following:

- An advisory service for asylum seekers and refugees
- A Centre for Children Affected by Armed Conflict offering individual and family therapy, art and play therapy
- Drama, classical music and dance workshops in schools having a large concentration

of children from a refugee or immigrant background

- Individual support to children and families offered by volunteer members of Rädda Barnen
- A wide range of activities designed to raise awareness of the issues faced by refugee children: these include advocacy work with government, the training of pre-school workers, continuing education for professional workers, conducting research and various measures to counter racism and xenophobia

Their experience, confirmed by the initial finding of some recent research, suggests that unaccompanied refugee children, especially those from Africa, face extreme difficulties, including racism, social isolation, problems in school and in finding work, all leading to a sense of hopelessness and despair. In a culture in which the small nuclear family is the norm, and in which there is a severely limited sense of community, even in smaller towns, the lack of community support leads to a situation in which the sense of loneliness and isolation are profound: the work of the Centre for Children and War has an important role in providing social support as well as therapeutic intervention for some of these youngsters.

Rädda Barnen's work with refugees and asylum seekers in Sweden can be seen as a developing process which has tried to take a holistic perspective by working with a wide variety of methods, and on a range of different levels. Rädda Barnen have chosen to work with individual children, with families, in pre-schools and schools, with a variety of professionals, in the wider community, and by impacting on the policy and legislation level through advocacy and lobbying. By retaining direct involvement with refugees through such means as its clinic and advisory work, it has continued to develop its first-hand knowledge of refugees, and of the ever-changing pattern of problems and needs that they bring to Sweden.

Case Study 7: Contamination by War: Strategies for Restoration by Collective Action: Somali Refugees in Yemen

Most of the Somali refugees who fled to Yemen during the spring and summer of 1992 crossed the Sea of Aden and ended up in Medinat Al Shaab refugee camp in a sandy desert

10 km from the city of Aden. The camp environment initially had few facilities apart from a food distribution system and a small health clinic. Rädda Barnen, as one of the few NGOs working in Yemen, took the initiative to plan and start a primary school in the camp. It was immediately apparent that many of the children and their parents had had experiences of violence and other traumatic events in Somalia which were compounded by the current stresses and absence of support in the refugee camp. Six months later, a survey was undertaken to assess the psychological well-being of refugee mothers, and to evaluate their competence to meet the needs of their children. As a result of this survey, ideas were formulated on ways to improve the mothers' sense of psychological well-being and parental competence by encouraging their active participation in a range of community development activities. The case study focuses on these two initiatives - the school and the programme with women.

Rädda Barnen were unable to provide consistent support to the programme, partly because of the civil war in Yemen, which created the need for the refugees to flee again, to Algahin in a remote and barren part of Yemen. This had a quite fortuitous outcome in respect of the school, which developed an approach to the children's psychological well-being based on a range of traditional practices. A strong sense of "community ownership" of the school, the recruitment of teachers with appropriate motivation and a real concern for the children, and an effective and participative management style on the part of the head teacher all helped create a situation in which the school became a central community resource which transcended the deep clanship divisions within the camp. The school offered various activities to children (and sometimes to families) which were significant in helping them to recover from their repeated experiences of violence and displacement, in the context of a culture in which people are not encouraged to talk directly about personal or painful issues. These activities included story-telling, plays, singing, quizzes, encouragement with hobbies and interests etc.. An important objective was to facilitate self-expression and develop clear forms of communication with other children, with parents and within the wider community. Sports activities were also organised by the teachers, including football and volley-ball teams. Religious expression was encouraged: this was seen as an important coping strategy both for adults and children.

With regard to the programme with refugee women, as a result of the survey, it was decided to establish a Women's Union: a meeting place was provided. Various interest groups were set up, including ones to concentrate on hygiene and health care, education and child care, social and cultural activities, home economics, conflict resolution, and help to people in need. After the camp moved to Algahin, the group again was provided with a place to meet, but the activities appear to have been limited to handicrafts and literacy classes. However, it was subsequently learned that the Women's Union had ceased to be a democratic organisation, leadership being concentrated in the hands of one, very authoritarian person. The Union had become little more than a place for women to meet and undertake a limited range of activities.

In analysing the reasons for this disappointing outcome, the case study concludes that the planning was based on an under-estimation of the existence and importance of relatively invisible, informal support networks which existed among the women. Given the lack of the more formal and visible patterns of leadership among women in Algahin, the leadership of the Women's Union was likely to depend on a small number of powerful women, leaving the Union vulnerable to inappropriate and autocratic leadership. The lack of external support in the early implementation phase of the project also probably contributed to the disappointing outcome.

The case study examines the way in which traumatic events were experienced by these Somali refugees and how culturally-appropriate responses emerged from this understanding. The school placed particular emphasis on the importance of daily structure, adult support and play in promoting the psychological well-being of the children, and these were very evident in the various activities planned and implemented by the teachers. They had taken their role outside of the school, first in promoting partnership with parents, and also in developing a wide range of out-of-school activities. Rather than seeing reactions to frightening experiences as individual problems, they preferred rather to emphasise that everyone in the camp has experienced violence, war and displacement, and that the whole community is not only grieving together but also coping collectively.

Chapter 6: Understanding the Meanings Ascribed to Events: the Role of Cultural Traditions, Religion and Ideology

The case studies clearly underline the need for comprehensive cultural understandings as an essential part of the context for any work with children psychologically affected by war or displacement. Such understandings are needed on several levels:

1. There are issues to do with how people in a particular cultural context understand and make sense of events they have experienced. In particular, there are issues about how traditional healing, religious beliefs and practices and political ideology confer a sense of meaning on events they have experienced
2. There are issues of how traditionally different societies respond and deal with distressing events: in particular, the role of traditional practices in contributing to healing
3. Underlying these issues is the important question of the way in which understandings and responses are seen to be individually or collectively framed.
4. The fourth set of issues concerns the strategies used for promoting, developing and building on cultural responses to distressing events in order to strengthen people's capacities to cope, and to avoid the danger of undermining traditional means of coping
5. Finally there is an important issue about how humanitarian staff - especially expatriates - gain sufficient socio-cultural understandings in order to be able to operate in a culturally sensitive and informed manner

These points provide the structure for this chapter.

6.1 Understanding How Different Cultures Make Sense of Events and Experiences

In the discussion of the concepts of coping resilience in Chapter 2, it was noted that an important variable in people's coping is their *appraisal* of the stressful event: psychological

stress was defined by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) as "a particular relationship between the person and the environment which is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being". Appraisal occurs in a particular context, and people's appraisal of a potentially stressful event will take place in the context of traditional beliefs, religious convictions and political ideology.

Many approaches to psychological healing offer ways of assisting individuals or groups of people to understand and make sense of difficult experiences, accept and "process" the feelings associated with them, and integrate these understandings into their view of themselves and their world. Sometimes referred to as "psychological resolution", the process, however achieved, serves to help restore a sense of well-being. Most Western professional approaches to psychological healing place particular emphasis on counselling and other therapeutic techniques as a means of facilitating these processes, usually with individual "clients" or "patients". However, the experience of this study is that there are many other ways of achieving this sense of "psychological resolution", and that the most appropriate methods will reflect the unique circumstances of each situation.

Much of the literature on the importance of ideology in people's coping with conflict situations emphasises *political* ideology, but two additional factors seem to be extremely important: first, in many traditional societies, people do not, as in Western societies, envisage body, mind and spirit as separate entities but rather as an undivided whole. Indeed the spiritual dimension may be an all-pervasive aspect of everyday life. Moreover, as will be discussed below, the self is experienced not so much as a highly individual and autonomous entity, but as the "self-embedded-in-community" (Katz 1984).

Second, religious beliefs can also be an important source of meaning, and religious observance can provide vitally important forms of expression of the feelings associated with traumatic experiences. Taken together, these two factors mean that people will develop understandings of traumatic events by reference to their set of beliefs, and that meaning will be attached to events not only as they are experienced by the individual, but as collective, community experiences.

6.1.1 The Role of Traditional Healing

Traditional healers may have a vital and effective role in healing the psychological wounds of war and conflict. Reference has already been made to the work of Katz (1984 and 1986) and of Katz and Wexler (1989) in defining and analysing the concept of healing in traditional societies.

The case study on the National Children and Violence Trust illustrates the value of psychologists working with traditional healers in South Africa.

Box 6.1 Working with Traditional Healers - the NCVT in South Africa

Based on the observation that many people still have faith and confidence in traditional forms of healing, the Trust's psychologists tried to adopt an attitude of respect rather than judgement towards them, and to seek to work in partnership with them. The case study provides an example of a traditional practice which was found to be effective in working with young people who had been the perpetrators of township violence. "Ukukhipha" ("removing the urge to kill") is a practice that rests on the notion that in order for a murderer to be rehabilitated completely, he/she is expected to undergo a certain cleansing process which is regarded as effective in removing the automatic urge to kill or engage in violence, an urge which lay behind such practices as "necklacing" - setting fire to a car tyre placed around someone's neck.

Similarly, in their work with the unaccompanied refugee children from South Sudan (Case Study 5), Rädda Barnen sought to use the knowledge and skills of the traditional healers in the Pignudo and Kakuma camps. This was a society in which, despite strong Christian beliefs, many events were understood by reference to spirits: death, for example might be looked upon as having to do with spiritual anger or disappointment. The programme manager responsible for this programme talked about a group of children who could not respond to other forms of therapy and who expressed a wish to "go to the holy water and then I know that I would be healed", so she sent them there with an adult's support. The

result - "usually they get better"[16].

In her article on the role of traditional healing in Zimbabwe's war of liberation, Pamela Reynolds (1980.1) described the role of traditional healers thus: "As the tailors and seamstresses, n'anga (traditional healers) were patching and darning the fabric of rural society as it set about restoring and reconstructing relations sorely strained by war". Her experience was that healers were sensitive to the effects of war on children, and in their treatments they displayed a care and concern for children and an understanding of their needs. Various rituals were used, for example for cleansing and purification, and in situations where problems were interpreted as being caused by spirit possession the healers could intervene in family groups to try to resolve the problem - for example if it were caused by an old quarrel. In a similar vein, Richman et al (undated) describe ceremonies in Mozambique which serve to "vaccinate" people from the effects of violence. Other traditional ceremonies serve to purify people returning from the war, while others help people to forget the pain associated with frightening events.

Writing in the context of Lao and Cambodian refugees in Thailand, Hiegel (1984.30) argues for the need for modern medical practice to work in collaboration with traditional healers. He concludes that many of the latter "have genuine psychotherapeutic abilities and a deep sense of medical ethics. They are well aware of their neighbors' need, and they are respected and trusted by them in return..... They are well-equipped to give psychological support to patients and to help them solve their emotional conflicts, especially when these conflicts are expressed through cultural beliefs in spirits and possession". He observed that traditional remedies and the psychological support offered by traditional healers were effective in treating depressive and neurotic symptoms and even mild forms of psychotic illness. Hiegel emphasises the need for mutual respect between traditional healers and modern health professionals, an acceptance of the limitations of each and sufficient mutual trust to facilitate referrals to each other.

During the fieldwork for the case study on the work of Acisam in El Salvador, it was found

[16] Tape-recorded interview

that some of the volunteer Health Promoters[17] who were trained and supported by the project were, initially, quite dismissive of the part played by traditional healers in their communities, and though this programme sought to work in close association with other local resources, traditional healers were not officially viewed in this way. One of the professional staff had already made the interesting general statement that "they do not reject people's knowledge but try to complement it". Upon closer questioning and discussion, however, some of the Promoters' initially very dismissive attitudes towards traditional healers fell away, and there was some acknowledgement that they might have some skills to offer. Later in discussion with the professional staff of the project and in the context of their request for feedback on the work of the project, the question was raised by the researcher, and there was a positive response to the suggestion that there was some potential for exploring greater collaboration with traditional healers.

Similarly in the refugee camps in Karagwe, Tanzania, there were believed to be traditional healers but their presence was largely invisible to the international agencies working there. This may, however, reflect a dismissive attitude towards them by the health professionals in the camp, and it is probably only by acknowledging, respecting and seeking to collaborate with them that their presence can become more visible. There is an immediate parallel with the role of Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) in many African contexts: in the past their role has sometimes been dismissed as non-scientific or even as "witch-doctery", but the trend today is towards collaborative work between modern practitioners and TBAs, affording opportunities for respecting their skills and standing within the community, developing their role and providing them with training which greatly enhances their skills. An example of such an approach was found in the Kakuma refugee camp[18].

6.1.2 The Role of Religion

Religion can play a vital part in enabling people to cope with death. Among the Rwandese refugees living in the Karagwe camps (Case Study no. 4) there were huge numbers of

[17] Research diary

[18] Fieldnotes - Case Study 5

people who had lost people in the genocide, and a particularly strong preoccupation was the problem in burying the dead. In many cases, people had fled leaving their dead relatives unburied, which caused great distress. Within the camp situation, people's inability to bury the dead in accordance with tradition was difficult, for two main reasons: first the lack of appropriate material to act as shrouds, and second, because an essential part of the traditional ceremony was the provision of food and drink for invited guests, clearly impossible in a refugee camp context where people are struggling to subsist on minimal rations.

An added complication in conflict situations is that war can distort traditional means of coping with difficulties. For example, the lack of priests in some of the refugee camps in Karagwe meant that religious expression was inhibited. One refugee woman told the researcher that she found it difficult to pray without the presence of a priest, and another refugee[19], in answer to a question about whether he was a Christian answered:

Yes, but we forget because of the war.... God has done bad things to us

Among international organisations there is sometimes a sensitivity about encouraging religious institutions in refugee camps, especially where religious divisions exist. In the Karagwe District of Tanzania there were huge numbers of Rwandese refugees who had witnessed (and in many case had taken part in) the most terrible atrocities. Given that the majority were Christian, there was potentially a vital role for the churches in administering healing on a wide variety of levels: helping people to mourn even though no burial had been possible, supporting bereaved people, providing forgiveness for the committing of atrocities and ceremonies of healing. Unfortunately the lack of priests in some camps meant that people were denied the vital role that the church could potentially play in healing the wounds of war. An additional problem was that some priests themselves had been involved in atrocities in Rwanda. Another factor was that many people who sought the sanctuary of

[19] Fieldnotes

churches in Rwanda had not been spared but were slaughtered in church[20].

In this context there was considerable scope for supporting and encouraging traditional religious practices, and for providing the material means for people to carry out the traditional ceremonies which were so important for their sense of well-being. Unfortunately these were not seen as a priority.

By way of contrast, the Case Studies on the Unaccompanied Minors of South Sudan, and that on the work of the National Children and Violence Trust offer examples of the role of religion in helping to mitigate the psychological effects of war. In the former, Christian worship provided a forum for the expression of emotion and for the offering of support and consolation. The Case Study on the NCVT highlights the role of some African churches in conducting large, community-based healing ceremonies.

Another example of the role of religion is provided by the Case Study in Yemen: in this Islamic society, practices such as reading the Koran were found to be effective as a means of assisting children who were troubled by their experiences. Teachers, too, used such practices as means of dealing with their own difficult experiences. Writing of Buddhist societies, Garbarino et al (1991) write that remembering and honouring the dead can "provide a useful sense of connection that can help comfort an orphaned child".

6.1.3 Political Ideology

It has long been recognised that both religious and political ideology can serve to protect people against the most severe consequences of stressful conditions. Reference has already been made (Chapter 2) to Bettelheim's (1943) observations of people's reactions to life in Nazi concentration camps which led him to acknowledge the importance of ideological commitment, and in particular, in his experience, ultra-religious beliefs and communist ideology.

Speaking of the situation in Central America, Jose-Luis Henriquez (1994) suggests that

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[20] Fieldnotes - interview with Child Care Adviser, SCF

child soldiers can be better able to cope with the effects of war than child civilians who had witnessed the war because they can understand the war from an ideological point of view. A similar picture emerged from the case study on the work of Acisam in El Salvador - see Box 6.2 below.

However, as Garbarino (1992.17) emphasises, "Ideology is a paradoxical resource. On the one hand, it bolsters and supports adults and thus increases their capacity to remain functional and accessible for children. On the other hand, it may prolong and intensify situations of conflict and in the long run increase the challenges to which children and parents must respond". This is probably most clearly illustrated in Palestine, where ideological commitment has, on the one hand bound Palestinians together in a common cause, offering a sense of meaning and purpose, and providing both support and a sense of solidarity which has had beneficial mental health effects: on the other hand, such a commitment has been, and to some extent continues to be, a barrier to the creation of peace in the region.

The work of Acisam in El Salvador illustrates another facet of this paradoxical effect of ideology in situations of conflict.

Box 6.2: The Effects of Ideological Commitment

Born in the years of the most extreme oppression in El Salvador, Acisam was closely associated with the various political groupings associated with the FMLN. It was their experience that people who were directly involved in the armed struggle generally coped better psychologically than the civilian population during the period of the conflict: they had a strong ideological commitment to the armed struggle, and they experienced a great sense of camaraderie and support. But after the end of the war, the psychological effects were more apparent, and a particular factor was the "military ethic" which dictated, for example, that the showing of feelings is a sign of weakness: consequently many of the combatants experienced considerable difficulties after the end of the war, with the phenomenon of "frozen grief" being observed frequently.
(Continued overleaf).

Box 6.2 (Continued)
Because Acisam was clearly identified with particular political groups, during the conflict it was possible for them to gain the trust of communities supportive of the FMLN, and hence to work effectively on the psychological issues raised by the conflict. However, since the end of the war, this political identification has limited the extent to which they can gain the trust of communities which are more heterogenous politically, and hence it has been difficult to work towards community reconciliation.

People caught up in traumatic experiences such as conflict and displacement have a vital psychological need to understand and make sense of their experiences using whatever frameworks of understanding they find helpful in their particular culture and situation. Religion, traditional beliefs and traditional forms of healing, and political ideology may all provide a sense of meaning and hence facilitate the integration of difficult and painful experience into people's view of themselves and their world. Any outside intervention needs to take account of, and seek to support, those aspects of people's lives which help to provide meaning.

This is a difficult area for external agencies, particularly those wishing to maintain a neutral stance in both political and religious terms. In some situations it is almost impossible for young people to be neutral: they may be forced to make ideological choices and identifications when they may not be ready developmentally to do so, and they may become actively involved in the conflict. The involvement of youth in the forefront of the armed struggle in South Africa is a clear example of this. The challenge is to help to provide ways in which people can make sense of their experiences but without the danger of encouraging extremist beliefs which may serve to prolong conflict.

6.2 Understanding Cultural Norms and Traditional Ways of Responding to Problems

An obvious finding of the study is that different societies have different traditional ways of responding to difficult life-events such as death and loss, and that it is vital to understand them if interventions are to avoid undermining rather than reinforcing traditional means of coping. Case Study 5 provides a very clear illustration. In Sudanese society, it would be regarded as disrespectful or even insulting for a stranger to ask someone to talk about personal issues such as illness or death: people would talk only to people very close to them - family or close friends - and discussions would tend to focus on the distressing event rather than the person's emotional response to it. In Sudanese society it would confer a great sense of shame for a child, especially a boy, to cry except in the privacy of his own family [21]. Emotional expression is permitted but only through particular prescribed ways such as writing and reciting poems or singing. Case Study 7 revealed a similar theme: it was found that in Somali society there is a taboo against discussing personal and painful issues, except possibly with close family or friends. The teachers recruited by Rädda Barnen felt that it was inappropriate to talk directly to children about their experiences of war, and they evolved other, culturally-appropriate means by which children could be helped. This is discussed in more detail below.

The literature provides a few other references to the relevance of such cultural norms to programmes designed to support people psychologically affected by war; one example is given by Nicole Dagnino (1992) who, referring to the Ixil of Guatemala, explains that "there are rules for expressing emotion, and that merely expressing emotions can be dangerous", and that "they believe.... that a child will be born misshapen if its mother expresses anger".

One term which was encountered in the fieldwork for many of the case studies is that children are encouraged to "forget". This was difficult to understand, and was in stark contrast with western approaches to psychological healing which emphasise remembering, reliving painful events, expressing emotion and developing understandings of the meaning

[21] Tape-recorded interview with the Project Director, an Ethiopian psychologist

of the events experienced. So the emphasis on "forgetting" was puzzling , and hence some strenuous attempts were made to understand what lay behind this.

The term was used repeatedly in an extended interview with a Rwandese refugee (who, it turned out, had lost both parents and four of her five siblings in the genocide). When asked how a parent would help a child cope with the death of a father, she repeated this term "helping children to forget", and placed a great deal of emphasis on reassuring the child: but on closer questioning, three significant facts emerged. The first is that various ceremonies provided opportunities for remembering the dead person and an expressing emotion within the immediate network of family and close friends. Second, children are not encouraged, outside of these ceremonies, to dwell on the past, but rather to look to the future. Finally, religious practices, for Catholics, also provide opportunities for recalling the past, receiving personal support and possibly expressing emotion in culturally sanctioned ways.

Interviews with a Ugandan social worker working in the same camp helped to reinforce this notion of "forgetting": he explained it in the following terms[22]:

> *(Rwandese people) focus so much on the future - this happened and that happened but there is still a future.... Forgetting... is transformed into strength - after some time these bad experiences are transformed into strength, it's history which comes as background*

Another area in which a thorough understanding of cultural norms and practices is essential is regarding the care of children who become separated from their parents or other carers. This important topic will be dealt with in Chapter 7.

It has already been suggested that war can distort and disrupt traditional means of coping with difficulties - for example the lack of priests in the Karagwe refugee camps. Moreover, the involvement of priests in the genocide reduced people's confidence in the church. But

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[22] Tape-recorded interview. For many of the key informants in this study, English is not the mother tongue. Throughout, quotations are given in the actual (or translated) words used

conversely, the research revealed examples of situations in which experiences of conflict or displacement actually facilitated traditional coping mechanisms. In El Salvador, the areas of the country occupied by the guerilla forces were characterised by a high level of social organisation which was seen by Acisam staff as facilitating people in coping with their experiences of violence and loss (Case Study 1). Moreover, peoples' commitment to the struggle, according to one member of staff, "gives a meaning and a sense to the actions they do. It also gives a meaning to the losses: for example for ..... (a group of) handicapped people loss had a meaning - they had done that when they were fighting for a better society and they were fighting for others"[23].

A fundamental issue which emerged in several of the case studies is that people's reactions to distressing events are experienced not so much as a personal, individual and private matter but as a collective concern: hence the first person plural is often used to describe reactions to events. This has been a difficult issue to fully understand and the following section attempts to explore the way in which events seem sometimes to be experienced collectively.

6.3 Coping: An Individual Or Collective Phenomenon?

In several of the case studies located in an African context, the theme of "collective grief" and of "collective coping" emerged very clearly. A quotation from Case Study 7 which examines the role played by a school in a refugee camp for Somali refugees in Yemen, illustrates this well:

[23] Tape-recorded group interview

Box 6.3: Collective Coping Among Somali Refugees

Rather than seeing reactions to traumatic experiences as individual problems, (the teachers) preferred rather to emphasise that everyone in the camp has experienced violence, war and displacement, and that the whole community is not only grieving together but also coping collectively.

People sensed that if you sit together, feeling secure and do things with other people who have had the same experience, this will be helpful: talking is not so important.

To belong to a well-functioning community where there are strong ties between its members may be the most important coping strategy.

In similar vein, an Ethiopian psychologist who had worked in a refugee camp containing large numbers of unaccompanied Sudanese refugee children explained[24]:

> *One of the factors would be the sense of collectivism by itself, you know when you are sharing the problem, it is accepted and it's shared and you have some kind of a goal that you are escaping from something, you are aiming at something... ".*

This sense of collective rather than individual experience, and the consequent need to understand the concept of "collective coping" seems to be of central importance, though there is little written about it. One partial exception is Neil Boothby (1992b.171) who suggests that "the community itself often continues to be a support system of enormous importance to children in war zones. Several studies noted, for example, that children exposed to air raids not only benefited from the presence of parents, but from the presence of teachers, neighbours, extended family and other familiar adults". He asserts that "in Mozambique survival is a collective act, rooted in community compassion and care". But the impression from the seven case studies is that there is more to this issue than a simple one of community-based support systems. How is collective coping to be understood and explained? Some partial answers are to be found within the anthropological literature.

[24] Tape-recorded interview

LeVine (1974) has made the interesting observation that, in societies in which there is a scarcity of subsistence resources, socialisation of young children is likely to emphasise compliance in the undertaking of roles and tasks which assist the family in its economic and subsistence responsibilities. It is only in relatively prosperous cultures, where child participation in economic activity is unnecessary, that more independent, autonomous and self-assertive behaviour can be tolerated, or encouraged. Throughout most of sub-Saharan Africa, children are not seen as belonging only to their parents, but rather to the whole extended family, clan, community or tribe. Children live in much more of a communal context, and their sense of identity is not so much that of an individual, autonomous person, but rather as what Katz and Wexler (1989) describes as the "self-embedded-in-community as the fundamental experience of self". In another paper, Katz (1984) quotes evidence to demonstrate that the existence of "self-embedded-in-community" exists in most non-Western cultures.

Lykes (1994.550) uses rather similar terminology in describing the sense of selfhood among Mayan communites in Guatemala, where "selfhood is ensembled and achieved through activities in community-based relations". In similar vein, Schweder and Bourne (1982.131/2) make a broad distinction between two different approaches to the relationship between the individual and society. They suggest that "egocentric" western cultures are unusual in that they have the concept of "the autonomous distinctive individual living-in-society": by contrast, in many non-western societies, which they describe as "sociocentric", individual interests are subordinated to the good of the collectivity. They conclude that "to members of sociocentric organic cultures the concept of the autonomous individual, free to choose and mind his own business, must feel alien, a bizarre idea cutting the self off from the interdependent whole, dooming it to a life of isolation and loneliness. Linked to each other in an interdependent system, members of organic cultures take an active interest in one another's affairs, and feel at ease regulating and being regulated. *Indeed, others are the means to one's functioning and vice versa*" (emphasis added).

It follows that if people experience distressing events collectively, they are likely to use mechanisms to cope collectively. But there is more to the argument than this. Many

indigenous healing systems focus on collectivity rather than individuality because of the ways in which the nature of sickness and of healing are understood. Katz and Wexler (1989.20) have written perceptively about this, and an extended quotation summarises their thesis: "Indigenous healing systems emphasise community context and the spiritual dimension. From studying these indigenous systems, a definition of healing emerges: 'healing is a process of transition towards greater meaning, balance, connectedness and wholeness, both within the individual and between individuals and their environment'. This is a definition of 'healing as transformation'. The definition emphasises 'healing' as a process, not a 'cure' or any other particular *outcome*. Furthermore, the definition emphasises 'illness' or the social construction of the sickness, rather than 'disease' or the specific biomedical sickness. Finally, the definition focuses on a person-environment unit, holistically conceived, stressing the significance of interrelationships in healing, rather than isolated patients or discrete sicknesses".

Drawing on anthropological studies of two very contrasting communities in Southern Africa and Fiji, they refer to healing as being something much broader than curing sick people: they write of healing as involving central tasks of psychological development such as defining reality and making meaning. Healing involves health and growth on physical, psychological, social and spiritual levels. They assert that in these societies, the spiritual is considered inseparable from other aspects of life, and that individual and social development are merged. Katz (1986.53) suggests that "development is a shared enterprise, a joining of self and community with unexpected benefits to both".

Scheper-Hughes (1989.21), drawing on a wide range of anthropological works from many parts of the globe, concludes that many non-Western ethnomedical systems, "do not logically distinguish body, mind and self, and therefore illness cannot be situated in mind or body alone. Social relations are also understood as a key contributor to individual health and illness. In short, the body is not seen as a unitary, integrated aspect of self and social relations. It is dependent on, and vulnerable to, the feelings, wishes, and actions of others, including spirits and dead ancestors. The body is not understood as a vast and complex machine, but rather as a microcosm of the universe". By contrast, Western medical practice

is rooted in the Cartesian dualism, the artificial separation of mind and body, and hence tends to ignore the identification between the individual and his or her social world, transferring the social into the biological. In many non-western societies, sickness is often explained or attributed to malevolent social relations (including, for example, sorcery), to the transgressing of social norms or taboos, or to disharmony within the person's family or community relations. White and Marsella (1982.18) refer to a number of studies in their book which "characterize indigenous systems of belief as holistic in so far as they do not presume any sharp boundaries or discontinuities between the natural and supernatural, the organic and the inorganic, or the physical and the mental".

Gaines (1982) suggests that the use of "talk-therapy" which aims at altering individual behaviour through gaining insight into one's own personality is firmly rooted in a conception of the person as a distinct and independent individual who is capable of self-transformation in relative isolation from the social context. Western therapeutic approaches cannot simply be applied to cultures where the sense of self is much more rooted in social relationships.

How do these ideas illuminate conceptualisations of healing as a community phenomenon? There are obvious dangers in inferring universality from the study of particular cultures. But the above findings do find echoes in the present study: in the three case studies set within an African context, the collective conceptualisation of coping comes across extremely strongly. Using a broad understanding of ritual suggested above, it can be seen that the "dream-groups", the singing and dancing, traditional story-telling and other activities in the camp for Sudanese refugees can all be seen as a form of ritual in which the fact of people being together in a supportive environment is more important than the actual activities *per se.*: these are depicted on Box 6.5 below. Another example is the range of activities for children and parents which the teachers in the camp for Somali refugees in Yemen provided: these are illustrated in Box 6.3 above and further elaborated in Box 6.4 below.

In the refugee camps for Rwandese refugees in Tanzania, where the sense of community had

been severely disrupted both by genocide and the by experience of chaotic flight and settlement in refugee camps, people were denied many of the collective means of coping with which they were familiar. Eisenbruch (1988) introduces the notion of "cultural bereavement" - the grief experienced individually and collectively for the loss of cultural identity stemming from the experience of uprootedness. He suggests that refugee children need a period in which they can retrieve and consolidate their own cultural identity. Katz's writings help us to see another potential significance of music and dancing as a means of responding to stress, by reinforcing inter-personal bonding and strengthening communal commitments. But even such "everyday" rituals, in the refugee camps of Karagwe, had been inhibited by the experience of conflict and flight. One refugee[25] movingly commented that their sense of misery inhibited the custom of singing and dancing:

Here you take only beans and remember fleeing

It was, however, reassuring to find some NGOs were assisting the refugees in organising cultural activities such as dancing and singing with children, whose enthusiastic participation was observed during the fieldwork for this case study.

Another refugee provided a detailed account of how, within her culture, people traditionally deal with death and bereavement. She sketched out how she understood non-Christians responded; she explained how the wider family and close friends would sit in the evening, naked, around a fire, talking about the deceased person and singing and requesting their god to welcome her and to take care of her health. For both Christians and non-Christians, great importance is attached to a big celebration meal, some time after the death. Again fulfilling the need for a ritual involving a wide circle of people within the community, such customs were inhibited in a refugee context because the food and drink required in order to comply with cultural norms simply were not available. The absence of priests in the camp and the repercussions for Catholics have already been mentioned.

As examples of collective coping, it seems that being part of a supportive network of family

[25] Fieldnotes

and friends, and having that support symbolically strengthened in various ritualistic ways, are experienced as more important than talking about death or other critical or painful events. Indeed the conscious recalling of events and the discussion of them and of the feelings associated with them seem to be discouraged in many of the societies represented by the case studies.

6.4 Strategies for Building on Traditional Approaches to Coping

In Section 6.2 it was noted that some societies have clear norms about to whom one talks about personal or painful issues, and about the expression of emotions and media for so doing. Some cultures do not encourage the verbalisation of difficult experiences and there is sometimes an emphasis on the present and future rather than the past. Section 6.3 above revealed evidence that in many more traditional societies, difficult circumstances are experienced collectively rather than individually and collective means of dealing with those experiences have evolved, often with an emphasis on the strengthening of community bonds through various kinds of shared experiences rather than directly "working on" the actual experiences and their impact on current life.

In looking at programmes designed to impact on the psycho-social health and well being of children, families or communities affected by conflict or displacement, a huge diversity of approach is to be seen. At one end of the spectrum, it is not uncommon to find western clinical approaches exported with virtually no concession to the local culture: this research has encountered approaches such as Unicef's "Trauma and Recovery" Programme in Rwanda[26].

Such approaches are to be questioned on several grounds, as was discussed in Chapter 2: first they fail to acknowledge the existing strengths and resources within the local culture. Second, they assume that the focus of concern should be the individual and not the collective. Third, the sheer numbers of people psychologically affected by their experiences, coupled with the lack of indigenous trained personnel, make individual

[26] Other examples and references are given on page 23

approaches unrealistic and uneconomic. More significant is the potential that western approaches may have to actually harm people. To impose a psychological approach which expects the child to recount painful and personal events to an unrelated stranger, and to encourage the direct expression of emotion (such as crying), could serve to re-traumatise the child and impose upon him or her a great sense of shame. This was illustrated in Case Study 5: in Sudan, it would be the cause of extreme embarrassment for boys and men to express their feelings of sadness and pain through crying. Although it was felt that they might benefit from discussion about traumatic experiences, in this culture discussions would centre on events rather than feelings - indeed the language has few words which describe feelings. On one occasion a well-known western psychologist visited the Kakuma camp[27] and, as a complete stranger, asked some children about their experiences and encouraged them to express their feelings. Some boys were moved to tears, but this contravention of a norm regarding the expression of feelings - especially with a stranger - would be deeply embarrassing and potentially distressing.

In identifying projects for this collection of case studies, a conscious attempt was made to find some approaches which consciously built on local cultural traditions and which adopt a community perspective. Others have adapted elements from local traditions and practices into the programmes, while at the same time incorporating some more western psychological practices.

In one of the programme (Case Study 7), the approach which eventually emerged through the medium of the camp school did so somewhat serendipitously. The original intention had been to plan a school in a way which emphasised the teachers' role in providing psychological support to children in a variety of ways, included the stated aim that they should develop the idea of "supportive conversations" with children. Teachers were selected from among the refugees principally according to their personal qualities, attitudes and motivation, rather than for the teaching abilities *per se.* They were provided with teacher training which included a strong emphasis on the needs of children who have been psychologically affected by war and displacement. However, it was not possible for a high

[27] Tape-recorded interview with the programme manager

level of follow-up work to be done with the teachers, for a variety of reasons which included, significantly, the fact that the refugee camp became caught up in the civil war in Yemen, involving additional experiences of violence and necessitating further displacement and resettlement in another part of the country.

Box 6.4: A Collective Approach - Somali Refugees in Yemen

It was subsequently discovered that the teachers had not followed through the idea of having "supportive conversations" with children. One teacher explained that it is best for children not to talk about the bad experiences they have gone through. Instead, they evolved a range of activities through which children could express their reactions to the events they had experienced. These activities included singing, drama, free drawing, story-telling etc., and sometimes involved parents as well as children. They initiated a club called "the Children's Corner" which also involved parents: a teacher expressed a major function of it in the following terms:

> *Teachers will present different stories that touch on aspects of real life: this will help the teachers to draw out the child's emotions of happiness and sadness.*

The teachers placed particular importance on daily structure for the children, adult support and play, emphasising patterns of communication and expression other than the direct verbalisation of experiences and their reactions to them. Equally significantly, the teachers, in the context of a camp which was deeply divided along clanship lines, developed a significant role within the wider community. As well as fostering partnerships with parents, they were active in promoting communal activities such as sports and community celebrations, dealing with inter-personal conflicts and so on.

Underlining this whole approach was the importance of a sense of **shared problems** which were being dealt with **by the community as a whole.**

A second example of a culturally-rooted approach is derived from Case Study 5 and is also worth describing in some detail. In a remote part of northern Kenya is a large refugee camp in which there is an extraordinarily large concentration of separated children, mainly boys. The exact circumstances of their flight from Sudan and their separation from their families is not entirely clear. What is clear is that the process of flight, initially into Ethiopia, and

later because of threats to their safety there, the long walk back through south Sudan and into Kenya was absolutely fraught with dangers, from soldiers, from wild animals and from the threat of starvation, dehydration and disease. If any group of refugee children would be expected to be deeply affected by their experiences of war, separation, multiple displacement and hardship, it would be this group.

Box 6.5: An Approach Rooted in the Culture of Refugees From South Sudan

From the beginning (and in the face of some opposition from UNHCR and other agencies) Rädda Barnen saw the need to construct a composite programme based carefully and sensitively around the cultural traditions and practices of the refugees. Care arrangements were based on the tradition of group living in "cattle camps" and the acceptability of care provided by unrelated families. A range of activities facilitated the children's recovery from traumatic experiences in a way which respected culture and tradition: these included story-telling, composing poems, recounting and discussing dreams, traditional singing and dancing and an art form based on the traditional importance of knowing the colours of each boy's bull. The involvement of the whole community was significant in emphasising the importance of collectively coping with shared experiences.

Despite the repeated experiences of danger, fear and flight, and the fact of separation from their families, the psycho-social health of these children remained remarkably good: only a tiny percentage were functionally impaired, as evidenced by their behaviour patterns, the quality of inter-personal relationships and their performance in school. An investigation of their psychological health revealed remarkably few children reporting symptoms of stress (Nilén 1994) and it was clear that, in general, these children were coping remarkably well.

In the relatively new refugee camp for Rwandese refugees in Tanzania[28], a Ugandan social worker shared his view that western approaches to counselling were inappropriate in this culture; but he saw value in using traditional forms of play, singing and dancing as means of facilitating recovery. He spoke of the way in which children would sometimes adapt the words of songs to make them relevant to their particular situation. A similar example

[28] Fieldnotes - Case Study 4

comes from a refugee camp for Mozambican refugees in Zimbabwe[29], where a young volunteer conducted singing and dancing sessions with refugee children: in one dance, they re-enacted some of their experiences of killing in Mozambique, but the main aim of the dance was to look forward to returning to their country in peace.

Other examples of the creative modification of traditional approaches come from South Africa. The National Children and Violence Trust (Case Study 3) developed some imaginative approaches to the psychological healing of children and adults caught up in the political violence during the Apartheid era and following its demise:

Box 6.6: Adaptation of Traditional Children's Games - the NCVT in South Africa

The NCVT adapted traditional children's games as tools for diagnosing and treating violence-related trauma. The assumption underlying this approach is that the games played by children can highlight some of their concerns and pre-occupations, and can be used to enable children to talk about experiences and express feelings about them. One example is a popular game called "Masiketlane" which is played by a group of children in a circle. One of the players kneels at the centre, manipulates a small stone on the floor with the hands while simultaneously narrating a short story: while this takes place the other children clap their hands in a rhythmic form. Using the format of this game, children sometimes relate traumatic events from their own life-experience. The significance of this is probably not just that it provides a culturally-familiar form of self-expression, but also that it mobilises support and solidarity amongst the participants.

6.5 Developing Cultural Understandings

This chapter is now concluded with a discussion of some of the issues involved in enabling programme planners and field staff to achieve a sufficient understanding of socio-cultural issues to enable them to plan and develop policies and practices which are respectful and sensitive towards local culture, building on what is already there and carefully avoiding

[29] Save the Children Federation - video "Makwaya: Dancing with hope".

undermining traditions which may be beneficial.

Within the collection of seven case studies, some fascinating contrasts emerged: this section focuses primarily on Case Study 4 on the work of the Standby Team in Karagwe, and Case Study 5 on the work with the Unaccompanied Refugee Children from South Sudan, which provide starkly contrasting experiences.

In Karagwe, some four or five months into the refugee emergency created by the genocide in Rwanda, the researcher was very struck by the lack of knowledge of the culture of the refugees on the part of international staff from various agencies. It was partly in response to the blank looks which resulted from questioning about how Rwandese refugees cope with death, loss and stress that it was decided to undertake a semi-structured interview with an English-speaking refugee. This tape-recorded interview provided a graphic and detailed account of the traditions and mechanisms used in coping with death and stress. Moreover, the information was elicited readily, and this raised the question of why so much of the work being planned and undertaking with and for the refugees was not informed by good socio-cultural understandings. Why was the importance of religion as a source of comfort and consolation not recognised? Why did there seem to be such a limited understanding of how separated children are cared for, how children typically react to the presence of step-mothers, how widowed fathers cope with child-rearing, and so on? Even one of the key informants who had previously spent three months in the camp setting up community services, who fully appreciated the need for good cultural understandings, actually seemed to struggle both in gaining those understandings, and in explaining why she found it so difficult[30]:

> *I have never been in any place where (cultural understanding) was so difficult to get at, and this I still don't know why.*

What was clear among international staff - especially those from UNHCR - was that there is a huge gap between the rhetoric and the reality. When I asked the former UNHCR

[30] Tape-recorded interview

Community Services Officer if UNHCR has a system for gaining knowledge of the refugees' culture, the answer[31] was

> *Oh no, no, no. But it's in all the manuals there, it's very important, ... All the manuals are very good in that sense, to take into account all factors that are affecting the social life and the happening in the camp.*

However, within UNHCR there was a good level understanding about one crucial area, namely the pattern of community leadership and other social structures which the refugees brought with them from Rwanda. The need to understand these is crucial in taking the necessary steps to strengthen existing social structures and to promote the creation of new ones: one very interesting example of the failure to fully appreciate the relatively invisible patterns of informal leadership patterns among Somali women is illustrated in Case Study 7. This and the wider issue of developing and promoting social structures will be discussed further in Chapter 8.

When it comes to cultural issues as they impact on psychological health, the level of ignorance in the Karagwe camps was striking. This also reflects the fact that awareness of psychological issues was also extremely limited, even among agencies directly concerned with child care issues. In many meetings and interviews, these issues were not voluntarily raised by respondents, but when the researcher raised them the response indicated, on the one hand, an awareness of the need for both cultural understandings and appropriate interventions, but on the other hand a striking inability to translate concerns into actions.

Shortly after the fieldwork for this case study was undertaken, the researcher visited the refugee camp for Sudanese refugees in Kenya in order to initiate this case study. The person centrally involved in planning a comprehensive package of care and support for this large concentration of unaccompanied children had made a concerted attempt, from the very beginning, to root the programme within the cultural background of the refugees (see more detailed information in Box 6.5 above). She was asked to identify what factors helped to

[31] Tape recorded interview

achieve this and was invited to comment on the difficulties which had been encountered by the researcher in Tanzania.

She identified four interesting issues: first, the whole programme, from the beginning, was based on a partnership with the refugees themselves: this seems to have greatly facilitated a high level of sensitivity towards their culture. The fact that the programme manager was an Ethiopian was probably significant. Second, the programme was not greatly concerned with delivering material resources, but with psycho-social well-being, which demands a close understanding of cultural issues.

Third, she felt that some agencies avoided close contact with the refugees as a strategy for self-preservation - i.e. insulating themselves against the pain which can stem from closer examination of the psychological issues faced by the refugees. Finally, she suggested that many agencies adopt a very short-term strategy based on the rapid delivery of material services and hence do not take the trouble to really find out about cultural issues, and do not see this as a priority. Their objective is the efficient delivery of aid rather than longer-term social and economic development. Moreover, many international staff are deployed only for a period of months. When professional staff are under enormous pressures of work, it is understandable that the more difficult and delicate tasks associated with building up understandings of the refugees' culture become neglected.

However, it is vital that external agencies take the trouble to find out the precise manner in which people experience psycho-social distress, the meanings which they ascribe to their experiences, and the resources contained within the local culture which may contribute to healing and resilience. Religious beliefs, political affiliations and traditional beliefs and practices may all inform people's understandings of events and experiences. There is no system within UNHCR for accessing existing anthropological information which might be highly relevant and useful, and staff clearly need practical tools for eliciting appropriate socio-cultural information from the refugees themselves. It is vital that external intervention takes account of, and seeks to support, those aspects of people's lives which help to provide meaning. Failure to do so is not just wasteful of scarce resources: it may

actually undermine the community's own resources and even serve to inflict further psycho-social damage on individuals.

Chapter 7: the Family - First Ring of Security[32]

All of the case studies underline the role of parents, or other care-givers, in supporting children and in shielding them from the worst effects of their experiences of conflict, violence and displacement. But adults as well as children are psychologically affected by their experiences and this may impair their capacity to respond appropriately to their children's needs. Moreover, a highly significant feature of many recent conflicts and large-scale population movements is that large numbers of children lose their parents or become separated from their families. In the genocide in Rwanda and the subsequent refugee outflow, for example, Rädda Barnen (1995) estimate that about 150,000 children lost their parents or were separated from them. Approximately three million people became refugees or were internally displaced, more than half of them children. This has huge significance. For a child to lose her parents, or to become separated in the chaos of social upheaval and flight is one thing: to have to cope with violence and sudden displacement without the support of close family members may prove to be an emotionally overwhelming experience.

The work of Anna Freud in looking at the responses of children in England during the Second World War suggest that it is not so much the actual experience of war which affects children, but rather the degree of emotional disruption displayed by parents and other adults in the child's life. As Freud and Burlingham observed: "The war acquires comparatively little significance for children so long as it only threatens their lives, disturbs their material comfort or cuts their food rations. It becomes enormously significant the moment it breaks up family life and uproots the first emotional attachments of the child within the family group". In similar vein, Garbarino (1992), in reviewing other studies during this period concludes that it is not so much the war situation itself that impacts on the child, but rather the level of emotional upset displayed by the adults in the child's life. Similarly, Eisenbruch (1988) reported on a study which showed high vulnerability of stress on the part of Vietnamese refugee children when separated from their families but effective coping when receiving family support.

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[32] The titles of this and the following chapter are derived from Ressler et al. (1988)

The family, in almost all societies, is the main source of protection and care for children, but the capacity of the family to exercise its responsibilities towards children may be impaired not just by their experience of conflict and their consequent sense of well-being: the practical and material problems which they may experience and the social support which they receive will be important in determining the extent to which parents (or other care givers) will be able to provide sufficient nurture and support to their children. The ability of family members to understand and make sense of their experiences will also be important in determining their capacity to shield their children from the worst effects of conflict and displacement.

Two major issues emerge from the above: first, that supporting parents/carers and enhancing their parental competence needs to be given high priority in refugee and conflict situations; and second that children who do not have families to support, nurture and protect them need to be given the most urgent priority. Each of these issues will now be considered in more detail.

7.1 Supporting and Enhancing Parental Competence

> *The family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community.* UN (1989), quoted from the Preamble.

During the fieldwork for Case Study 2 on the work of Hi Neighbour in Yugoslavia, it was observed that the parental competence of mothers was profoundly affected by their own emotional state. For example, in one workshop group, parents were observed to inhibit the expression of their children's feelings and emotions[33]. Writing more generally of the situation of refugees in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Rudić et al. (1993) observe: "Their mothers watched television for hours, day after day, waited for the news from their homeland, and were concerned about their relatives. They were completely absorbed in feelings of sadness, so they were not able to recognise and respond to emotional needs of

[33] Fieldnotes - observation of a video of a workshop group

their children". Eisenbruch (1988) comments that the trauma of being uprooted experienced by the whole family may mean that family members may not be able to be mutually supportive: some may even be "anti-protective".

In the Collective Centres for refugees in Serbia, where meals were provided by staff, refugee women were denied many of their normal household and parenting roles. The researcher made the following reflection in the fieldnotes:

> *I wondered about the situation of parents - especially in a Collective Centre where parents' roles with their children are diminished by central catering and dining*

Far from strengthening parental roles, the structure of the centres appeared to be undermining them and creating the potential for dependence.

By contrast, in the more typical refugee camp situation in the developing world, women are usually faced with excessive demands on their time - collecting water, gathering firewood, preparing meals, caring for children and possibly undertaking economic activities; moreover, they may lack the economic and social support if their husbands/partners are not with them. In either case, however, the impact of their situation on their parenting capacity is obvious.

The dangers of refugee dependence have been widely recognised, though actions to counteract this tendency have been much slower to enter the mainstream work of UNHCR and its partners. As long ago as 1948, Caplan (1961) noted the dependence amongst immigrants to Israel: placed in huge barrack-like huts, with no privacy, little work and with meals provided, he observed that many had sunk into an apathetic and dependent state.

While the main emphasis in the literature is on the role of women, men are also affected by their experiences of exile, and their loss of status as a result of losing their economic providing role can also have a profound impact on the dynamics in the family. Sometimes women and girls retain more of their traditional tasks which may enable them to cope more

effectively than men and boys (Tolfree 1991).

A picture of the impact of traumatic past experiences and current stresses affecting refugee women from Somalia in a refugee camp in Yemen is provided by a survey[34] reported in Case Study 7:

Box 7.1: Parental Capacity Among Somali Refugee Women in Yemen

A survey among refugee mothers in the camp, undertaken by Rädda Barnen, revealed that their sense of well-being was extremely poor. Half of the mothers interviewed expressed a high degree of psycho-somatic and emotional problems, and 85% reported as daily experiencing various stress factors to an extreme degree. About 90% of the mothers expressed feelings of helplessness about bringing up their children, yet a similar proportion considered themselves to be the most important person in their child's life.

Following this survey, it was felt that the most appropriate means of enhancing mothers' parental competence would be by strengthening women's social networks and thereby increase their participation in the life of the community and give them a greater sense of control over their own lives.

In her excellent discussion of "Refugee Women and Family Life", Elizabeth Ferris (1992.93) writes: "when the mother is able to fulfill her role, the difficulties of camp life are lessened for the child.... The mother can help interpret past traumatic events, help the child to understand what happened, and alleviate feelings of stress and guilt. But in order for this to occur, the mother must be physically and psychologically able to play this supportive role". The implications of this are that women need to be supported both as women and as mothers. They need to be seen both as potentially vulnerable and as highly resourceful. Programmes must not only be available but relevant to women's particular needs, and accessible to women who may have many demands on their time, including the

[34] Some reservations are to be expressed regarding the methodology used for this survey, with a reliance on questionnaires: this issue will be discussed in Chapter 11.

care of young children.

The literature on children affected by war is often found to place emphasis on this important issue of supporting parents and enhancing parental competence.. However, the case studies in the present study provide some interesting examples of the **dynamic** relationship between parents' needs and resources and those of children. The experience of Hi Neighbour (Case Study 2) in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia provides a particularly interesting example[35]:

Box 7.2 Children Promoting Change in Adults

In the Collective Centres, Hi Neighbour frequently found that parents were unable to meet the emotional needs of their children, and moreover that sometimes children sought to "protect" their parents from emotional expression because they perceived them to be vulnerable. By involving both children and adults in workshop groups, based on a developmental psychology approach, Hi Neighbour found that even young children could effect change in their parents by encouraging spontaneity, playfulness and the expression of feelings. In one workshop group, the following observation was recorded:

> *One child was going again and again to her mother (dressed in black because her husband had been killed) to get her to express joy.*

Here was a child clearly trying to influence her mother's emotional state.

This finds some echoes in the work of Punamäki (cited in Punamäki and Suleiman (1989.75)) who found that "Palestinian children of families that had suffered severely from political hardships tended to assume full personal responsibility both for their family's welfare and for their mothers' well-being".

A wide range of different approaches can impact on the well-being of parents, especially women: from appropriate and accessible health services to economic activities; from

[35] Fieldnotes - Video recording of a workshop group

educational opportunities to cultural and recreational activities. While some programmes have specifically aimed at enhancing parental competence, for example Homecraft Groups (see, for example, Tolfree (1991)), others attempt more generally to improve the quality of life and opportunities for the development of women. Issues of the social mobilisation and empowerment of refugees, and especially of women, will be considered in the next chapter.

All of these approaches are of equal relevance to other adults (and older brothers and sisters) who have assumed the responsibility of caring for children who have become separated from their families: indeed, because of the additional responsibilities such people have taken on, they may be especially in need of additional support. The care of unaccompanied children is the subject of the next part of this chapter.

7.2 Care for Separated Children

> *A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment..... shall be entitled to special protection and assistance.....* UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, Article 20

The introduction to this chapter emphasised the importance of the child's family in providing care and protection in situations of conflict and displacement. Unaccompanied children may be especially vulnerable on three counts: first the circumstances of separation or loss of parents may have been exceptionally traumatic (e.g. witnessing the death of parents or experiencing sudden and unexpected separation). Second, they will be trying to survive without the support, care and protection of familiar carers. Finally, they will face a particularly uncertain and insecure future, especially if the whereabouts and wellbeing of the parents or other care givers are unknown: this may compound the insecurity which is inherent in the refugee situation.

Some recent refugee situations have been characterised by exceptionally large numbers of children who are either orphans, or who have become separated from their families prior to or during flight. As already noted, it was estimated that about 150,000 children became separated following the genocide in Rwanda (Rädda Barnen 1995). In one of the camps for Rwandese refugees in Karagwe, Tanzania, for example, it was found that 16% of all the

children had been separated from their families, about half of whom were now living with unrelated families. A survey referred to in the case study revealed that 29% of the separated children had seen their parents being killed and 63% had witnessed other killings.

A full discussion of the wide range of problems associated with separated children is beyond the scope of this work but can be found in various other publications[36]. However, a number of significant issues do emerge from the study, and these are considered in the succeeding sections of this chapter: first, a discussion of the different care arrangements for separated children, and this is followed by a discussion of family tracing issues. Finally there is a consideration of the important issue of the prevention of separation.

7.2.1 Care Arrangements for Separated Children

Until comparatively recently, UNHCR has used the term "unaccompanied minor" which has been defined as a "person who is under the age of majority and not accompanied by a parent, guardian, or other person who by law or custom is responsible for him or her" (derived from Ressler et al (1988)). The present author has, however, strongly advocated for a wider definition (Tolfree 1995), partly on the grounds that some children living with relatives (and hence do not fall within the definition) may still have an urgent need to be reunited with parents or others who were previously providing care. In this chapter, the terms "separated children" and "unaccompanied children" are used interchangeably to refer to children who are separated from both of their parents or their legal or customary care-giver and to whom, in most cases, they would like to return.

The issue of care arrangements for separated children is highly complex, not least because different cultures have widely different norms and customs. Some cultures, for example, do not sanction the care of children by people outside of the extended family: others may do so, but may also accept that such children will not be accorded the same rights and benefits as other children within the family (Tolfree 1995). In either case there may be grounds for a

[36] See, for example: Tolfree (1995): Bonnerjea (1994): Brown et al.(1995): UNHCR (1994), Uppard and Petty (1998).

strong contra-indication for fostering separated children within such cultural contexts. On the other hand, UNHCR and many international NGOs have promoted policies of avoiding institutional forms of care, partly in response to recent research which has drawn attention to widespread abuses and violations of children's rights in institutional care (Tolfree 1995).

There is some evidence that the circumstances of war and displacement create a community ethos in which families take in separated children even if there is no tradition of caring for unrelated children (McClung 1995). Evidence from Karagwe, to be discussed below, provides some reinforcement of this observation (see 7.2.1).

The case study on the Unaccompanied Children from South Sudan provides a fascinating and possibly unique picture of cultural traditions which positively pre-dispose towards group forms of care. The following is an extract from the case study:

Box 7.3: Group Care Practice, Pignudo and Kakuma Camps for Sudanese Refugees

This is a care programme catering for unaccompanied children who are over 14 years of age. There are 19 groups each consisting of up to 250 children organised into villages of up to 50 children and subsequently divided into sub-groups of 3 - 5, living together in one tukul (hut) under the supervision of Care-takers employed from among the refugees. Unaccompanied children grouped themselves voluntarily based on kinship and other social relationships, while in Pignudo (the camp in Ethiopia from which they later fled to Kakuma in Kenya) the grouping was done on the basis of age and level of education.

The arrangement is adapted from a traditional practice of the Sudanese in which groups of boys live for certain periods in cattle camps, often a long distance from their homes. The practice was first introduced in Pignudo refugee camp by the refugees themselves and has since been modified to address the needs of the children. These traditional practices seem to serve to protect children from the worst effects of separation from their parents, and the practice of peer-group living in the cattle camps served to prepare children for the form of group-care in the refugee camps.

As the example above illustrates, care arrangements for separated children may be made spontaneously by the refugees, or may be made as a result of the actions of inter-governmental or non-governmental organisations or the government of the host country. In this section, the issues raised by spontaneous fostering are examined first: then comes a consideration of agency-arranged fostering and finally group care.

a. Spontaneous Fostering

Within the Rwandese refugee community in the camps in Karagwe, large numbers of separated children were absorbed spontaneously into families, many of them unrelated. In Rwandese culture there is a tradition of caring for parentless children within the extended family and, on occasions, with friends and neighbours with whom there is no blood tie, provided they come from the same tribe. However, it was also clear that the potential for abuse does exist. This will be discussed further below. It is therefore vital that the initiatives of families are supplemented by those of refugee leaders, UNHCR and NGOs to facilitate appropriate placements and to provide some monitoring and support to spontaneously fostered children and their carers. At the time of the field visit to Karagwe, this work was progressing extremely well; a balance was being struck between, on the one hand, the need to avoid discouraging refugees from taking responsibility for the care of separated children, and on the other hand the need to introduce some regulating mechanisms which serve to reinforce community responsibility for the well-being of separated children and provide some safeguards to protect children from the possibility of abuse.

b. Agency-Arranged Fostering

In the camps in Kakuma and Karagwe (Case Studies 5 and 4), separated children were being placed in foster homes by NGOs on a large scale. Both of these refugee populations were characterised by exceptionally large numbers of separated children. Especially in the case of younger, and emotionally vulnerable young people, fostering was generally seen as the most appropriate option.

Inevitably in situations of emergency, skilled professional resources are a scarce commodity, and it is necessary to rely on "bare-foot" social workers, variously referred to as "social

supporters", "community assistants" etc., usually recruited from among the refugees and offered a modest level of training and support. A major problem in the Karagwe camps was that, among this large population of refugees who came mainly from rural areas, the overall level of education was extremely low, and experience in social welfare was zero, making the recruitment of suitable staff from among the refugees very difficult. Under such circumstances, the upholding of acceptable standards of professional practice is extremely difficult.

An examination of the concept of fostering within these two programmes reveals that it is a very heterogeneous concept. Variables include the following:

1. Whether or not housing is provided: in some of the Karagwe camps, for example, single women and widows (who would experience some difficulty in building their own huts) became foster parents with the agreement that housing would be provided.
2. Anticipated time scales: although there was no formal distinction between short-term and long-term fostering, some children were fostered as in interim measure while steps were taken to trace their parents or other carers: in other situations it was clear from the outset that a longer-term arrangement was needed. In most cases, fostering was arranged on an indeterminate basis, with no formal threshold between temporary and long-term care.
3. Whether or not material support was offered: in general, no material incentives were offered apart from housing (see point 1 above), or some form of material "kit" of equipment to benefit the whole family. However, in refugee camp situations, the child's name would be added to the family's ration card, which meant that he/she would not make demands on the family's food resources.
4. An important variable which is particularly difficult to define relates to the nature of the fostering task and the role of the foster parents. In Kakuma, for example, it appeared that fostering generally did not entail a sense of full family membership - especially for older children: rather it was a form of support comprising material assistance and supervision but not a great deal of emotional closeness. Very often a group of foster children would share a separate hut close to that of the foster family.

In some cases they had their own ration cards and prepared their food separately. However, for some younger children it was observed that fostering seemed to confer a greater sense of membership of, and integration with the foster family. The nature of the fostering task seems to link with -

5. The motivation of foster parents. This was another difficult issue to understand in both programmes, and the researcher only gleaned some clues to what may be a significant and difficult issue. Clearly some of the single women were motivated both by the provision of a house and by the personal support which was offered. In Karagwe, one foster mother[37], who had no children of her own, told the researcher that

> *God will be kind to me if I help children*

However, the former UNHCR Community Services Officer[38] suggested that

> *Some of them (foster parents) were looking for some advantage, and of course some of them, they would sort of use them, if older children, for one thing or another*

Bearing in mind that, in most parts of the developing world, children are considered as economic assets, and that some cultures sanction the more favourable treatment of natural children in comparison with that of foster children (Tolfree 1995), it would not be surprising to find that foster children are taken in for a wide range of reasons, which might include the benefits of their work within or outside of the family, the perceived advantages of "pooling" a larger number of food rations and even the sexual exploitation of children. Although the study uncovered no evidence of the last of these, in neither of these fostering programmes was there a great deal of awareness of the potential risks.

A number of other interesting issues emerge from these two programmes.

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[37] Fieldnotes

[38] Tape-recorded interview

First, in Kakuma, fostering was mainly a child-driven process. The recruitment of potential foster parents was a result of the initiative of children in identifying a family to whom they felt some affinity: steps were then taken to formalise the arrangement following discussions with the family and consultations with community leaders regarding their suitability for the task.

Second, an interesting gender issue emerged in Kakuma: it was clear that the decision to become foster parents was generally taken by the man in the family, but fostering may entail a greater burden of work on the part of the woman. This was perceived to be a difficult issue to resolve.

Finally, a hugely important issue regarding the sustainability of fostering emerged from the study, and because of the importance, and lack of awareness, of this issue it will be discussed at some length. Discussion with a foster mother in one of the camps for Rwandese refugees in Karagwe revealed an interesting statement: the following is recorded in the field notes:

> *I asked if taking in children who are not related would happen in Rwanda: she said it would be very uncommon, but that the refugee situation gave people a sense of responsibility and solidarity.*

This quotation suggests that some foster parents were departing from the cultural norms in accepting children who were complete strangers, and that it was the refugee emergency itself and the sense of solidarity it generated that motivated at least some people to foster children. But this raises a question that was posed[39] to the current Child Care Adviser employed by Save the Children who was responsible for the fostering programme: "Just supposing the situation in Rwanda changed very rapidly, and voluntary repatriation suddenly started to happen, what do you think will happen to the children in foster homes?" After a long and pregnant pause, he said:

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[39] Tape-recorded interview

That is a very important and challenging question, I can't exactly tell what would happen.

He went on to indicate that his organisation is working in Rwanda and that they would try to follow up foster families: it was clear, however, that the question was one which was not being systematically addressed.

However, evidence from elsewhere suggests that children fostered in a refugee camp situation may be vulnerable to rejection upon repatriation (McClung 1995). The reasons for this are not clearly established, but the repatriation situation raises a number of issues such as access to land and inheritance of property which may not be perceived as important in a refugee context. Return to their own community and country may also symbolise a return to more traditional values, including, for example, a traditional association between the land and one's ancestors. Fostered children may find themselves in highly ambiguous situations with respect to these issues, especially in cultures where there is no strong tradition of family care outside of the extended family. In addition it appears that, with Mozambican refugees as well as with the Rwandese, the refugee situation leads to a sense of community responsibility and solidarity that may not be sustained into repatriation. A final factor appears to be that, whereas in a refugee situation the child will have a ration card, upon repatriation, material assistance may not be available (with the possible exception of short-term aid), which may make a significant difference to families struggling to survive.

In some of the camps in Karagwe, refugees were being settled in groupings which reproduced, as far as possible, their original community groupings, in order to preserve some of the original leadership patterns, community support systems etc.: this is considered in the next chapter. Had the fostering programme attempted to match children with other adults from the same community of origin, this might have enhanced the chances of both family tracing and of foster placements being sustained into repatriation. This, however, had not been considered, which is surprising considering that repatriation was envisaged by UNHCR as the only possible long-term solution for the refugees. Clearly many of the spontaneously fostered children were the result of pre-existing relationships between the

child and carers, often reflecting previous extended family or community networks. It may be speculated that such arrangements may be more sustainable into a repatriation situation. Other fostered children who do not return to their own families may face a more uncertain future.

c. Group Care

There are few societies where there is a long tradition of group forms of care: however, the idea of "orphanages" and other institutional forms of care were introduced into many countries, often by religious groups or the colonial power (Tolfree 1995). This was the case in Rwanda, with the influence of the Catholic church being particularly significant.

One of the camps for Rwandese refugees in Karagwe provided a very interesting illustration of the very negative consequences of non-traditional group care. A Catholic organisation with very little experience of providing social and community services decided to open a "drop-in centre" to cater for what was perceived to be a large number of unaccompanied children. This occurred despite the policy of UNHCR which is to avoid institutional forms of care apart from in exceptional circumstances. Subsequent events revealed that the large majority of children living there did, in fact, have parents or other carers, who placed (or abandoned) their children in the belief that they would be better fed, cared for, clothed and educated in a residential centre. In fact the case study reveals that the standard of care was exceedingly poor. This was a situation remarkably similar to an institution for supposedly unaccompanied Ethiopian refugee children in Somalia (Tolfree 1994) where the "pull-effect" of material and, especially, educational provision served to induce family separations that were not necessary and probably not in the best interests of individual children. The organisation running the centre in Karagwe was initially highly resistant to making changes, partly because of the high-profile nature of the centre (for example, it received the President of Tanzania during a visit to the camp) and the "donor-appeal" of such a resource. When ultimately there was an agreement that the centre should be closed, there appear to have been no difficulties in returning the majority of the children to their own families, and fostering the few who remained.

By way of contrast, the group care arrangements (see Box 7.3 on page 101) made for the majority of the unaccompanied Sudanese children in Kakuma did reflect a clear and considered perception that this was the most appropriate way forward, especially for older youngsters, and they themselves, in the main, are said to have favoured this option. Fostering was seen as a supplementary form of care which targeted mainly younger or emotionally vulnerable children. The group care arrangements avoided a higher standard of care than was available more generally within the community, while the deployment of caretakers recruited from among the refugees, along with the training, monitoring and supervision that was provided ensured a satisfactory level of care. A great deal of responsibility was delegated to the older youngsters which was consistent with traditional practices in the "cattle camps".

7.2.2 The Prevention of Separation

The "drop-in centre" in Karagwe offers a dramatic example of how misguided attempts to help children can actually result in the unnecessary and damaging separation of children from their parents or others who have assumed responsibility for their care. Institutional responses in this culture are non-traditional, and offer an individualised, "rescuing" response without adequate consideration of either the family and community context, or of the likely but unintended consequences for the children. In looking at the history of this centre, it was interesting to note that a huge amount of time and energy had to be devoted by UNHCR and Save the Children into negotiating the closure of this centre and in responding to the problems which it created.

The work of Rädda Barnen's Swedish Department, and their research into the situation of unaccompanied African refugee children in Sweden (Case Study 6) has resulted in an awareness of the particular problems facing children and young people who have sought refuge in Sweden without their families. Large numbers of children, mainly older boys, had sought asylum in Sweden on the false grounds that they had no parents, often with the intention of settling and then seeking to have their parents join them in Sweden. The initial results of this study provides a depressing account of the extremely difficult situation facing many of these young people. Many face a profound sense of loneliness and isolation, they

experience difficulty in adjusting to the expected patterns of behaviour in Sweden, especially with regard to authority issues. Many were experiencing problems in school, with language difficulties, limited previous experience of, and different attitudes towards education. Although the circumstances of the separation of these children from their families is clouded in secrecy, it appears that many of these separations were prompted by dis-information about the situation in Sweden which raised false expectations. Exactly what steps would need to be taken to prevent such separations is difficult to determine: further research in this area is needed.

Although difficult to quantify, it seems highly likely that many of the unaccompanied Sudanese young people in the Kakuma camp did, in fact have parents (or other traditional carers), and it was particularly the availability of education (which was very difficult to access in war-torn South Sudan) which prompted them to leave home.

The fieldwork for Case Study 4 in the Karagwe camps for Rwandese refugees revealed many children who might be regarded as vulnerable to separation. These included, for example, child-headed households, families in which the mother had been killed or died of other causes, making it difficult, within this culture, for the father to provide care. Another factor, according to a Rwandese refugee informant[40], is that very often when a father remarries there is a lack of affection and the potential for a great deal of conflict between children and step-mothers;

> *Even if the second wife tries to love the children, the children see that the wife isn't his mother, it is difficult to create the love between them*

Save the Children were attempting to provide both social and a modest level of material support to various categories of families who were perceived to be vulnerable: in addition to child-headed families and single-parent families, they also targeted families with seven or more children.

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[40] Tape-recorded interview

Another area of vulnerability was identified in an interview with a Rwandese health worker[41]: she observed that in many families there was a tendency for one (only) child to be severely malnourished: her interpretation was that this reflected a decision on the part of mothers to facilitate the survival of some of her children at the expense of others. In this context, it is not difficult to understand the pressures which led some parents to abandon their children in a residential centre. Clearly, ensuring food security for families has to be seen as a key measure for reducing infant mortality and for preventing the unnecessary separation of children from their families.

In the Karagwe camps there was evidence that not only did many children arrive in the camps following the death of parents or other carers, or separation from them in the chaos of flight, but that children were continuing to become separated within the camp. In one camp a group of children appeared and started living rough in the market area of the camp - a kind of "street children" phenomenon. No study had been undertaken and it was difficult to see any patterns to the reasons for continuing separations. One possibility is that many of the spontaneously fostered children were leaving their families, and in some cases it may be that children were moving between different members of their extended families but failing to find a secure family base for themselves.

This study suggests that there is a vital role for agencies in promoting family unity by identifying and supporting families which are perceived to be vulnerable, by developing understandings of why children continue to be separated from their families, by adopting strategies for the prevention of unnecessary and inappropriate separations, and by ensuring that policies and practices do not inadvertently serve to encourage separations. There is also a need for further research to develop an understanding of how children become separated, the pattern of "circulation" of children between families, and the actions which children take as a means of coping with the difficult situation in which they find themselves in a refugee context. In Chapter 8, there will be a more extended discussion of community-based supports which may benefit children and their families: these may be significant in preventing separations.

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[41] Fieldnotes

7.2.3 Family Tracing

In many past refugee emergencies, work with unaccompanied children has not been given high priority: in Malawi, for example, it was almost four years after the beginning of the Mozambican refugee emergency that the first systematic (and quite localised) work was started to interview and document unaccompanied children and take steps to trace their families with a view to reunifying them (Tolfree 1991). Case study 4, which looks at the work of the Standby Team in Karagwe concludes that this is clearly an area in which delay is damaging: apart from the extreme anxiety and distress faced by separated children (and their families), memories of the circumstances of separation from their families will fade and the practical difficulties in tracing families will be greater. Moreover, children placed with other families will develop new attachments, and the likely disruption to those attachments caused by family reunification will increase as time passes. These points serve to emphasise the importance of family tracing programmes being established as early as possible in the emergency phase.

In this context, it was reassuring to find in the Karagwe camps in Tanzania that family tracing was considered to be an urgent priority, almost from the beginning of the refugee influx. Refugees themselves were identifying this as a high priority, and there was a great deal of unorganised searching for lost relatives on the part of refugees, often walking huge distances. On a regional basis, the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) had been given the mandate for the coordination and implementation of the family tracing and reunification programme, with a central computerised data-base in Nairobi. Essentially this involved providing a central register of separated children, and of parents seeking a lost child, and ensuring a close coordination between the various governments, NGOs and inter-governmental agencies involved with family tracing. The registration and documentation of separated children was being undertaken by ICRC themselves in the Karagwe camps.

At the time of the field visit, however, this was not working entirely satisfactorily. The following entry in the research diary shows the researcher's reflections on what had been observed:

The main problems with ICRC's role are -

1. They have a partial task in the overall task of reconnecting separated children with the danger of splitting off the logistics of connecting people from the wider concerns about children's past, present and future

2. Because the interviewing process is driven by the need to complete a very short, factual, report, the wider picture of the child's background and history is not being elicited or recorded. There is a real danger that this vital life history information will be forgotten by the child and lost

3. ICRC's tracing is entirely passive - there is no active searching for the parents/family on an individual case basis. As circumstances in Zaire and Rwanda change, this will become more possible. But active tracing needs fuller information about the child (as point 2 above)

4. All this leads me to describe the programme as minimalistic, ... (this) needs to be taken up on a policy level in Geneva. The whole system is far from an ideal way of doing family tracing and reunification

These points were fed back by the researcher to the relevant agencies.

In the Kakuma camp for Sudanese refugees, by contrast, the task of interviewing and documenting separated children was being undertaken in a thorough manner, this task being more fully integrated with the other child care tasks and functions which were being undertaken. Here the problem was much more about tracing families and reunifying children with them. It has never been entirely clear why this exceptionally large group of separated children left their country in the first place, but there was a strong suspicion that the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, the main guerilla grouping, had orchestrated the exodus in order to ensure the preparation of a future generation of well-educated males to take leadership roles in the future - or possibly even to be trained outside of the country as fighters. There was evidence that many of the children did know where their families were, and many maintained contact with them, some returning home during school holidays.

Whether the advantages of education and the relative security offered by a refugee camp off-set the disadvantages of continued separation from the family and the longer-term implications of this is a contentious issue, raising the relative value of family unity and the right to education see the CRC (UN 1989) Articles 9 and 28.

The issues facing unaccompanied refugee children and adolescents in Sweden were different again: here the major issue was that many young people were in touch with their families, but because many had sought entry into Sweden on the basis of not having parents, these contacts were occurring covertly. Even in situations where the young people were declaring information about their parents' whereabouts, the government often refused entry to the latter - partly, no doubt, because of the element of deceit involved in the child's asylum application. For some, however, the situation in Sweden was experienced as being so miserable that they decided to contemplate returning to their country of origin - often with the prospect of facing a difficult and dangerous situation.

7.3 Conclusions

Children - especially younger children - experience the world partly via the mediating role of parents or other care-givers. Research suggests that there is a direct link between the psychological well-being of children in situations of conflict and displacement and that of their parents, especially their mothers. Policies which reinforce rather than undermine their parenting role, and measures to support parents are therefore of critical importance.

It is obvious that children who through death, accidental or agency-induced separation may be an especially vulnerable category of refugees requiring special and urgent intervention. The identification, registration and documentation of separated children needs to be seen as an urgent priority, together with the complex programmes and procedures required to trace families with a view to reuniting separated children with them. This requires coordination on a camp, district, country and regional basis - no easy undertaking in the aftermath of armed conflict: this was, however, being achieved in respect of the Rwandese refugee population, at a remarkably early stage of the emergency, though this study did highlight some significant weaknesses which were touched upon in this chapter.

It was not the original intention of this study to examine, in any detail, issues of care arrangements for separated children. However, a number of key issues did emerge.

First, it is clear that care arrangements need to take account of, and build upon, traditional norms and practices regarding the care of children separated from their families. The study has revealed interesting examples of both group care and fostering which are linked in with traditional practices and which build upon them. It also identified a dramatic example of a form of non-traditional group care which had a dramatic pull-effect in encouraging the abandonment of children by their parents or other carers.

Second, it is clear that fostering is a heterogeneous concept - reflecting different cultural norms, different motivations on the part of adults, different needs and taking place in very different contexts. There is reason to believe that some of the risks involved in fostering - whether spontaneously arranged within the community, or agency-arranged - were being neither acknowledged nor addressed. Clearly there is a difficult balance to find between, on the one hand, the need to assess risk and ensure adequate protection for exceptionally vulnerable children, and on the other hand to avoid an unaffordable and unsustainable professionalised response.

Finally, the issue of the sustainability of fostering arrangements into a repatriation situation seems not be addressed, despite the scale of fostering in Karagwe and the virtual inevitability that the refugees will eventually repatriate[42]. Many refugee programmes have failed to take a long-term perspective which envisages, and is consistent with, a particular durable solution for the refugee population as a whole.

This study has raised more questions than it has provided answers: but many of these questions have not been raised in research, writings or even, it seems, acknowledged in

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[42] This did, in fact, occur in 1996/7. A very recent visit to Rwanda (October 1999) revealed that there appear to have been no follow-up of children fostered in the camps, and that there were grave but unquantified concerns about the potential vulnerability of some of these children.

practice. Beyond anecdotal evidence, little is known about the long-term impact of fostering, whether spontaneous or agency-based, on children in emergency situations, and about what happens to them upon repatriation. There appear to be no writings (apart from Tolfree (1995)) which try to set the concept of fostering in its cultural context and which examine the difficult issues of the potential vulnerability of fostered children to explicit abuse or exploitation, or at least to a quality of care significantly different from and inferior to that afforded to other children in the family: the latter may be culturally sanctioned but this may not be acceptable by international standards such as the CRC (UN 1989). With the rapid rise in the numbers of AIDS orphans, especially in Africa and parts of Asia, there is an urgent need to promote carefully considered, non-institutional policies to their care and protection.

However, one outcome of the present study is that Rädda Barnen have accepted a proposal by the present writer to undertake a major global study of the care arrangements for separated children in refugee and emergency situations. This work will take place between 1999 and 2001, and will make a self-conscious attempt to directly access the views and ideas of children themselves, using participative methods which have been devised and tested in a recent study of working children (Tolfree 1998, Woodhead 1998). A study has also been commissioned at the Refugee Studies Programme at Oxford University to explore the phenomenon of child circulation.

A key issue in all aspects of community services work in refugee camp situations is the importance of developing the capacity of the refugee community to take responsibility for the various social problems which are present. Strengthening the capacity for the care and protection of separated children by the importation of skilled human resources from outside of the refugee or host community is likely to have only a short-term benefit. In Karagwe and Kakuma, strenuous attempts were made to build capacity within the refugee community. Not only is that the most economically viable option, it also means that the refugee community will become more resourceful, offering the potential for taking back, upon repatriation, knowledge and skills which will be vital in rebuilding their country in the longer term. The development of community resources is also vital in supporting parents

and in preventing the unnecessary separation of children. This bring us to the next chapter, which examines the role of the wider community in supporting children and their families who are psychologically affected by war and displacement.

Chapter 8: the Community - Second Ring of Security

8.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 identified as key issues the questions of whether some programmes conceptualise the problem of human responses to conflict and violence in collective or community terms rather than just individualistic ones, whether some base their work firmly in a community context, and if so how? The selection of projects for the collection of case studies deliberately tried to identify some which had a stated community orientation, but in the event all seven case studies emphasised the importance of the concept of community.

Amongst those which adopt an explicit community mobilisation[43] perspective, different programmes pursue quite diverse strategies. Some, for example, attempt to combine a continuing focus on individual needs with this broader perspective; for example, Acisam in El Salvador deploys local-level volunteer Promoters whose primary task is that of community mental health promotion but who nevertheless retain a role in working with individuals. Similarly, the National Children and Violence Trust in South Africa combines individual counselling with a broadly community-based approach based on awareness-raising of psychological issues, training and support, carried out largely through the medium of establishing community-based networks. Other projects focus entirely on empowering communities to identify and respond to their needs themselves: for example, the Standby Team deploys Community Services Coordinators, seconded to UNHCR as part of their Emergency Teams. Using a community mobilisation approach, their role is to facilitate the process of needs assessment, to help to set up community structures which will assume primary responsibility for community services, and to begin to develop and promote whatever pattern of community services suits the particular circumstances. Work with individuals is largely avoided.

Other programmes, though not using the language of community development are, nevertheless, seeking to mobilise resources within the community to recognise and respond to the problems people are facing. Hi Neighbour is an example of this: though the stated

[43] This is defined on page 120 below

approach is to provide workshop groups in refugee Collective Centres based on a developmental psychology perspective, one aim is to impact on the whole refugee community by influencing the pattern of social interaction. This serves a significant empowering function which can lead to collective action by the refugees to take action to improve their situation.

This chapter will examine a number of strategies illustrated by the case studies. It will then look at some of the characteristics and advantages of a community mobilisation approach, and finally will consider whether the concept of resilience could be applied to the community as well as to individuals. Initially, however, three fundamental issues need to be raised. First the importance of the totality of the context in which people experience war-related stress needs to be examined. Second, the concept of "community" will be explored and clarified, along with the impact of war and displacement on the sense of community. Third, the concept of empowerment will be discussed.

8.2 The Importance of the Wider Context

A striking theme to emerge from several of the case studies is that people's reactions to war and displacement tend to be inextricably bound up with their reactions to the totality of their current situation. The following quotation from the Case Study on the work of Acisam in the post-conflict situation of El Salvador illustrates this important point most clearly:

Box 8.1: the Importance of the Total Context

Acisam has increasingly come to recognise that the main effects of war on people are not so much the classical symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder, but the **indirect effects**: excessive use of drugs and alcohol (banned in the Liberated areas during the war), increasing marital violence and child abuse, very authoritarian, militaristic attitudes, and a widespread feeling of despair and hopelessness..... They particularly reflect people's disappointment at the outcome of the peace agreement and the sense that people had fought and died for a very limited result, and that many of the country's problems - poverty, repression, inequality and injustice - remain relatively unchanged.

In response to a question about the effects of war on people, the director of Acisam[44] said:

> *It's really hard to tell what comes from the war and what comes from the present situation they are going through in the community*

A similar theme, however, emerges in all seven case studies. At no point in the fieldwork for any of the case studies did any informant refer to symptoms of traumatic stress divorced from the wider context in which they were living. In Yugoslavia, for example, where the fieldworker encountered both newly-arrived and longer-standing refugees, characteristic problems included the following: a sense of shame and the stigma of being a refugee; social isolation; uncertainty and the repeated sense of loss people experienced if they had to move to another centre; overcrowding; lack of privacy; tensions between refugees; and disturbing thoughts of revenge. These issues seemed much more likely to be identified by the refugees than their experiences of violence, loss and sudden uprootedness: in other words, they were, in general, more concerned about their present problems than their past experiences.

When Rädda Barnen first started work with the Somali refugees in Yemen, it was immediately apparent that many of the children and their parents had had experiences of violence and other traumatic events in Somalia which were compounded by the current stresses and absence of support in the refugee camp. Similarly, with the Rwandese refugees in Karagwe, a key informant who had acted as the Community Services Officer from the beginning of the emergency stated[45], in response to a question of whether refugees themselves were raising mental health issues as a priority:

> *I would say they were not raising it as a mental health issue - I would rather say they were presenting it through other issues, general health issues, by talking a lot about diseases and malnutrition, and how bad the food was - it was coming out through constant fear and complaint, you know, about health - their own health and*

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[44] Tape-recorded group interview

[45] Tape-recorded interview

especially their children's health, and the children didn't eat.... a lot of things and probably because they saw they were not getting on well, so it goes through health.

Other priority issues raised by the refugees were the lack of education and activities for children and youth, and the need to trace the families of separated children: however, it was unsurprising to find that refugees' preoccupations were usually material needs - food, housing and the need for paid work.

The many stresses facing young unaccompanied refugees in Sweden have already been mentioned in the previous chapter - extreme loneliness and isolation, depression, poor educational progress, lack of work opportunities, racism and xenophobia and so on. Rädda Barnen operate a clinical response within their "Centre for Children and War", but even here they sometimes find that the principal need is not for counselling but for the broad social support which the therapists provide[46].

All of these examples underline the conclusion that people's experience of psychological stress is embedded in the totality of their current experience, whether in new emergency situations, more established refugee camp contexts, third-country settlement or post-war reconstruction. This would suggest that any attempt to respond to psychological stress as a discrete phenomenon which is divorced from the totality of people's experience is likely to be futile.

8.3 What is Meant by the Term "Community", and How Are Communities Affected by Conflict?

The term *community* has been described as having "a high level of use but a low level of meaning" (Mann 1965). Three possible definitions are given below:

- A territorial unit of society - e.g. a village, town, district, city or refugee camp
- A unit of social organisation which can be based around common interests (e.g. "the

[46] Fieldnotes - interview with a psychologist.

academic community"), a shared living situation (e.g. a residential home or a convent) or around a territorial unit (e.g. a village or district)

- A particular type of social interaction - typically characterised by:-
  - a sense of belonging
  - a sense of purpose and common goals
  - a high degree of co-operation and participation in pursuing common goals
  - an inter-personal climate characterised by mutual respect, a sense of fraternity or fellowship etc.

Community mobilisation has been defined (Tolfree 1999) as "a process by which communities are helped to clarify and express their needs and objectives and to take collective action to attempt to meet them". Community mobilisation work generally seeks to take the first of these three definitions as the target for intervention and to try to work towards achieving the third definition by facilitating social organisation within the territorial unit. However, in some contexts this simply is not possible: in some societies, divisions of tribe, clan, social class or caste or political affiliation may limit the sense of community to people within similar groupings. The case study on the Somali Refugees in Yemen, for example, illustrates an attempt on the part of the camp school to work with all sections of the community despite the deep clanship divisions which transect the camp. On the other hand, the work of volunteer Promoters in El Salvador often found themselves able to work only with people based on particular political affiliations because of the deep community divisions created by the civil conflict.

Communities are profoundly affected by experiences of conflict and displacement: the collection of case studies provides some fascinating contrasts. The case study on the work of Acisam in El Salvador provides some particularly interesting examples. The government had actively discouraged any kind of community organisation because this was seen as a potential threat, but during the civil war, it was frequently found that in the areas controlled by the FMLN guerillas, a greatly enhanced sense of community was achieved, resulting principally from the fact that people were bound together in a common cause, with a common adversary, and in the face of severe hardship.

In other areas, however, it was found that people with markedly different political affiliations had been resettled in the same villages. The result was not just a high level of animosity and conflict: but because of the incidence of people being hired by the government to spy on their neighbours, which sometimes resulted in killings and "disappearances", the deep sense of mistrust endured. In turn this served to inhibit community activities which tended to perpetuate the fragmentation of village communities, and distrust both within and between different communities

By way of a contrast, the researcher came across an extremely interesting example of a village community, Ita Maura, which had fled to neighbouring Honduras following a harrowing experience of massacres by the Salvadoran army and violence perpetrated by Honduran soldiers subsequent to their flight. In interviews with the chairman of the village committee and his wife, it was learned that before the war there was no organisation in the village but that the shared experience of flight and exile greatly strengthened the organisation of the community, and they formed a special committee to negotiate their return to El Salvador following the peace agreement. It was evident that there was now a very strong sense of community, with strong social structures: a fascinating manifestation of this sense of community will be described in Box 8.6 on page 139.

The case study on the work of the Standby Team (Case Study 4) provides some additional insights into the effects of sudden displacement on communities. The exodus of Hutus from Rwanda following the period of genocide and civil war was sudden and massive. In some instances, whole communities fled together, arriving in their original community groupings, while in others, the exodus was unorganised with people arriving in small groups. In some instances it was possible to "re-create" (as least partially) the original community groupings by settling refugees alongside others from their commune of origin: the benefits of this will be debated in more detail in Section 8.5.1 below.

But in many refugee camp situations, especially when previous community groupings have been dispersed, the original community structures and informal networks will be

lost: moreover, the sense of community may be lacking, or it may apply only to particular groupings within the camp. Social divisions based on ethnic, tribal, clanship, political or religious considerations may severely limit this sense of community, and responding to these issues is a major challenge to community mobilisation. Sometimes, however, there are traditional mechanisms for developing relations across these divisions - in which case it will be important to know what they are and how they work.

8.4 Capitalising on Community Resources

A defining characteristic of refugees is that they have been forced to flee their homes, communities and country and have had to place themselves in a situation of reliance on the international community for survival. A strong sense of loss of personal control over one's life and destiny, and the potential for dependence are frequently seen as a consequence.

It is especially important in this context to note that the literature on coping and resilience places particular emphasis on the importance of *active* coping strategies (see discussion in Chapter 2). It was interesting to note, during the fieldwork with newly arrived refugees in both Tanzania and Serbia, that refugees often have a powerfully-felt need to be active: the fact of "doing something" seems to be important for mental health, apart from the value of the actual products of their activity.

Communities - including refugee communities - are frequently found to be extremely resourceful: but because of the disruption to social structures caused by conflict and flight, the capacity of the community to organise itself may be limited. Furthermore, because of the particular circumstances of refuge or of post-conflict situations, there may be a particular need for social structures and community organisation which go beyond traditional structures and organisation.

The work of the Standby Team in refugee emergencies places particular emphasis on the need, early on in refugee emergencies, to facilitate refugee leadership, including female representation on camp committees and to involve refugees, especially women, in assuming responsibility for identifying needs and in determining how they should be met. Case Study

4 illustrates how such a strategy can be effective in enabling women to take the initiative in organising themselves, set up women's groups and take action on a self-help basis:

Box 8.2: Promoting the Participation and Empowerment of Refugees

The secondment of a social worker to UNHCR and deployment as a Community Services Officer early in the refugee emergency proved effective in enabling refugees themselves to take responsibility for the many social problems in the camps, and not to slide into a dependent attitude that these are "someone else's responsibility". The CSO successfully worked with refugees themselves, and with various colleagues in UNHCR, government agencies and other NGOs to emphasise the vital importance of external intervention being seen as supplementing and reinforcing, but not replacing, the endeavours of the refugees themselves to identify, assess and find solutions to the many problems they were facing. The need to facilitate the participation of refugee women, and to support women's own initiatives to organise themselves was seen to be especially important.

By facilitating the setting-up of leadership structures, including community services sub-committees, within the refugee community, the responsibilities and potential for responsiveness of the refugees were enhanced, and a sense of partnership with external agencies was initiated. This is in stark contrast with many other refugee situations in which the refugees quickly came to perceive themselves to be passive recipients of aid and social services rather than active participants in the tasks of identifying problems and devising solutions.

8.5 Strategies for Working with the Community

An analysis of the various strategies used within the seven case studies reveal a wide variety of different approaches, of which the following appear to be the most significant:

8.5.1 Facilitating the Re-Connection of Previous Community Structures

One example of this has already been given, the attempt in one of the Kakuma camps in Tanzania to re-locate refugees in a new camp, in a way which placed people within their original community groupings. The benefits of "re-creating" original communities have already been identified (Tolfree 1991) but the recommendation for doing so wherever possible was never taken up as a matter of policy until the Rwanese refugee emergency.

Discussions with refugees during the fieldwork for this case study revealed some divergent reactions to the decision to re-group refugees according to their commune of origin. However, it appears that those who expressed reservations about this were reacting to the need to move a second time rather than to the re-grouping *per se*. Many advantages were identified both by refugees and international staff: these included the capacity to re-establish the communities' original leadership structures (though new elections sometimes made changes to these), re-establishing the sense of solidarity and mutual support within the community, the restoration of traditional activities such as singing and dancing, and better security.

An important set of tasks central to the work of the Community Services Officer in the early stages of the refugee emergency in Karagwe was to facilitate the re-establishment of leadership structures. In some instances, the original community leaders came forward; in others "self-appointed" leaders emerged. It was felt appropriate to institute a new and formal election of leaders to represent each "block" within the camp, using the traditional means of asking people to line up behind their chosen candidate. The successful leaders formed a camp committee, which then elected a camp chairperson. In turn the camp committee, with guidance from the international organisations working in the camps, established various sub-committees to work on particular issues such as health, education and social welfare. This pattern of committees and block leaders provided the key focal points for community development work.

The decision in the Pignudo and Kakuma camps for refugees from South Sudan to devise care arrangements for separated children based on the traditional social structures required in the "cattle camps" is another illustration of an attempt to re-connect, but also modify, previous community structures. In part this reflected the fact that the refugees brought with them their own leadership structures, and in the initial absence of outside intervention, these leaders took the initiative in devising care arrangements for the separated children in accordance with their own customs.

8.5.2 Facilitating the Establishment of New and Adaptive Social Structures

It should not be assumed that traditional social structures are necessarily adequate and adaptive. Traditional leadership structures in many societies, for example, largely or totally exclude women. Given the range of issues to be faced in refugee camps, and the central role of women, especially in providing food, water and firewood, and in rearing children, it is often seen as vital to find ways of empowering women and helping them to organise themselves. So mobilising women may be important, but it may also be culturally unfamiliar, and hence pose a threat to the domination of male leadership.

The case studies provide some interesting and contrasting experience of mobilising female leadership structures. In the Karagwe camps (Case Study 4), leadership elections were held, but the international organisations decided to facilitate the election of men and women in equal numbers, and in practice this seems to have been accepted without a great deal of dissent. Women played a vital part in many of the camp sub-committees dealing with such issues as food distribution, health issues, the care of separated children and so on. At the time of the field visit for the case study, work was being planned and implemented to support women's endeavours with income-generating projects, adult literacy and pre-schools. In other camps (Tolfree 1999) for Rwandese refugees, however, the attempts by refugee women to mobilise themselves and become involved in the formal camp leadership structure did pose a major threat to the male leaders: a careful strategy had to be worked out to establish separate structures for women, ultimately leading to a situation where there was an increasing acceptance by the men to the point where women could take a formal part in the camp committee. In the Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan, for example, male domination was very deeply entrenched: it was found that winning the confidence of men was required before effective work could be done with women, but sensitive work over long time-scales proved remarkably successful in mobilising women (Millwood 1995).

The Case Study on the Somali Refugees in Yemen provides an interesting account of an attempt - not entirely successful - at mobilising women. A survey identified both the key role of mothers in shielding their children from the worst effects of their experience of violence and displacement, and the lack of support structures for women. In response to this it was decided to evolve a strategy for empowering women, as the following extracts from

the case study illustrate:

Box 8.3 A Strategy for Empowering Refugee Women

As a result of the survey, a strategy to empower women was devised. Some of the women had organised themselves into a Women's Union and they requested donor organisations to assist by providing a meeting centre for all women in the camp where they could discuss issues of interest and concern to themselves..... a meeting place was duly provided..... Various interest groups were set up, including ones to concentrate on hygiene and health care, education and child care, social and cultural activities and home economics, conflict resolution, and help to people in need. After the camp moved for the first time, the group again was provided with a place to meet, but the activities appear to have been limited to handicrafts and literacy classes. At the time of the follow-up visit to Algahin, the Women's Union had been re-established, but its apparent lack of impact on the life of women in the camp was disappointing. It had ceased to be a democratic organisation, leadership being concentrated in the hands of one, very authoritarian person.....The Union had become little more than a place for women to meet and undertake a limited range of activities.

Why was this, when the Women's Union looked to have the potential for becoming an extremely important resource for women?.....One reason appeared to be the **lack of leadership** which was needed for the Union to develop in a committed and imaginative manner. Many of the more influential female leaders in the camp left, and were replaced in the Women's Union by self-elected women who had more interest in financial benefits than the good of the whole community.

A second reason is probably that women seem to associate and socialise mainly in small informal groups rather in large, visible, well-structured organisations..... Moreover, the majority of mothers were spontaneously and informally meeting other mothers (especially those with small children) in small groups, or they were busily occupied in the traditional activity of running the home.

This experience highlights the need to fully understand the informal patterns of social interaction characteristic of the culture which, in this case, were relatively invisible to outsiders. Given the lack of the more formal, more visible patterns of leadership among the women in the camp, the leadership of the Women's Union was likely to depend on a small number of powerful women, leaving the Union vulnerable to inappropriate and autocratic

leadership. With hindsight, perhaps the vision for the Women's Union was too ambitious: it might have been more appropriate to begin with the more immediate life-tasks facing Somali women - giving birth, feeding and caring for children, looking after the home and perhaps engaging in modest business enterprises. Instead of trying to support the more formal leadership patterns required by a social organisation such as a Women's Union, it might have been more appropriate to work to identify the less visible patterns of informal leadership amongst the women in the camp, and find ways to support and strengthen these.

A final example of the facilitation of new types of social structure comes from the case study of the work of Acisam in El Salvador. During the early years of the peace accord, Acisam found that some communities continued to be very polarised in their ideological views and political affiliations. However, they found that young people were frequently less polarised in their views than adults, and less stuck in their country's recent history of conflict. Moreover, as the director of Acisam[47] commented:

> *In adults there is a lot of hopelessness, they feel bad, apathy: youth show more dynamism, they want to find out how to get out of the problems and probably being young is one of the resources they have in trying to cope with problems*

For these reasons, the organisation began to enable young people to become organised, and they began to identify, train and support Young Promoters and Child and Youth Leaders whose role was to undertake a wide range of tasks which might include recreation and sports, workshops on various topics relevant to young people (e.g. drugs and alcohol abuse, sexuality, economic activities etc.). One particular activity which was observed during the fieldwork for the case study was the compilation of a village map by young people, which was a visual means of engaging youngsters in analysing the problems and resources of their community. Following the completion of a "community diagnosis", groups of young people would then identify, prioritise and devise a strategy for responding to them.

8.5.3 Avoiding the Imposition of Alien Structures

A third strategy is work directed at avoiding the development of inappropriate and culturally alien structures. Salole (1992.6) makes an impassioned plea to acknowledge people's

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[47] Tape-recorded group interview

strengths, skills and resources and to ensure that intervention supports them: "Unfortunately, rather than actually encourage people in what they are doing, we have tended to undermine and thwart them by by-passing them and setting up our own institutions".

The clearest example of alien structures, which was discussed in Chapter 7, was the institution for supposedly unaccompanied refugee children in one of the Karagwe camps which an NGO had misguidedly set up in the belief that this was a modern and appropriate response to the needs of separated children: in fact, as discussed previously, the institution not only failed to adequately meet even the basic subsistence needs of the children, it also served as a magnet and attracted children who had families within the camp. This experience contrasts with the decision in the Pignudo and Kakuma camps for Sudanese refugees to develop a form of group care which did build on traditional structures.

Other examples include the dismissive attitude towards the potential role of traditional healers and traditional practices, and their replacement by "modern" medical facilities staffed by white professionals, to which the NCVT in South Africa had to respond.

8.5.4 Empowerment through Social Interaction

One of the most moving experiences in the fieldwork for the case study on the work of Hi Neighbour in Yugoslavia was participating in a workshop for a group of newly-arrived refugees who had suddenly had to flee from Krjina and who knew they would never be able to return. This particular workshop was attended by about 50 adults - the majority of the refugee community in this Collective Centre. Although the topic of the workshop was "Human Rights", it provided opportunities for people to express the despair they felt, and the hopelessness and powerlessness stemming from their current situation. Gradually, however, the workshop leaders introduced forms of self-expression which facilitated emotional release, and other forms of expression which symbolised strength and collective action. This resulted in a sudden and palpable release of energy[48] within the community, and the workshop concluded with the refugees identifying actions which they could, and

[48] As a participating observer, the researcher directly experienced the powerful impact of this workshop

would, undertake to improve their present situation. Although the project did not use the language of "empowerment", this was surely a significant result of their work.

8.5.5 Integrating Knowledge of Child Development and Psychology into Community Structures

Finally, the case studies provide some interesting examples of work which attempted to enhance understandings of child development, the psychological effects of conflict and culturally appropriate ways of responding within local communities. In contrast to most western approaches, which have the tendency of isolating individuals and treating them outside of their immediate context, these approaches attempt to encompass the totality of people's experiences, within the contexts in which they occurred and continue to occur. Rather than seeing "psychological trauma" as something exceptional, and affecting a few isolated individuals, these approaches see the psychological repercussions of conflict as affecting large numbers of people or even whole communities. Rather than seeing intervention as a specialist matter requiring very specific skills, attempts are made to diffuse understandings more broadly on the basis that psychological health is everybody's responsibility. Because these approaches seem to be so significant, some more detailed illustrations will be provided. First, the approach of the NCVT in South Africa:

Box 8.4 Political Violence and the Role of Community-based Networks in South Africa

The National Children and Violence Trust was established in response to the widespread phenomenon of political violence during the Apartheid era in South Africa. A growing awareness of the limitations of counselling approaches, the lack of black professionals and the existence of many local but largely untapped resources led the organisation to seek to mobilise existing community resources. Central to the programme is the establishment of networks comprising teachers, community workers, church leaders, medical staff and other interested individuals. Each network is encouraged to explore the ways in which local people are affected by violence and then to develop appropriate responses. Typically these might include violence-prevention in schools, running workshops (on topics such as domestic violence, the effects of violence on children, rape, resilience, non-violent conflict resolution etc.), running campaigns on issues such as child abuse and mobilising the mass media to draw attention to issues connected with violence.

Box 8.4 (continued)
Although, in addition, counsellors are trained and supported in counselling children and families, the main emphasis is on empowering community members to be the main actors in their local programmes. A particular attempt has been made to develop indigenous methods of healing, emphasising the use of traditional children's games and encouraging the role of traditional healers.

A key aspect of the programme is the training and support of the members of these networks - sometimes referred to as "front-line care workers" - to enhance both individual and collective understandings of the problems of violence and appropriate ways of responding locally.

In South Africa, the problems of violence were perceived to permeate almost all aspects of life, with the inherent violence of the Apartheid government being reflected in the massive outbreaks of violence within the black communities. Underlying both were the widespread abuses of human rights, endemic poverty and inadequate housing, unequal access to resources and the iniquities of the migratory labour system. El Salvador, in the immediate post-war period, also experienced this sense of pervasive violence. Continuing repression, murders and "disappearances" continued despite the peace accord, and these problems were compounded both by deep mistrust within some communities and a widespread dissatisfaction with the results of the peace agreement and the continuing problems of poverty, inequality and injustice. In both countries, an escalation of violence in the family seemed to mirror the violence within the wider society.

As with the NCVT, Acisam's work grew out of a more clinical approach to displaced people and others affected by the conflict. Dissatisfaction with such approaches, coupled with a growing realisation of the pervasiveness of psychological problems in many of the communities led them, first, to switch their emphasis to prevention and then to mental health promotion.

Box 8.5 An Approach to Community Mental Health Promotion - Acisam in El Salvador

Acisam employs a small team of Facilitators, most of whom are psychologists. In turn they provide training and support to a large cadre of Promoters, who are unpaid volunteers working mainly in village communities. The Promoters are usually selected (or at least approved) by village committees, and their work covers a spectrum of activities which include, for example, identifying local needs and negotiating for resources such as wells and water pumps, roads, health facilities etc; raising awareness of issues such as domestic violence, grief and loss, and alcoholism; giving talks to schools and other groups; and organising cultural and recreational activities and celebrations. In addition they work in close collaboration with other professionals, churches, local government and Promoters in fields such as health and education. They also undertake some counselling work under the supervision of the Facilitators, and help to set up and support self-help groups.

A style of training has been evolved that owes much to the popular education movement: it is highly participatory, and a range of materials have been produced which have been aimed at people with either limited or no literacy skills. These utilise diagrams and comic-strips, and are designed to encourage reflection and questioning. Audio and video tapes, and large posters, are also used as educative tools.

Acisam has developed the concept of the "community self-diagnosis" which involves Promoters working in a participative way within the local community to engage people in an exercise which examines the problems, resources and needs of the community and leads to an action plan which specifies what needs to be done to solve the problems identified, and to improve the overall health and well-being of the community.

A new departure is the development of a cadre of Young Promoters and Child and Youth Leaders to undertake a broadly similar range of tasks (with the exception of counselling) with children and youth.

These programmes were operating respectively in the context of continuing but low intensity-conflict in the African Townships and the immediate post-war period of El Salvador. The question arises whether a similar approach might be taken in a refugee context following severe and high-intensity conflict. During the fieldwork for the case study on the work of the Standby Team in the Karagwe camps for Rwandese refugees in

Tanzania, a particular attempt was made to examine the level of psychological awareness among refugee leaders and the many organisations working in the camps.

The three-week field visit took place about four months after the beginning of the refugee influx which followed the severe outbreak of genocide in Rwanda: the researcher was accompanied by the social worker who had undertaken the initial work as a Community Services Officer seconded to UNHCR at the beginning of the emergency. In a tape-recorded interview, the former CSO was asked specifically about the impact of traumatic events on people - how was this rated as a priority in her work and what did she do about it. After a long and pregnant pause, she said:

> *Oh God.... Why it was so difficult to start dealing with it was that it was sort of everywhere*

She went on to talk about the need to restore a structure to people's lives, help the refugees to begin to take part in activities such as sports, singing and dancing, and encourage informal educational activities. Her initial and hesitant response to the question, however, probably indicated that it was almost impossible to respond quickly and adequately to such a pervasive issue. Discussions with many other professional workers during the field visits indicated that many had an extremely low awareness of psychological issues, while for others there was an awareness but a sense that the needs were so overwhelming that it was almost impossible to do anything. The researcher attended a training course for refugees who had been recruited by various organisations as workers with children and families in the camps: the following was recorded in the research diary:

> *The most notable thing to emerge from the seminar was the complete absence of any discussion of the effects of war and violence on children, despite extensive discussion of the whole range of children's needs and rights - including psychological needs. The issue is not in the consciousness of many NGOs, it seems.*

Then towards the end of this two-day seminar, a presentation was made on the theme of

traumatic stress and reactions to it. This was a western, text-book presentation about PTSD which seemed to make little connection with the experience of the refugees and made no concessions to their culture.

After further interviews and discussions with NGO staff about these issues, the research diary was again used as a means of trying to formulate some conclusions, as the following entry demonstrates:

> *With regard to the difficult issues of traumatic stress... I found myself using the analogy of this area being kept in "little boxes" by NGOs, occasionally to be opened and examined, but quickly closed again because so few answers or appropriate responses can be found. Perhaps the most worrying trend is towards seeing this as a specialist area requiring special structures and skills.*

What seemed to be lacking in Karagwe was a strategy to diffuse knowledge of child development and of the psychological effects of war and displacement on people broadly both among the various organisations working in the camps, and among the refugees themselves. Both Acisam and the NCVT took the view that the key players are not, and cannot be, specialist psychologists and psychiatrists: rather the emphasis needs to be placed on the idea that psychological stress should be everybody's concern and that all categories of worker should find ways of integrating psychological knowledge into their everyday work.

8.6 The Principal Characteristics, Advantages and Limitations of a Community Mobilisation Perspective

Throughout this chapter, considerable emphasis has been placed on the value of a community perspective. It has been suggested that in many societies, the impact of conflict and displacement is experienced in shared rather than individual terms. It is important for problems, needs and priorities to be defined by people collectively, and for responses to them to reflect the resourcefulness of the people themselves. Approaches which rely on external definitions of the problems, and a professionalisation of the means of dealing with

them, carry the danger of by-passing people's own insights into the nature of the problems and their context. They may also override people's individual and collective strengths and resources: in the process, this can be disempowering and potentially damaging.

On the other hand, it is important not to make naive and universalist assumptions about the nature of "community". For example, two of the case studies in this book provide illustrations of work undertaken in social contexts where the sense of community is not very strong - Sweden and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Although the work of Hi Neighbour did succeed in working with the "community" in the sense of the population of Collective Centres, it was very difficult in Yugoslavia to work with the much larger numbers of refugees living with host families using a community organisation model. Nevertheless, working with an international NGO, Hi Neighbour is now adopting an approach designed to reach refugees living with host families using a community-centre approach which was offering a range of resources to both refugees and their host families. Early results from this approach are encouraging.

This chapter has drawn attention to another limitation of the community mobilisation approach which is that communities are frequently deeply affected by divisions along tribal, clanship, ideological, political, religious or social class lines. A further potential limitation of approaches which emphasise collective responses is that they raise the difficult question of how to reach those people who have been so profoundly affected by their experiences that they are unable to take part in collective activity. Rädda Barnen's experience suggest that the numbers so affected are likely to be much smaller than some would expect: their work in Pignudo and Kakuma, for example, suggests that the community-based approach taken was effective in assisting all but a tiny minority of these young people, despite the exceptional experiences of violence, danger, hardship, separation and repeated displacement.

Although care must be taken to avoid the assumptions that community-based programmes offer a panacea to all psycho-social problems, it must also be recognised that the majority of conflicts in recent times have occurred in societies in which there is generally a strong sense

of community and in which community-based approaches appear to offer the most appropriate, sustainable and affordable way forward.

In reviewing the case studies which adopt a broadly community mobilisation approach, it is possible to distil some of the key features and advantages of this way of working:

1. They are based on definitions of needs, problems and priorities made by the people themselves. This is in striking contrast to the "top down" approach which is sometimes advocated by those espousing a more clinical approach (see, for example, Raundalen and Stuvland (1990) for an explicit argument in favour of a "top-down" approach). The importance of community definitions of problems and needs are particularly emphasised in the case studies of Acisam and the NCVT which have been featured in this chapter
2. They are based on traditional methods of coping with adversity and on existing strengths and resources within individuals and within the community, rather than seeking to replace (and potentially undermine) them. The case study on the Unaccompanied Refugee Children from Sudan illustrates this theme particularly well
3. They adopt participative methods, and thereby empower people, giving them more control over their own lives. The importance of participation and empowerment has been stressed throughout this study and is illustrated by many of the case studies
4. By adopting a holistic approach, they enable a focus on issues stemming from past experiences, on current areas of stress and difficulty and on future developments within the community. Again, the importance of the wider social, economic, cultural and political context has been stressed in many of the case studies
5. This approach contributes to the long-term development of the community rather than merely attempting to relieve immediate distress. This may be especially important for agencies who are committed to long-term, sustainable development within local communities
6. Community-based programmes which adopt networking approaches tend to be highly cost effective, potentially reaching large numbers of people at relatively

modest cost

7. By embracing either whole communities, or significant sections of communities, they avoid the stigmatising effect of isolating people on the grounds of "being traumatised", "pathologised" etc.. No rigid distinction needs to be made between prevention and treatment: rather the assumption is that whole communities are affected by experiences of war and displacement, and that all can benefit from programmes which address these issues in the wider context of the life situation of the community as a whole. Another advantage is that people who may be currently displaying no symptoms of stress may be able to benefit from the approach
8. Similarly, they seek to broadly diffuse understandings of psychological issues within the community, ideally avoiding the specialised language of psychology and psychiatry. This helps to generate an ethos which sees psychological well-being as everybody's responsibility, not just that of specialists and of external agents

8.7 Towards A Model of Community Resilience

The concept of **resilience** was introduced in Chapter 2, and has been used to describe the characteristics of individuals who seem most able to cope healthily with high levels of stress; emphasis was placed on protective factors within the wider social milieu which contribute to the resilience of individuals.

It may, however, be helpful to consider the application of the concept of resilience more broadly. For example, the notion of coping as a collective phenomenon was considered in Chapter 6, and it may be hypothesised that cultures may have certain characteristics that tend to enhance people's resilience. In the culture of the Dinkas and Nuers of South Sudan, (see Box 6.5 on page 88), boys were encouraged, from an early age, to take responsibility for themselves and for the cattle they tended, often far from home: they had to face many dangers and threats to their safety. The culture favours stoicism and bravery (Rädda Barnen 1994), while painful initiation ceremonies in adolescence reinforce the male identity as strong and courageous. These cultural factors may pre-dispose boys and men to a high degree of coping behaviour, and hence resilience may be seen partly as a cultural phenomenon.

The cultural and political context of armed conflict may also serve to enhance the capacity of whole communities to cope with extremely stressful situations. Rigoberta Menchú (1983) who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1992, describes how the circumstances of her upbringing enabled her to cope with extreme adversity. Brought up as a devout Catholic in a family who were active in demanding rights for the Indians of Guatemala, she was taught to expect frustrations and difficulties from an early age. Her family and community provided very powerful modes of coping, and this seems to have strengthened her capacity to cope with the terrible fate of her parents and other relatives in the conflict.

The concept of resilience may also be applied to particular communities. The case study on the work of Acisam in El Salvador includes a brief description of a particular village community, Ita Maura (referred to in section 8.3 above) which could be described as resilient: this is such an interesting illustration that it is described overleaf in some detail:

Box 8.6: An Example of A Resilient Community

The village now known as Ita Maura comprised a community which had fled from El Salvador to neighbouring Honduras following harrowing experiences of massacres by the Salvadoran army and then experienced extreme violence perpetrated by Honduran soldiers during flight. Previously an individualistic and fragmented community, this village achieved a strong sense of community and a high level of community organisation as a result of the experience of exile and their negotiation with the government of El Salvador prior to their return.

An Acisam Promoter suggested ways in which the community might celebrate their return, and the village committee decided on the idea of re-enacting the circumstances leading to flight into exile. This re-enactment, which involved large numbers of adults and children, both preserved a highly significant part of the village history, and also served therapeutic purposes in encouraging people to talk about these traumatic events within the context of the whole community sharing memories together.

Discussions with the Acisam Promoter and Facilitator and with community leaders, including the village chairman, revealed that the village was relatively free from problems such as drug and alcohol abuse, and it seems likely that the sense of community solidarity is an important reason for this.

Here, then, was a village which, because of a high level of community organisation and a strong sense of solidarity based on a shared history and a cohesive way of working together, seemed an example of a resilient community: it was in stark contrast with many other villages visited where, despite the endeavours of the Promoters, deep divisions and mistrust severely hampered the development of a strong sense of community. The village devised a means of re-living painful experiences, and the joy of return, in a way which both preserved their shared history, and enabled people to continue to work on their painful memories.

Similarly the work of the Standby Team, discussed in some detail in this chapter, is working in a way which may be seen as encouraging community resilience. So what are the typical characteristics of a resilient community? Although no definitive answers can be provided, the experience reviewed in the present study suggest that the following may be particularly significant:

- there is a **strong sense of community** characterised by open relationships between people, good communication and a strong sense of collectivism
- **leadership is democratic**, or at least leaders genuinely represent the people, and that women as well as men are able to exercise leadership functions
- there is a **commitment to community development**, a strong sense of the people themselves being organised to take responsibility and take action to develop and transform the lives of the inhabitants
- problems such as the effects of conflict and displacement are widely acknowledged as **shared rather than individual problems**; psychological understandings are diffused broadly in the community and there is a commitment to developing collective responses
- **people see themselves as resourceful**, and their communities as having the potential for meeting the needs of their people in a culturally-appropriate manner, relying on external resources only when necessary
- **supportive structures exist** within the locality - for example, schools and pre-schools, health services, women's groups, people's organisations, economic cooperatives and religious organisations all provide a high level of social support

In the context of most developing countries, it is likely that the psycho-social needs of children who are affected by war and displacement are most likely to be met by strategies which emphasise family support in the context of a community which actively seeks to address the whole range of the needs of its members - social, psychological, recreational, economic, spiritual, cultural and educational. Enhancing community resilience seems to offer a possible strategy which potentially reaches the most vulnerable children in the most sustainable and cost-effective manner.

Reference to educational needs raises the important issue of the role of schools and teachers, which are likely to be especially significant as sources of community support to children and adolescent. This is the theme of the next chapter.

Chapter 9: The Role of Schools And of Teachers

9.1 Introduction

The research literature on resilience in children places central importance on the existence of appropriate networks which provide social supports. Clearly the child's own, or substitute, family is usually the single most significant source of support, but after the family, it is the school which probably has the greatest capacity for providing children with a range of experiences which serve in a supportive capacity.

In most communities, the school is the public service structure which reaches the largest number of children, and it is teachers who have the most close and frequent contact with them apart from family members. Moreover, in some cultures, teachers get to know families closely, as well as children, and they may carry a great deal of authority and respect within the wider community. It is therefore not surprising to find that schools are often seen as a vital source of personal and emotional support to children affected by their experiences of war and displacement, apart from their primary task of providing education in its more traditional sense.

On the other hand, not all vulnerable children will be attending school. In some cultures, education does not receive a high priority, especially for girls. Moreover, in some conflict situations (for example Mozambique and Liberia), schools were particular targets for military activity, dramatically reducing access to schooling for huge numbers of children.

This chapter seeks to analyse the role played by schools in meeting the psycho-social needs of children, drawing on the experience of the seven case studies. It also suggests a number of factors which may serve to limit the contribution that teachers can make to children's psychological recovery.

9.2 The Potential Tasks and Roles for Teachers in Responding to Psycho-social Needs

The experience of the seven case studies suggests that the part played by schools can be grouped under seven main headings:

9.2.1 Identifying Vulnerable Children, Assessing their Needs and Monitoring their Progress

Teachers may be the only professional group to have regular contact with children who are affected by their experiences of war and displacement, and their knowledge of child development places them in a central role for identifying vulnerable children. Teachers can readily be trained in the signs and symptoms of stress in children, and are well placed to monitor the development and progress of children whose well-being has been affected by their experiences. The training of teachers in the programmes depicted in Case Studies 4, 5, 6 and 7 all included this component.

However, teachers will not necessarily be well placed to **respond** to the emotional needs of children (see 9.2.2 below), and assessing their needs and monitoring their progress will only be useful if either they are able to provide appropriate responses themselves, or have other resources available to which to refer them.

9.2.2 Providing Avenues for the Culturally Appropriate Expression of Feelings and Opportunities for more Personal Support

In an interview with a Rwandese refugee in a camp in Karagwe, she was asked to indicate what forms of help should be offered to children who have witnessed violent events which have subsequently affected their behaviour: her answer[49] was instructive:

> *First thing we have to do is to try and send children to school, to send those children to school, to find teachers who are able to try to console peoples, not teachers who want only money, no, but who are able to try to console children, who can find and understand problems of children.*

A number of programmes worldwide have particularly sought to develop the role of the teacher in order to provide more personalised support to children, both in refugee situations and in countries affected by civil war. At the most simple level, teachers can act as good role models for children; they can offer a concern for their well-being and a context in which they can feel accepted and valued. Some programmes have attempted to go further

[49] Tape-recorded interview

than this in giving teachers a more specific role in dealing with psycho-social needs: however, it is clear that these programmes have not been uniformly successful.

This collection of case studies illustrates a number of different approaches to the involvement of schools in this wider role with children. One of the most interesting describes the role of education in a camp for Somali refugees in Yemen:

Box 9.1: the Central Role of A School in Providing Psychological Care

Rädda Barnen was involved in initiating a school which had, as an expressed purpose, to meet some of the psycho-social needs of children affected by their experiences of war and displacement. Teachers were recruited principally for their personal qualities, attitudes and motivation rather than for prior experience of teaching. The original intention was to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills required to enable them to lead group discussions and to carry out "supportive conversations" with individual children.

Support from Rädda Barnen was interrupted for various reasons, including the war in Yemen: in the meantime, the teachers developed their own distinctive methodology, based on the cultural norm of not discussing painful issues directly. They developed a range of extra-curricular activities for children, some of which also involved parents. These included singing, drama, story-telling, sports and games, and through these media teachers encouraged the expression of feelings and verbal communication in a culturally-appropriate manner and in the context of a supportive and accepting community ethos.

In this situation, it is clear that the teachers had highly significant roles and status within the refugee community and had succeeded in developing the school into the most important social structure in the camp, extending the role of teachers beyond the school and out into the community.

Other attempts to develop the role of the teacher to meet the psycho-social needs of war-affected children have been less successful. In Malawi (Tolfree 1991), for example, an attempt was made to train teachers in the many camps for Mozambican refugees in what was described as "psycho-social rehabilitation". Again the intention was to provide them with the skills to undertake individual counselling and group activities. Two particular factors were identified as leading to the disappointing impact of the programme. First, the very limited teacher training programme provided: and second the lack of opportunities to enable the teachers to examine their own experiences and feelings in order to free them to work constructively at an emotional level with children.

Two additional factors also seem to be important when this experience is compared with that described in Box 9.1 above. First, in a culture in which teaching methods are very formal and non-interactive, and teacher-centred rather than child-centred, Mozambican teachers were being asked to work in a way which was in striking contrast with the culture of their profession and which probably posed a challenge to their professional self-concept. By way of contrast, in the Yemeni camps, conscious steps were taken to recruit, as teachers, members of the refugee community chosen for their personal qualities which would enable them to work in a very different way with children than was typical of teachers. Interestingly, in the classroom situation they continued to operate in a traditional, "top-down" and non-interactive mode, but outside of the classroom they proved able to work in an informal, interactive and highly supportive manner.

Second, there was a tendency in the Mozambican situation to assume the cultural relevance and appropriateness of promoting an approach which relied on the more direct expression of feelings and talking about experiences (see discussion of this issue in Chapter 6). One of the dangers of western models of intervention is that they can easily be uncritically accepted on a superficial level but not really become integrated into the working practices of the professionals concerned. A particular strength of the approach taken in Yemen was that it was developed by the teachers themselves: this served to greatly enhance their sense of ownership of and commitment to it.

A quite different approach to using the school as a forum for psycho-social intervention is illustrated in the case study of the Rädda Barnen Swedish Department: one component of the programme was the development of dance and drama workshops in schools and pre-schools. They are conducted by specially trained pedagogues, and provide opportunities for children from refugee backgrounds to express themselves in a variety of non-verbal ways, to learn new methods of communication, to work on their difficult past experiences and to examine their current difficulties - all in a relaxing and enjoyable atmosphere. These experiences seemed to have the greatest impact in situations where the school-teachers worked closely with the pedagogues in order to integrate the themes and issues emerging from the workshops into their classroom work with children. It also appeared that this work is most effective when teachers can "let go of their teacher role", for example by avoiding judging the quality of children's contributions and relating to children on an emotional level[50].

This issue of **integration** is central in developing the role of teachers with the broader psycho-social needs of children: Case Study 5 on the Unaccompanied Children from South Sudan provides an illustration of the way in which care arrangements, community activities and educational experiences formed an integrated preventive mental health programme. This was in striking contrast to many of the refugee camps in Malawi (Tolfree 1991): here, while teachers became effective in recognising the signs of stress in children, they lacked the skills and methods to deal with these themselves. Moreover, there was a paucity of other resources to whom they could refer and with whom they could coordinate.

9.2.3 Providing A Daily Structure, Purpose and Meaning to Children

One of the most obvious impacts of both conflict and displacement is that they tend to disrupt or even destroy social institutions such as schools. Refugee children in particular have experienced wholesale disruption in their lives - the loss of familiar people and surroundings (including parents and family members), loss of a sense of order and structure

[50] Fieldnotes

and predictability to their lives, loss of a clear sense of their future.

Reviewing the research stemming from experiences of war zones in Europe during the Second World War, Neil Boothby (1992b.171) writes: "children exposed to air raids not only benefited from the presence of parents, but from the presence of teachers, neighbours, extended family and other familiar adults. These adults provide children with a representation of their own abilities to exert inner control in the midst of chaotic and changing circumstances". This conclusion is equally relevant to contemporary refugee emergencies. One of the key "protective factors" identified by Losel (1994) which enhance resilience was identified in Chapter 2 as "a sense of structure and meaning in one's life".

The early weeks and months in a refugee camp may be characterised by an overwhelming sense of loss and shock, which can be followed by an equally damaging sense of despair and resignation unless steps are taking quickly to restore a structure and purpose in their lives: this is where an early start to educational provision can be so important. Education is frequently identified by refugees themselves as an urgent priority, and in many situations, refugees themselves take the initiative in starting informal school and recreational activities, often simply getting children to sit in the shade of a tree and participate in activities without any form of school materials. This was happening, to a limited extent, in the early stages of the refugee influx in the Karagwe district of Tanzania: in one of the camps, a group of young people formed themselves into a Students' Committee and took the initiative to begin educational activities for children. It was a conclusion of this case study that the active support and encouragement of such initiatives is of considerable importance. The following quotation is from this case study:

Box 9.2: the Priority of Education in Refugee Emergencies

The real significance of early initiatives to begin educational activities lies in the urgency to create for children, especially those who have been distressed by their experiences, a structure to their daily lives, a sense of purpose, and the rewards of achievement and the self-esteem that result from it. Participation in educational activities also provides young people not only with a sense of future, but an opportunity themselves to invest in that future: this is vital in helping to avoid that passive dependence and sense of hopelessness and despair that can so easily characterise refugee camps. It is with these objectives in mind that educational activity is so valuable, long before the stage where it is possible to implement more formal education.....

The case study on the Unaccompanied Children of South Sudan used similar terminology in emphasising the importance of structure and routine in the lives of this large group of unaccompanied children.

Another aspect of the maintenance of a sense of order in children's lives, especially for refugee children, is the preservation of culture and traditions, of values and practices, all of which provide a continuing link with the past and an investment in the future. Writing principally in the context of refugee children settling in western countries, Eisenbruch (1988) writes of the need for activities which help children to maintain their cultural identity while adapting to their new situation: in this context, many of the cultural activities undertaken with children early on in refugee emergencies such as singing, dancing, sporting activities, handicrafts etc. may help to provide a sense of continuity in a rapidly changing situation.

9.2.4 Enhancing Children's Understanding of Events

Western therapeutic approaches emphasise the value of "talking through" experiences in order to enable individuals to understand and make sense of them. The value of this cognitive and integrative function of therapy probably does have trans-cultural importance.

But an individual professional relationship with a therapist or counsellor is but one of many ways by which this need can be met. In situations in which children have shared stressful experiences with their families, their peers or indeed the whole community, it is more likely that talking about and developing understandings of such experiences will most effectively occur with others who have shared in them.

Schools can play a vital role in enabling children to discuss experiences of violence, danger, displacement etc., and in so doing develop both individual and shared understanding of the meaning of these events. It is in this context that the teaching of such subjects as history and geography can have particular relevance, especially for refugee children. In the Kakuma camp, for example, it was decided to base the curriculum on the Kenyan model, but to include as a specific topic the history of South Sudan. It is, however, important that the teaching of such subjects is undertaken in a way that promotes dialogue and discussion, and not the mere conveying of factual information, in order to enable children to "process" information and make sense of it in their own lives.

Religious and political beliefs also contribute to the process of understanding and making sense of difficult experiences. Although this is sometimes a controversial area for schools, there are many ways in which they contribute to young people's understandings and meanings. Religious education and the teaching of "civics" (or its equivalent) may be particularly important. The emergency curriculum used in the Karagwe refugee camps in Tanzania, for example, included the subject of "morales" which appeared to be a mixture of religion, ethics and civics. On an informal level, schools potentially provide opportunities for peer-group discussions which may be just as significant as more formal teaching.

However, in refugee situations, there are often sensitivities and conflicts, especially regarding curricula: the host government, the refugees themselves and possibly the government of the country of origin frequently express different ideas, values and priorities. Reaching agreement on areas such as curricula and the recruiting, training and payment of teachers can be difficult.

9.2.5 The Role of Schools in Contributing to the Broader Education of Children and Others in the Community

Schools also have a potential role in providing education more broadly within the community. Child to child approaches - in which children take on an educative or supportive role vis à vis others - have become increasingly popular, particularly in promoting health education in refugee camps. Some schools have pioneered the production of a newsletter - for example the school featured in Box 9.1 above.

In South Africa, the case study on the NCVT provides an example of the role of the school in becoming a vehicle for public education. Schools, youth clubs and women's organisations are particularly targeted as forums for training and the promotion of awareness about such issues as the different manifestations of violence, the effects of violence and traumatic experiences on people and the need for non-violent means of conflict resolution.

In El Salvador, the village-level volunteer Promoters deployed by Acisam were involved in education in schools, dealing with such topics as grief and loss, alcoholism, domestic violence and other subjects falling broadly under the heading of preventive mental health. It was Acisam's experience that children were frequently seen to be more open to change and new ideas than were adults: by working directly with young people it was hoped that their work would indirectly impact on their parents and other adults within the community.

9.2.6 The Development of Schools as a Vehicle for Community Mobilisation and Development

Schools are more than places for educating children. In new refugee camps, members of the Rädda Barnen Standby Team often find that education is seen by the refugees as an early priority, and frequently the initial planning of education serves as a vehicle by which people come together to plan. Schools are symbolic of both collectivity and stability, they demonstrate a community investment in the future and symbolise a sense of hope.

In conflict zones, too, education has a value well beyond the immediate benefits to children. Kenyi (1995), in a conference paper, said: "In Southern Sudan, one of the signs of hope for

future generations is a gathering of children and some adults, most often under trees, around an ill-equipped volunteer teacher". In post-conflict situations, the building of school premises may symbolise a return to normality, a sign of permanence and hope.

Once established, a school may continue to contribute to community development by being a highly significant focal point for children, for parents and very often for the whole community. The school described on the Case Study in Yemen (see Box 9.1 above) graphically illustrates how the camp school became a vibrant resource, the most significant social structure in the camp which met human needs far above and beyond those met by the traditional school: in the words[51] of the head-teacher:

The school is like a spring: a water hole for the whole community.

9.2.7 The Role of the School in Promoting Reconciliation

Civil war inevitably creates distrust and divisions within local communities, for example between people with differing political allegiances, or between those who fled and those who remained. Direct involvement in violence - as illustrated most graphically in Rwanda and Bosnia - creates particularly powerful tensions.

Schools can have a vital role in facilitating reconciliation between children, with the potential for having a wider impact within the community. Naomi Richman et al. (1991) talk of the role of teachers with children and parents in helping to reintegrate children who had been recruited into the guerilla army in Mozambique. Acisam in El Salvador found that children were frequently less polarised in their views than were adults: their director referred to children and youth as being "the new actors in the new reality", and it was frequently found that it was through young people that work towards reconciliation between adults could be undertaken. Similarly, in the refugee camp for Somalis in Yemen, the camp school seemed able to work effectively to promote reconciliation between people from different clanship groups, providing a "free zone" despite the existence of deep clanship divisions and conflicts within the community. The role of children in active coping will be discussed in the next chapter.

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[51] This quotation is derived from the Rädda Barnen video "Learning to Cope"

9.3 Some Constraints and Limitations to the Role of Teachers

The experience of this study clearly demonstrates that schools do and must play a central role in assisting children whose well-being has been adversely affected by war or displacement. Indeed it would be difficult to see how any strategy could ignore the central role that schools and pre-schools play in the lives of children. Schools and pre-schools provide vital settings for the promoting of child development. Regular attendance and meaningful contact with teachers and other children help to re-create a sense of trust and stability: scholastic achievement enhances children's sense of competence and this, coupled with the formal and informal social interaction which schools offer, assist in the formation of a strong sense of personal and collective identity. Schools provide children with tools for thinking, learning, and analysing, all of which may be relevant in understanding and making sense of disturbing experiences. Schools can provide a situation in which young people can talk about shared experiences and integrate the meaning of events into their view of themselves and their world. The fact of providing schooling demonstrates society's recognition and valuing of children, collectively and individually, which contributes to self-esteem. It gives them a hope for the future and a confidence in their own survival.

The experience of this study and other research and programme evaluations also, however, offer some notes of caution. First, it must be remembered that not all children attend school. The signs of traumatic stress in children include those of depression, withdrawal and social isolation: consequently, some of the most needy children may not be attending school, but quietly suffering in isolation from the world outside the home. For this reason, programmes which rely exclusively on school-based interventions may completely miss a significant, and potentially high-risk part of their target-group. Moreover, in many situations, schools have a marked gender imbalance, sometimes with only a small minority of girls attending.

Conversely, in some situations of conflict it has been found that boarding schools[52] often have an unusually high concentration of children who have been psychologically affected by

[52] In many countries it is common to find boarding houses attached to secondary schools in order to facilitate access by children from remoter areas

war: in Serbia[53], for example, boarding schools often contained a high percentage of refugee children, the boarding school effectively becoming "home" for children unable to return to their families during the holidays.

Second, insofar as school-based programmes rely on a major shift in the traditional role, knowledge and skills of teachers, it is vital to avoid the naive assumption that teachers can take on tasks which, in some respects, conflict with the role-relationship between teachers and pupils which may be characteristic of some traditional approaches to education. What has sometimes, perhaps, been seen as "adding on" additional tasks may, in reality, involve a major change in the role and self-concept of the teacher. Careful selection of teachers, training and on-going support are major factors in enabling teachers to function well in this area of work, and were all features of the school in Yemen depicted in Box 9.1: they were also components being built into the planning of schools in the Karagwe camps.

Third, experience in Mozambique and Malawi, and of Case Study 7 of Somali Refugees in Yemen highlights the fact that teachers as well as children have psycho-social needs arising from their own experiences of conflict and displacement. It is unlikely that teachers will be in a position to assist children constructively unless they have been able to face and deal with their own personal problems: otherwise there is an obvious danger that they may use discussions with children as a means of gaining support for themselves rather than providing it for them. It is vital that adequate training, personal preparation and on-going support are provided if teachers are going to be able to provide adequate help and support to vulnerable children.

Finally, an educational resource oriented to the broader psycho-social needs of children is most likely to be effective if it is closely integrated with other community resources. The case studies based on experience in Yemen, in Ethiopia/Kenya and South Africa (Case Studies 3, 5 and 7) all illustrate the considerable impact that schools can have on children's sense of well-being where their work is embedded in the life of the community as a whole. Close collaboration with parents (or other carers) and coordination with, and a sense of

[53] Fieldnotes

ownership of, the school by the wider community appear to be important factors in the capacity of the school to respond to the needs of children in a holistic manner.

One of the teachers[54] of the school in the Algahin camp for Somali refugees in Yemen summarised the benefits of the school in these terms:

> *Before we had the school, the children were lost. Their future was dark - so much has happened to them. Now we have the school, the children are more at peace. They have got back their zest. They are more themselves again.*

[54] This quotation is derived from the Rädda Barnen video "Learning to Cope"

Chapter 10: Re-thinking Conceptualisations of Childhood and of Child Development

10.1 Traditional Approaches to Childhood and Child Development

This research study provides strong support to the growing body of opinion which has challenged the concept of childhood as being timeless and universal, and of child development as being a process of development through particular pathways and through a series of predetermined stages, leading ultimately to the rationality of adulthood. By the conclusion of the study, it became increasingly clear that the concept of childhood needs to be replaced with the concept of childhoods in the plural, and that it is essential to look at children and child development within the particular cultural and social context.

The traditional, and de-contextualised approach to child development is seen as a unitary process in which the growing person evolves through various stages until reaching the independence and maturity of the adult. Possibly the best-know theorists were Erikson[55], who focussed on the socio-emotional development of children and adolescents and Piaget who was mainly concerned with cognitive development[56]. Growth from birth to adulthood is seen as a progression from simplicity to complexity of thought, from irrational to rational behaviour. This psychological discourse of development was translated into sociological accounts of childhood in the form of theories of socialisation during the 1950s, a time when the social sciences, under the influence of positivism, offered a "scientific" account of how children come to participate in society.

As Boyden et al (1998) point out, the legacy of this traditional model of child development has been expressed in five ways:-

1. Childhood is seen as a natural and universal phase in the human life cycle, in which biological factors are more significant than cultural or social ones

[55] See for example Erikson (1950)
[56] See for example Piaget (1953)

2. The idea of linear progression implies that children whose development deviates from the "normal" pathway places them in a situation of risk or trouble
3. Children are seen as relatively passive subjects of socialisation, rather than as social actors who are active agents within their own development
4. Certain western norms have been built into the developmental process - for example, an emphasis on school and play, and the neglect of activities such as work - which may not transfer to other cultural environments
5. There has been a strong emphasis, in theory development and research, on the periods of infancy and adolescence, leaving the period of middle childhood relatively neglected, or even defined as a period of "latency" by Sigmund Freud and his successors (Brown 1961)

The theme of this chapter is a critical examination of the concepts of childhood and of child development, based on the experience of this study and of subsequent theoretical exploration. It begins with some of the issues to emerge from the fieldwork for this study, then moves to consider child development in its cultural context, and finally draws some conclusions regarding research, policy and practice in the field of children in situations of armed conflict and displacement.

10.2 Issues to Emerge from the Case Studies

Two particular themes arise from the seven case studies. First, the overall picture from almost all of the case studies is that children do seem to cope unexpectedly well with the most extremely adverse circumstances. At first this seemed quite puzzling. The thesis began with a short story of a Mozambican child who had had the most harrowing experiences of brutality, loss and displacement. It was not possible to obtain any firm data on this child's functioning, but the fact that he was apparently coping at all was remarkable.

Case Study 5 also revealed an extraordinary account of the way in which an extremely large group of separated children from South Sudan have managed to cope with repeated experiences of war, conflict and violence, flight under the most extremely adverse circumstances, separation from their families and the inevitable constraints of life in a

remote refugee camp - see Box 6.5 on page 88. This capacity to cope in the face of overwhelming stress was difficult to explain merely by reference to factors bolstering resilience and to individual and collective coping behaviour. It raises the question of whether the nature of childhood as it is generally understood in Euro-American contexts can be applied appropriately in other cultures.

The second issue to arise from the study is that a picture emerges of children responding to their circumstances in a very active and creative way. Far from being the passive victims of circumstances, young people are frequently to be seen as social actors, actively engaging with their environment in order to respond positively and creatively to the adversity they are facing. A few examples serve to illustrate the point.

The first example comes from Case Study 1

Box 10.1: Reaching Adults Through Young People

In their work in El Salvador in the post-war period, Acisam found that young people were frequently less affected by the widespread feeling of hopelessness and despair than adults: moreover, in the context of deep political divisions in society, young people were often less polarised in their views. For these reasons, they found that young people can sometimes be more readily mobilised to take collective action to transform their communities and work towards reconciliation. In undertaking direct work with groups of children and youth, they also hoped to reach parents and other adults in the community.

Far from being seen as the passive victims of difficult circumstances, young people were seen as social actors, playing a key and constructive role in the recovery of their country and community from a long civil war, and in responding to the many social problems being faced.

During the fieldwork for this case study, groups of young people were observed to be actively involved within their communities, for example in compiling village maps as an aid to formulating a community diagnosis, and responding to issues such as alcohol abuse, economic problems, the need for recreational and sporting activities, health and educational facilities and so on. The Director of Acisam asserted that young people display more

dynamism than adults:

Children and youth are the new actors in the new reality[57]

Acisam attached particular importance to enabling young people to design and organise their own activities and not just participate in those planned and provided by adults. As such they are seen to be important agents of change within their communities.

A second example comes from the Karagwe camps for Rwandese refugees in Tanzania, where it was striking to find that at a very early stage, young people spontaneously organised themselves into Students' Committees, comprising mainly secondary students, and though their motive was partly that of seeking educational and/or work opportunities for themselves, these young people were seen to be extremely active in areas such as food distribution, organising activities for young people, including informal educational activities, advocating for the needs and rights of refugees and providing unpaid labour to NGOs (e.g. in undertaking a survey to identify separated children). The fieldworker also came across examples of children unquestioningly taking responsibility for the care of younger siblings where their parents had died in the genocide or had become separated from the family - with no expectation of outside assistance.

A third illustration was found in the Kakuma camp for Sudanese refugees, where there were also some interesting examples of young people taking the initiative to make the best of the situation - for their own benefit and for that of other people. It was interesting to see a system which spontaneously arose of separated children seeking out their own foster homes, while in the pattern of group care which evolved, older youngsters spontaneously took on responsibilities for caring for younger ones. This reflects cultural traditions, but in turn reveals a model of childhood different from that which exists in western societies. Children were also actively involved in activities such as health education in the camps, though it seems likely that this resulted from the initiatives of NGOs rather than arising spontaneously from the young people themselves.

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[57] Tape-recorded group interview

A fourth example comes from a number of the case studies, and relates to the situation of supposedly separated children. The ideas used for this illustration are drawn from three of the case studies and the conclusions drawn are tentative, but do seem to justify further study. During the fieldwork undertaken in the Karagwe refugee camp in Tanzania, the researcher came across a number of references to children who seemed to be moving between different families and possibly between family care and independent living (including a rather unusual "street child" phenomenon observed in the market-place in one of the camps - see discussion on page 110)[58]. At the time of the fieldwork, this had not been investigated, so the ideas expressed here should be regarded as somewhat speculative.

Family tracing programmes are generally based on the premiss that in many refugee situations, children become accidentally separated either because their parents (or carers) are killed or because of the chaotic circumstances of flight, sometimes compounded by agency policies which (as discussed in chapter 7) may inadvertently contribute to family separations.

In other refugee contexts, for example in Liberia[59], there has been clear evidence that some of the separated children referred for family tracing had become separated for other reasons: in this instance, children actually left their homes in search of food and it was only subsequently that the conflict caused displacement. It was initially assumed that these children had become separated as a direct consequence of displacement. In the Kakuma camp, it was very clear that many of the "unaccompanied" children had become refugees in order to benefit from a quality of education which was impossible to access in South Sudan. To what extent it was the children themselves who decided to seek refugee status, and to what extent their families, or even political groups, were the prime movers, is not clear. Similarly, Case Study 6 cites the initial results of research which clearly demonstrates that many supposedly "unaccompanied" children in Sweden do have parents and that they have sought asylum in the hope that their families would be able to follow. How far the decision to migrate has been one which has been imposed on children by their families, or how far

[58] Fieldnotes - Case Study 4
[59] Personal communication

the young people themselves have taken the initiative to seek out better opportunities for themselves, and possibly for their families, is not clear.

To return to the situation in Karagwe, one possible reason for this circulation of children may be that young people, in some instances, are actively negotiating their place of residence and opportunities for personal and economic betterment in the face of extreme difficulty. Is it possible that here was an example of children - like those in Kakuma who were seeking out their own foster parents - actually negotiating separation from one family and membership of another (or membership of a group living independently) as a means of coping with the difficulties they were facing? This would be a very interesting area for further study. The ration card system in most refugee situations would make it possible to "track" these children's movements, at least for those children registered on their own[60].

A fifth example comes from the case study of the Somali Refugees in Yemen, which describes the vital role of the refugee camp school. As well as providing a broad-based programme of education and social support for the children, the school mobilised young people to take an active role within their own communities: for example, they produced a regular newsletter which, among other things, contained important health messages for the benefit of the whole community.

A final example comes from the work of Hi-Neighbour in Serbia: the aim of the programme was to provide a social setting and a form of social interaction in which children and adults could express and work on the issues which they themselves identify as important. The case study reveals striking examples of the energy, creativeness and imagination which these children brought to bear on the sometimes extreme problems they were facing. An example has already been mentioned in Chapter 7 (see Box 7.2) in which children were seen to be active in trying to facilitate the emotional expression of their parents. The following is another example: this is a story written by a group of children in a workshop conducted by Hi Neighbour. They were, at that time, in a situation fraught with

[60] At the time of writing, a research study is being planned by Rädda Barnen and the Refugee Studies Programme at Oxford University, as a direct result of these findings

danger and uncertainty.

Box 10.2: An Example of Children's Creative Capacity

"In the field of flowers a boy was wandering. He was holding tight to his heart a boomerang of kindness, uncertain what will happen to his boomerang if people receive it. Would it come back to him as boomerangs always do? The boy took a chance. He threw his boomerang of kindness to people. Kindness went all the way to the sun and was coming back at people together with sunshine. The boy was looking into the blue sky and waiting.

"His boomerang came back to him as boomerangs always do. Kindness of people was with him mingling with sunshine around his heart. The boy was certain now, and for ever, that boomerangs do come back to one that sends it to the others."

This story is significant not just because of the extraordinarily powerful imagery, but because it resulted from the creative imagination of children themselves. Here was a group of children surrounded by the horrors of a war which adults had imposed on their lives, but despite everything they were still able to perceive their own, and other people's capacity for kindness and peace.

10.3 Childhood and Child Development in Context

The historian Ariès (1962) is often credited with launching the reappraisal of childhood as a relative rather than a universal or timeless category. Anthropologists and psychologists have subsequently sharpened the focus on the plurality of childhoods. The Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky (whose work was very influential in Hi Neighbour's programme) and his followers have demonstrated the way in which children's abilities are developed through social relations which are embedded in particular cultural and social contexts (Ratner 1991). Rather than conceiving of children's needs as something which are natural and universal, this line of thinking has prompted a reframing of development as a more open-ended process which is culturally defined. Super and Harkness (1986) have coined the term "developmental niche" to describe how children's development and needs

are mediated and expressed in particular ways, depending on the context. The concept of "developmental niche" has three components: the physical and social settings children inhabit; the culturally regulated customs and practices of child care, learning and socialisation; and the psychology of the child's care-takers, including the beliefs or "ethno theories" of parents, or other key individuals in their lives, about the goals and priorities for development. Martin Woodhead (1998a) has argued that these cultural niches define the particularities of development itself, for example the emphasis placed on human potential for social integration, autonomy, loyalty, obedience, playfulness, assertiveness, task orientation, physical strength, craftskill, artistic representation, literacy, numeracy, intellectual abstraction, spirituality etc..

Traditional thinking about child development asserts that children who face problems or adversity, within the family, school or community, would deviate from the normal (and presumedly universal) developmental path and face various additional problems, possibly in later life. Separation, loss or privation during the early years of infancy were posited as having particularly severe developmental sequelae. But the reality is that the links between cause and effect are much more difficult to understand, and developmental outcomes are extremely difficult to predict. Much of the work has been done in the more developed countries of the north, and tend to focus on the developmental impact of separation, loss, neglect and abuse, or of violent crime. But some research into the effects of war and of other grossly adverse circumstances outside of western cultural contexts do suggest that many, probably the great majority of children remain resilient in the face of extreme adversity.

For example, Ekblad (1993.30) reviews the literature on various kinds of urban and war-related stress and concludes "Some children... are remarkably resilient, managing not only to survive, but even to flourish, in unfavourable conditions. In some cases, early exposure to stress may actually contribute to enhanced psychosocial functioning in later life. Studies have also shown that negative environmental change can have positive effects. For instance, suicide rates and admissions to psychiatric hospitals often decrease during times of war". Other examples are to be found: Jill Swart, cited in Boyden et al (1998, pge 86) found that street children in South Africa have well-developed moral and social codes with a clear view of right and wrong. In similar vein, Aptekar (1989.435), writing of street

children in Colombia, concludes that "Many of the street children demonstrated that children have a remarkable ability to make life happy and meaningful in the worst of circumstances". Felsman (1994) also found remarkable resilience among children in southern Africa faced by armed conflict and displacement. Moreover, the children often played an active role in making the conscious, and to them rational, decision to live in the streets.

It seems clear that there is no direct and automatic link between particular kinds of adversity and particular kinds of developmental outcome: many mechanisms mediate between cause and effect. As was demonstrated in the discussion in Chapter 2 on the concept of resilience, many aspects within the individual child's make-up and within his or her family and social environment serve to enhance either vulnerability or resilience. Chapter 6 suggested that cultural factors may also be significant.

This brings us back to the issue about conceptualisations of childhood. While writings based on western conceptualisations of childhood tend to emphasise children's innocence and vulnerability and perceives them as victims, whether of abuse or war, as passive casualties of circumstances[61], the reality of childhood within the majority of contexts in which the case studies were set is quite different from this. Take, for example, the concept of childhood within the culture of South Sudan. Far from being an extended period in which children are nurtured and shielded from work so that they can concentrate on play and education, which are seen as the essence of childhood in Euro-American cultures, children are expected, from an early age, to be economically active: boys, for example, from the age of around eight years, will be taking responsibility for the care of their family's herds of cattle, often spending protracted periods of time away from their families in cattle camps. This is a society which places a premium on independence, self-assurance and the ability to withstand a great deal of hardship (Rädda Barnen (1994)): they are expected to encounter, and deal with, a range of threats and to take responsibility for themselves and for their highly-prized herds. The anthropological literature reveals numerous other cultures in which experiences of hardship are positively construed as contributing to children's

[61] See, among many examples, UNICEF (1995b)

development - see for example Bledsoe (1990).

10.4 Conclusions

So what conclusions can be drawn from the foregoing analysis? Four points stand out as most significant.

10.4.1 Globalised conceptualisations of childhood and of child development may mask children's resilience and capacities

Western models of childhood depict children as innocent, vulnerable, dependent and needing to be protected - or as John Holt (1975.23) described it "the walled garden" of "a happy, safe, protected, innocent childhood". As Boyden (1990) points out, this notion of childhood is culturally and historically bound to the social preoccupations and priorities of the capitalist countries of north America and Europe: in turn these reflect a level of social and economic development during the last couple of centuries which have enabled children to shift from being significant economic producers to being prolific consumers; and from a parental perspective, child-rearing has become less motivated by the economic value of children and more based around their psychological value.

Even international laws and conventions tend to unquestioningly adopt this western construction of childhood, with their emphasis on the need for governments to secure happy childhoods and adequate protection for their children. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) - now ratified by all states apart from Somalia and the USA - stresses the importance of a family "atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding" (Preamble), and goes on to assert the child's right to education, leisure, play and recreational activities (Articles 28 and 31). Whilst highly laudable in setting a global standard to be aspired to, such an image of childhood, characterised by play and school (but not work!) is far from the reality facing the majority of children today.

Boyden et al. (1998.32) offer a succinct summary of the difficulties in this globalised conceptualisation of childhood in the following terms:

Childhood embraces a remarkably heterogeneous set of experiences, supported by a broad range of developmental goals.... Children in different places face very different challenges, and are raised in very different ways and with very different expectations and outcomes. Different societies have their own ideas about children's capacities and vulnerabilities... Ultimately, children's well-being and development are influenced more than anything by their own competencies and by the opportunities and constraints, social, cultural and economic, associated with the particular context they live in.

It is instructive to compare this with the following statement, which is made in one of UNICEF's annual reviews (UNICEF 1996a):

It is universally true that horrific experiences are so deeply disturbing, so overwhelming, that a child will try to suppress bad memories rather than confront them..... A child must be helped to express suffering and to confront bad memories, with the support and guidance of an empathic and informed adult.

International agencies, however, still tend to transplant a picture of the western, idealised childhood into contexts in which it is quite alien. One of the results is that assumptions about vulnerability and passivity may be carried into situations where it may be more helpful to focus on children's resources, their active coping, or, in a word, agency.

It is increasingly clear that children facing a range of difficult circumstances do not necessarily respond to them with passivity or helplessness, but rather actively engage with their environment. James and Prout (1995.78) express this extremely clearly:

Children might employ a variety of modes of agency within and between different social environments... The possibility (exists) that children locate themselves flexibly and strategically within particular social contexts and that, through focusing on children as competent, individual social actors, we might learn more about the ways in which 'society' and 'social structure' shape social experiences and are themselves refashioned through the social action of members.

An examination of publicity material produced by agencies concerned with the well-being of children affected by war reveals many examples of images which superimpose a picture of a westernised model of childhood upon an armed conflict situation. Examples[62] appear on the two succeeding pages: the first is a picture of small and vulnerable child, complete with a pet dog, being overwhelmed by a military tank. The second depicts a child soldier incongruously clutching a teddy-bear and standing beside a broken toy gun. Such images may be good for publicity and fund-raising purposes: but they give a misleading perception of childhood in the countries which are most characteristically affected by armed conflict. They emphasise children's vulnerability rather than their resourcefulness and resilience, and fail to give a fuller picture of the lives of the children portrayed. There is a parallel here with the image of the abused child which is still projected by some child protection agencies and which typically is depicted visually as a despairing, helpless and pathetic victim (Kitzinger, 1990). Publications which emblazon concepts such as "stolen childhood" or "lost innocence" (see, for example, Blanchet 1996, Amnesty International 1995) are again superimposing western images of childhood on to contexts in which they are inappropriate.

10.4.2 Research has tended to perpetuate false assumptions about how war affects children

A second issue emerging from the discussion in this chapter is that a great deal of the research and programme planning in respect of children affected by war and displacement are rooted in the "vulnerability" discourse and assumptions about the universality of "children's needs": these issues are so important that a separate chapter will be devoted to them (see Chapter 11).

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[62] These are reproduced by permission of Ilon Wikland and the Refugee Studies Programme respectively.

10.4.3 There is a parallel between a de-contextualised concept of childhood and child development and the isolation of children from their communities for the purposes of "treatment"

As already discussed in this chapter, traditional and universalist approaches to child development have tended not to view children's development as being closely related to the specific cultural and social context, or "developmental niche". Similarly, it was suggested in Chapter 2 that more clinically-oriented "trauma" programmes tend to treat the child's responses to past events in relative isolation from other issues stemming from the child's whole situation - past experiences, current stresses and privations, and possible uncertainties about the future. It was suggested that approaches based around the concept of PTSD are essential reductionist.

A key issue to emerge from this study is the need to view children's development and well-being as closely bound with the totality of their situation (this was discussed in section 8.2 above). In order to understand how children are affected by their experiences, it is important to avoid looking at only one small part of their life situation, but rather to consider the totality of their experience and, as will be discussed further in 10.4. 4 below, what they themselves bring to their own development. To be effective, approaches designed to assist and support children affected by war and displacement, far from isolating children from their wider context need to ensure that wider context is carefully taken into account. The conclusion from Chapter 6 that people may experience events collectively rather than just individually is an added argument for ensuring that approaches view children in the totality of their family and community contexts.

10.4.4 Interventions based on globalised conceptualisations of children may inadvertently disempower children and undermine resilience

Traditional views of socialisation tend to see the period of childhood as a preparation for adult life, during which children receive inputs from adults relatively passively. As Schildkrout (1978.109) puts it "Child culture is seen as a rehearsal for adult life and socialisation consists of the process through which, by one method or another, children are made to conform".

One of the most serious consequences of the inappropriate transposition of a westernised model of childhood is that assumptions about vulnerability and passivity may lead to the development of therapeutic approaches which effectively disable and disempower children. Moreover, the "disease" terminology which is associated with PTSD tends to obscure the child's own efforts to negotiate his or her way through the many constraints and opportunities being faced. Dawes (1992b) suggests that biomedical language tends to suggest a view of the child as a "passive and helpless entity set upon by traumatic events".

It is not possible to draw very firm conclusions on the basis of the present study. It does, however, provide sufficient clues to warrant more extensive exploration of this important area. The case study on Acisam gives the clearest indication that children and adolescents can and do play an active role in responding to the many problems and issues facing themselves and their communities which are recovering from a long and bitter civil war. This work reflects the growing trend, which is particularly visible in Latin America, to develop strategies which help to mobilise children and youth and encourage their direct action in responding to the problems they face (Oakley, P 1995).

This chapter has also referred to other examples of young people adopting active coping strategies, and this is something which emerges clearly from the literature as contributing to resilience. Richman and Bowen (1997.106) summarise as follows: "Research suggests that resilience is encouraged and developed when children and youth have opportunities to meaningfully participate in and contribute to the environments that embody their microsystems. When families, schools, peer groups, and community all communicate the expectation that children and youths can and will handle their responsibilities successfully and participate in valued ways, the youths respond by developing a sense of autonomy, independence, heightened social competence, and - in a word - resilience".

A review of the resilience literature reveals that two key characteristics of resilient people are, first, the presence of an active coping style, and second, the individual experiences that he/she has a sense of power and control over his/her life. As Kitzinger (1990.175) asserts in the context of child sexual abuse, "to name power is to create it; to identify power is to activitate; once acknowledged its force increases".

There is clearly a great deal of scope for further pursuing strategies which see children and adolescents as social actors, and which emphasise the community mobilisation and empowerment of young people, especially if ways can be devised to evaluate the outcomes not just for the young people themselves, but for their families and communities.

Kitzinger (1990.177) asserts that "ultimately, it is childhood as an institution that makes children 'vulnerable'". This chapter has suggested that the exportation of a westernised model of passive and vulnerable childhood is potentially deeply damaging, and that programmes need to be rooted in an understanding of childhood within their particular cultural, social and political context. An emphasis on children as social actors, capable of taking action to respond to the many issues facing themselves, their families and communities may offer a more positive approach than an emphasis on children as victims and approaches which serve further to disempower them.

Chapter 11: Research And Evaluation Issues

11.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter (see 10.4.2) it was noted that much of the research in respect of children in situations of armed conflict are rooted in the "vulnerability" discourse, and it is perhaps partly because of this that few research studies use methods which allow children themselves to give voice to their concerns: in turn, these research methods may serve to reinforce a particular notion of childhood.

This short chapter offers a critique of the research methods which are characteristically used within this field: it also raises concerns both about the basis of planning of programmes designed to assist children affected by war, and the lack of programme evaluation, and in particular the lack of involvement of the children, whether defined as "clients", "patients", "beneficiaries" or "participants".

11.2 A Critique of the Research Methods Typically used in Respect of Children in Situations of Conflict or Displacement

The literature is littered with examples[63] of research studies which have, as their starting point, not an open-ended attempt to understand how war impacts on the child's sense of well-being, from his or her own perspective, but on assumptions that certain types of events have universal and predictable impacts on children: the research methods employed do little more than confirm that children do indeed conform to these assumptions. A recent paper by Summerfield (1998) makes a scathing attack on the deployment of unvalidated checklists as a means to sustain a prior conviction that (traumatised) children, en masse, have been damaged for life. But confirming that children have experienced certain types of events (which are assumed to be traumatising) and that certain emotional and behaviour sequelae result from them, does not establish that these outcomes are the most significant from the

[63] See, for example, Lima (1992), McCallin and Fozzard (1990), Eth and Pynoos (1985), Brett (undated), Segerström (1994), Rakic et al (1993), Espino (1991), Sack et al. (1986), Beiser et al. (1989), Kinzie et al. (1990), Mollica et al. (1987), Westermeyer et al. (1983), Tyhurst (1977), Stubbs (1996), Kinzie and Sack (1991). Several practical examples were encountered during the fieldwork for the case studies.

child's perspective, does not begin to explore the *meanings* of the events and their emotional and behavioural consequences for the child, nor does it establish whether there are other consequences which have greater significance in the eyes of the child.

As Chambers (1997.94) asserts, "In questionnaire interviewing, power and initiative lie with the interviewer..... They are something that is done to people.... The questions and categories are those of the interviewer, who also records the 'response'". Kleinman (1987) offers an extremely useful critique of methods which are used to identify symptoms of psychiatric illness, especially the use of questionnaires and structured interviews. On the one hand, such methods may produce results which are high on *reliability* - i.e. they may confirm the presence of certain symptoms or the fact of having experienced certain events with a high degree of reliability. The question is rather that of *validity*: Kleinman gives an interesting illustration of research which examined the reactions of American Indians to bereavement. Ten psychiatrists who examined these subjects came up with almost total consistency that they reported hearing the voice of the dead person within a month of the death. But the determination whether such reports indicate an abnormal mental state requires an understanding of this group's behavioural norms. In this instance, hearing the dead person calling to them as the spirit ascends to the afterworld is an expected experience, and hence to categorise these experiences as hallucinations is reliable but *not valid.*

He describes this as a "category fallacy" which he defines as "the reification of a nosological category developed for a particular cultural group that is then applied to members of another culture for whom it lacks coherence and its validity has not been established", and he goes on to assert that "to avoid a category fallacy, cross cultural research must be grounded in the local ethnographic context" (quoted from pages 452 and 453).

An extended example will now be used to illustrate how these ideas apply to research in the field of children in situations of conflict. Magne Raundalen et al. (1987) used a variety of research instruments to assess the impact of the civil war in Uganda on children. These included:

1. Essay techniques - children were invited to write on the theme of "The story of my life: events that made me happy and events that made me sad" and "War and violence in my life". The essays were analysed by means of a scoring system covering themes of loss, experiences of events of war and violence: in addition the themes of expressions of aggression and desire for revenge, grief and anxiety were analysed
2. A "stress questionnaire" was used, focussing on psychological reactions to war, events experienced and loss of relatives or close neighbours

However, there is no discussion of cultural norms, for example, on how people traditionally react to loss and death, norms about aggression, revenge etc.. Not surprisingly the researchers found what they were looking for, most notably evidence of "grief and depression". However, the finding that 90% of the children expressed no aggression and 92% displayed no desire for revenge is noted without comment!

The most significant feature of this research (and countless other studies[64]) is that no attempt is made to enable children themselves to articulate, by verbal or visual means, what they see as important, how they experienced events, and what the consequences are, uncontaminated by pre-existing assumptions about how children react to what are perceived by the researchers as stressful or traumatising events. By contrast, Bracken and Giller (undated, 11), also researching in Uganda conclude that "we looked for the symptoms of PTSD and found that while these were often present, they seldom dominated the person's account of his or her suffering. The impact of various traumata was determined to a large extent by the person's social, political and sometimes religious position".

Much of the research is little more than self-fulfilling prophecy: by uncritically adopting universalist assumptions about the effects of violence on children, based on a globalised notion of childhood, and using methods which predictably find what the researchers are looking for, a vicious circle is created which fails to advance the debate which, as a consequence, remains locked in a particular discourse. As Einstein observed, "It is the

[64] See footnote 63 on page 170

theory that determines what we can observe", or in the words of Heisenberg, "What we observe is not nature in itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning"[65]. The question posed in the title of Chambers's book (1997) - "Whose Reality Counts?" - is a pertinent one.

Typically, such studies conclude that what children "need" is a form of therapy based around the formulation of PTSD. An example of this has already been given on page 27, referring to the work of Menvielle (1992). Another example is the work of Lima (1992) which used questionnaires as the main research instrument in identifying mental health symptoms among the adult "victims" of natural disasters, which, predictably, led to the planning of health-oriented interventions. The work of Raundalen and Dyregov (1991) also illustrates this narrow approach. A few quotations serve to illustrate the suggested actions which inevitably flow from their analysis: "Child rearing and socialisation practices should be explored and utilised in efforts to provide therapy" (P.89); "Teachers may use the principles of insight therapy to help children understand why they react as they do... Behaviour therapy training can range from systematic desensitization to helping the child through a visit to a place where he or she was frightened" (P. 95). In this paper the child is seen as the object of therapy based on universalist assumptions about the nature of childhood and the relevance of methods and techniques derived from European and North American contexts: there is no sense of the child as an active agent in coping with his or her experiences.

One of the critical variables in research studies appears to be the type of interviewing techniques deployed, though unfortunately it is rare for the actual schedules to be included in the published study. An interesting example is the work of McCallin and Fozzard (1990): they too make use of questionnaires, eliciting information from mothers and children, both about experience of "traumatic events" and symptoms which were *presumed* to be experienced by the research subjects. However, these data were supplemented by information elicited from interviews which appear to have enabled the research subjects to voice not only their concerns but their ideas on what kind of assistance they would find

[65] Both quotations are derived from in Watzlawick (1984.101)

most helpful.

Returning to the theme of the nature of childhood and the way in which researchers may be influenced by particular models of childhood, Martin Woodhead (1998a.15), writing in connection with working children, makes some comments which are highly relevant to the situation of children affected by war: "Anyone making statements about the 'nature' of child development, or about how work 'harms' 'normal' development needs to recognize the way their experience and understanding of children's work, and their location within a particular cultural niche, shapes how they think about children's 'nature', 'normality', and 'harm' and modified how they construct it as a 'problem'..... Reflexivity remains an alien principle to most psychologists, who continue to presume they are discovering rather than constructing their subject. But the 'childhood' of which these children are 'deprived' is an idealisation that has grown out of particular historical and social circumstances. It may have little to do with how children themselves, or their parents or the communities of which they are a part, understand their young lives".

What seems to be wholly lacking in the research literature is an attempt to explore the meanings and impacts of war-related experiences faced by children which allow them, in their own way and using culturally-appropriate and child-friendly methods such as visual and dramatic representations, to describe and analyse their experiences and reactions to them. When these methods have been used in relation to working children, the issues which emerged proved highly challenging to the received wisdom in respect of the impact of work on children (Tolfree and Woodhead 1999).

One very recent research study provides the only example encountered of the kind of study which illustrates in a positive way the points being made in this chapter. A study of the well-being of children in the Gaza Strip used a methodology which enabled children to articulate their "worries" in their own way (MacMullin and Loughry in press). Previous studies of children in this area had revealed a high level of involvement in violence: one study (Abu Hein et al. 1993.7) found that 92.5% of their sample had been tear-gassed, 55% had witnessed assaults on family members, and 42% had themselves been beaten. Interestingly, MacMullin and Loughry found that children's main concerns related to their

physical, social and political environment and worries about their own futures: most significantly, "indicators of trauma such as difficulty in sleeping, night-mares and fear of the dark were ranked low on the list. The children also recorded low levels of worry about feeling lonely, helpless or sad".

11.3 Programme Evaluation Issues

Oakley, P (1990) refers to the fact that in many social development programmes, evaluation is either overlooked or undertaken in a limited fashion, but goes on to offer a framework for undertaking qualitative evaluation. However, few examples have been encountered of systematic attempts to evaluate the impact of programmes designed to enhance the psycho-social well-being of children affected by war or displacement. It was striking that not one of the seven programmes examined by the case studies had been systematically evaluated: moreover, few of the project staff were even considering the issue of how the impact of their work might be measured, and hence none of the projects was establishing base-line data, attempting to define outcome indicators or planning any form of impact measurement. What was particularly surprising was that even those which were working in a participatory manner were not attempting to involve those participants in a structured but qualitative consideration of the impact of their work. This was a serious omission and reflects the point already made, that programmes in this field of work are woefully lacking in documentation.

However, when evidence of the efficacious outcomes of trauma counselling are sought, the findings are illuminating. Raphael et al. (1995) reviews a number of outcome studies of "trauma debriefing" work; he finds limited evidence of beneficial effects and raises the possibility that it may increase people's problems. Of particular interest is the suggestion that some examples of debriefing do not appear to produce beneficial effects that could not have been obtained from the personal networks of the people concerned.

Following the same line of thinking, Summerfield (1998.32) makes an interesting observation:

> *The key question in evaluating, say counselling centres in Sarajevo, is to assess how much client satisfaction has been a function of the mental health technologies*

deployed there, and how much of a social setting that provided for people to gather, share their problems with each other and muster collective solidarity at a time when many other facilities lay in ruins. This can pose difficulties if the sponsoring agency has a medical identity and must pitch its work in health rather than social network terms.

From the situation of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal comes an interesting illustration of how the "by-products" of a counselling programme were felt by the refugees to be the most significant aspect of the programme. An independent evaluation (Dubble, 1993) of a counselling programme revealed that of the women using the service and finding it useful, 73% indicated that the main benefits were the practical services received such as medicine, clothes or access to other programmes: less than a quarter indicated that the process of talking with the counsellors was beneficial.

11.4 Conclusions

One of the recurring themes in the present work is the need for programmes to be founded not only on a careful and thorough understanding of the culture of the people involved, but on the people's own perceptions of their needs, problems, resources and priorities. Part of the problem with much of the current practice is that it is based either on research which (as illustrated in section 11.2 above) uses inadequate and inappropriate methods, or on the idea of a "needs assessment". This is a popular concept with UNHCR and with many NGOs, which tends to have a problem-orientation but may largely ignore the resources of the people, their understandings and analysis of their problems and their perceptions of the services which they would find most helpful. A participatory situation analysis, with a broader focus and a genuine attempt to enable people to articulate and analyse their concerns and identify possible solutions, may offer a much more appropriate basis for programme planning.

Chambers (1997.102 and 162) uses the term "lowers" to emphasise the relative lack of power of the people whom development programmes are designed to reach. He argues for the wider use of methods derived from the Participatory Rural Appraisal approach which he defines as "a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share,

enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, and to plan, act, monitor and evaluate" . He suggests that "participation, empowerment and mutual respect enable lowers, and poor people in general, to express and analyse their individual and shared realities. The principles and practices of participatory appraisal facilitate this analysis and expression".

What seems to be largely lacking in the whole field of children in situations of conflict is what might be described as a culture of participation. Many agencies fail to involve the people themselves in assessing problems and needs, identifying resources, planning programmes in accordance with stated problems and priorities and then running them in a way which conveys the idea of organisations having some accountability to the people themselves. An important aspect of this latter point is the lack of involvement of the people themselves in evaluating the work, which has also been identified as a significant weakness in the programmes featured in the seven case studies.

There is an interesting contrast here with other fields of work: for example, in work with street and working children, while there is a huge range of different programme approaches and philosophies, there is a growing trend towards a high level of child participation[66], in some cases with children themselves accepting high levels of responsibility for planning, monitoring and evaluating programmes. Some recent studies which have examined the lives of working children and which have examined programmes designed to benefit them have also used participative research methods which have enabled children to express their own concerns, as uncontaminated as possible by the agendas, constructions and biases of the researchers (Woodhead (1998a), Tolfree (1998), Tolfree and Woodhead (1999)). It is vital that these kind of approaches, both in research and in programme planning, are now applied to the field of children in situations of armed conflict.

[66] See, for example, Ennew (1994), Woodhead (1998a), Tolfree (1998), Tolfree and Woodhead (1999), with a useful overview provided by Miljeteig (1999).

Chapter 12: Reflections on Research Methods

12.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a review of the research process, an analysis of the researcher role and a discussion of the principal methods used. A particular attempt will be made to identify some of the research issues raised by the rather unusual and at times extremely difficult contexts in which the fieldwork took place. A number of ethical issues will be integrated into this chapter. Some of the reflections are quite personal in nature, and for this reason, this chapter will be written in the first person singular.

As explained in Chapter 3, I undertook the fieldwork for some of the case studies myself: in respect of other case studies, other researchers were contracted to do the work. The discussion of methodology in the present chapter will concentrate principally on the former, though the latter illustrate some interesting issues, notably in relation to access. The chapter begins with the question of access, then proceeds to an elaboration of the overall research process. Then follows a discussion of the research role in participant observation, sections on interviewing, the use of interpreters, recording, and finally data analysis.

12.2 Access Issues

When I first began planning the study - it will be recalled that the fieldwork was undertaken for a development agency, Rädda Barnen - access had to be negotiated on two, and sometimes three levels. It was anticipated that the research could potentially pose a threat (Gale, undated) on any one of several levels, and in the event it came from the least expected quarter. In my research work I was accountable to a fairly senior member of staff, referred to here as my contact person. Having made an initial selection of projects together with him, it was first necessary to negotiate access with the headquarters-based Desk Officers, staff members who were operationally responsible for communication with "their" field offices: these were crucial "gate-keepers" from whom I wanted not just permission but more active and hopefully committed involvement. Second, it was also necessary to negotiate with Rädda Barnen staff based in the relevant country or region, who were either the implementers of the project in question, or if the project were implemented by a local

NGO, they were, in effect, gate-keepers to the relevant organisation: either way, their cooperation was essential. In these latter cases, discussion with the relevant NGO was a third level of access negotiation.

The first tier of access negotiation proceeded smoothly, with one notable exception which will be discussed below. Personal discussions in Stockholm were significant in forging good relationships and in not only gaining permissions but also developing the interest of Desk Officers and a real sense of investment in the study.

The exception caused a great deal of heartache: the Desk Officer for South Africa tried to obstruct the work from the beginning. She set out a range of reasons why it would not be possible to include a case study on the work of the National Children and Violence Trust in South Africa and her hostility to the whole study was clearly in evidence from the beginning. Such was the importance of including this project in this study that I decided, in conjunction with my contact person, to appeal to her line manager, the Overseas Director: this followed some discussions from which it emerged that this particular Desk Officer had a reputation for being protective and defensive of her work and often obstructive to anything she sees as "outside interference". To cut a very long story short, she was instructed to cooperate with the study, despite her continuing protestations that the project was not happy to collaborate, and she continued to provide the absolute minimum of assistance.

A visit to the project in South Africa was arranged, timed to coincide with the visit of the Desk Officer, and negotiations with the NCVT Project Director revealed not just the latter's willingness to cooperate, but her enthusiasm to do so! A very productive series of interviews, an extended group interview with project staff and volunteers and a review of documentation enabled me to identify more precisely the issues to be covered by the study and to write a detailed Research Protocol. These discussions also resulted in a decision that the fieldwork for the study would best be undertaken not by myself but by a black South African, and eventually an ideal person was found - a black female academic who had some knowledge of, but little involvement with the project. Unfortunately, the problems with the Desk Officer continued: she made a formal complaint about me to her manager in Stockholm: again to cut a long story short, her complaint was disproved and the end result

was that her contract was not renewed. By this stage, I had established good contact with the project which enabled the study to proceed despite the lack of cooperation from the Desk Officer.

With every case study, I was at pains to explain the difference between an evaluation (a concept familiar to all of the projects) and a case study (a less familiar concept). Although a case study does have an analytic and evaluative component, I made it clear that the principal objective is not to make qualitative judgement about the programme, but rather to enable others to learn from its experience. This was a useful piece of "reframing" (Watzlawick et al. 1974) which, simultaneously, placed the researcher in a humble, learning position while also gaining permission to be both analytical and critical.

The enthusiasm of the NCVT to be involved in the study was mirrored in all of the other projects. In almost all cases - especially those involving local NGOs - project staff saw benefit for themselves in being involved both in terms of gaining publicity for their work and in gaining knowledge of other programme approaches. I knew that it would be difficult for these organisations to refuse to be involved because of the power imbalance created by the "funding relationship" with Rädda Barnen, but in all cases, consent to the study was far from reluctant. In some instances, there was an eagerness to expose their work to an outsider and in several cases I was asked, from the outset, to use the occasion of the fieldwork to offer feedback and criticism: this I gladly agreed to, though this called for a re-emphasis on the difference between a case study and an evaluation. This level of openness encouraged a particular style of reflexivity which will be discussed below.

The Case Study on the Unaccompanied Children from South Sudan provided some initial access difficulties which were referred to in Chapter 3. This was a programme directly implemented by Rädda Barnen, and in Stockholm there was a ready agreement that this experience should be the focus of one of the case studies: however, from the beginning a sensitive issue was raised regarding the "ownership" of the material flowing from this very interesting project. The current programme manager, an Ethiopian psychologist, had had an unfortunate experience of a previous documentary programme on her project which had left her feeling that she had not been credited for her work and that some of her ideas had been

mis-represented. I felt that an open discussion with her was the first step towards resolving the matter, and I decided to visit her in Kenya. She quickly re-asserted her own wish to write the case study herself. This presented me with a potential problem in terms of her objectivity and lack of detachment: however, a satisfactory compromise was worked out. Having read an extensive amount of existing documentation on the project, I undertook a series of extended, tape-recorded interviews with her and also did a few days of fieldwork within the refugee camp. The purpose of this work was twofold: first, to enable me to write a detailed protocol for the case study, setting out the objectives and the principal issues to be addressed. Secondly, it gave me sufficient knowledge of the project to provide some assurances about the veracity of what she subsequently wrote - a form of triangulation - which also enabled me, in the process of supervising her writing and in editing the study, to introduce or amplify issues not adequately raised in the early drafts of the study. In the event, she displayed, in the study, a refreshing amount of detachment and self-criticism.

Through this process, the project manager moved from an initial wariness to an increasing sense of enthusiasm to be involved. The extended interviews with her enabled me to understand and value the unusual and highly original work of the project: indeed her comment in one of the interviews[67] "I am amazed at how you understood it" probably marked a turning point in her attitude to the study.

Gaining consent from project "users" or "beneficiaries" was impossible in advance, not least because there was no constituency with which to negotiate. On an encounter-by-encounter basis, care was taken to explain the purpose of the research and of the particular interview or meeting and to seek the person's cooperation: it was also my normal practice to offer opportunities for the person to ask questions of me. However, this does beg the question of whether, by this means, "informed consent" was obtained, given the difficulties that many respondents, especially children, would encounter in understanding the objectives and implications of the research. In the context of prior institutional consent having been given, it would be difficult for some respondents to withhold their consent, especially in the case of children (Thompson 1993).

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[67] Tape-recorded interview

However, an overall analysis of risk and benefit of the research (Thompson 1993, Association of Social Anthropologists 1987) reveals that the risks to the many people who took part were low, while the benefits, at least in the short-term, were also low. The study carefully avoided the kind of extractive and intrusive approach to interviewing the "victims" of conflict which have not infrequently led to an exploitation of vulnerable children, often for the sake of gratuitous relishing of tragic situations (International Save the Children Alliance 1996). Particular care was taken in interviewing children and there was a careful avoidance of any attempt to elicit highly personal information.

In terms of the benefits of the research, there was unlikely to be any short-term benefit to project participants or beneficiaries: it can, however, be argued that research interviews can be both validating and empowering to the subjects. Any benefit would be to future generations of children and families affected by armed conflict or displacement in terms of hoped-for developments in policy and practice.

On a more personal level, I was faced with the conflicts raised by the fact of having close contact with many distressed and desperate people, some of whom were denied even the most basic necessities of life, while I was able to return to relative comfort and a decent meal at the end of the day. However, I had to define this as a fact that had to be lived with, and not as a problem which could lend itself to any immediate solution.

12.3 The Overall Research Process and Field Strategy

Negotiation of access in respect of each case study proceeded at different rates and the timing of the fieldwork for each one was dictated by a range of other considerations, including the convenience of project staff and my own work schedule. This meant that the sequencing of the case studies was done on a pragmatic basis, but in turn this led to a situation in which the work on the earliest case studies could be used to inform the development of subsequent ones.

One of the unexpected problems was the extraordinary paucity of written material on some of the programmes, making it difficult, in one instance, to compile a detailed research

protocol in advance of beginning the fieldwork. In all other cases, the research protocol was important in setting out the background to the project under consideration, the aims and objectives of the case study, the principal issues to be examined (though scope was always allowed for introducing issues not anticipated at the outset) and the methods to be used. A suggested format for the study was also included, and though this was not prescriptive it helped to ensure some consistency across the seven studies. The protocols, which were written in straightforward language, were appreciated by project staff in providing a clear and written framework: an example is provided as an Appendix.

In planning the fieldwork for each individual case study, detailed pre-planning was often neither possible nor desirable: to a degree, each interview, group discussion or field visit raised issues which helped to determine subsequent work, so the planning was something of an evolving process. To some extent, project staff were anxious to "show" certain features of their work, and as a guest in their country and their programme, this had to be accepted.

As already indicated in Chapter 4, the overall strategy for each case study can perhaps best be described as that of "rapid ethnography", with time providing a most severe constraint. In practice, the fieldwork was generally contained within a three week period, with sampling decisions inevitably leaving some aspects of the project unexplored. The sampling strategy generally reflected the desire to explore the range and diversity of project activities in different locations and carried out by different personnel, to pursue particular issues identified as important, but also to avoid spending a disproportionate amount of time travelling. Time sampling was difficult in such a short period of fieldwork, but some compensation was found by reviewing archival sources, and by discussing the project's history and future plans with the relevant staff. Opportunistic sampling (i.e. selecting informants who can provide particular data) and "snowball" sampling (where one informant leads to another) (Burgess 1984) were significant parts of what, overall, can be described as a non-probability sampling strategy.

With regard to the fieldwork for the case study on the work of Hi Neighbour in Serbia, sampling decisions were particularly difficult. This project involves the running of about 400 workshops per month in 44 different refugee centres: in deciding which workshops to

observe, I decided to experience several workshops in one chosen location (in order to gain a more in-depth picture of the work and build some rapport with participants), then observe a single workshop in many different locations, achieving diversity in terms of age-groups attending, in different centres catering respectively for newly-arrived or more established refugees: I also decided to make visits to centres where particular problems were being experienced. The resulting series of "snapshot" pictures of the workshops and their context were supplemented by interviews and group discussions with project staff, attendance at staff meetings and perusal of documentary and archival sources (including videos).

I frequently found that the interspersing of observation with planned group or individual interviews was helpful: the interviews elicited clarification of what had been observed and assisted in planning the next observation visits. Gold (1958) comments on the dangers of mistaken perceptions emerging from brief encounters with numerous informants, but by interspersing these with continued dialogue with programme staff it was possible to check out, and discuss, the testimony emerging from these more fleeting encounters.

The following is an illustration of how the fieldwork evolved in the case study on the work of Acisam in El Salvador, a local NGO funded by Rädda Barnen:

- Initial discussion with Rädda Barnen staff
- Initial introductory meeting with Acisam staff
- Review of documents in the Acisam library
- A series of field visits (day or half day) to four communities, accompanied by the appropriate Acisam staff member and an interpreter: typically, these involved meeting with volunteer Promoters, Young Promoters, Child and Youth Leaders; informal discussions with community leaders and other villagers; observation of workshops, other programme activities and meetings - all interspersed with discussions with the accompanying staff member. Field visits often involved many hours of travel in difficult conditions.
- Review of training materials
- Viewing of selected project videos
- Further discussion with Rädda Barnen staff

- Further field visit
- Extended (tape-recorded) group interview with Acisam staff members to discuss and seek further information and clarifications of programme activities observed so far, to offer feedback (at the request of project staff) and to plan the remaining visits.
- Two further field visits
- Field visit and final meeting with Acisam staff aborted because mud-slides blocked the only road!
- Review of selected documents which had been specially translated
- Final meeting with Rädda Barnen
- The case study was drafted after the field visit: this was translated into Spanish and sent to Acisam and Rädda Barnen with an invitation to comment on it

Note-writing and time for reflection were interspersed among these activities - often invading the planned rest days.

Several factors conspired to make the fieldwork for all of the case studies stressful and difficult. My research diary makes frequent reference to the effects of heat and uncomfortable conditions, especially in the tropical locations. This combined with an excessive amount of time spent in Land Rovers bouncing along appalling dirt roads added to the overall exhaustion and lack of physical comfort. The stresses induced by the context of armed conflict was another factor, as the following extract from my research diary illustrates:

> *I was awoken at 4 a.m. to the unmistakable sound of a large army on the move. There is generally only light traffic in Belgrade because of the chronic shortage of fuel, and night-times are remarkably quiet for a capital city: not so last night, when there was the incessant rumble of heavy vehicles. I lay awake for more than an hour listening to it and wondering if this is a new and crucial stage in this horrible war. If my worst fears are well-founded than I begin to wonder if I shall have difficulty in leaving the country, especially if there is a sudden exodus of foreigners and the kind of panicky evacuation I have experienced before.*

Yet another constraint was that on occasions I had to "share" the field visits with others who had quite separate agendas. An example of this was in visiting the Kakuma camp for Sudanese refugees: access to the camp was obtained by chartering a light aircraft, and in order to make optimum use of this expensive facility, it had been arranged that my visit would be co-terminous with the visit of a small group of senior Rädda Barnen staff who were making a monitoring/inspection visit. To my dismay I found that there were some pre-arranged and somewhat "stage-managed" events and meetings which did not sit comfortably with my own objectives. This is an example of what has sometimes been described as an attempt at "impression management" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983). I had to quickly negotiate for a separate interpreter and for a series of interviews which enabled me to escape the rather contrived events which might not have revealed very reliable data, and to pursue some of the issues of particular interest to me. Some of the pre-arranged meetings were, however, valuable and provided opportunities for discussion of issues, some raised by myself, some by other visitors. Even a large presentation, involving almost the whole community, with various groups such as Scouts and Guides, school-children etc. "performing" for us did give an interesting picture of community cohesiveness and an opportunity to unobtrusively observe members of the community. It was, however, important to take into account the contrived nature of such events when analysing the data.

In other situations too I found that a visit by an overseas researcher had prompted obviously-planned presentations: courtesy demanded that these were attended and usually it was possible to move into more spontaneous interaction with the people involved.

12.4 The Research Role in Participant Observation

I found that, even within the fieldwork for a particular case study, my role was very variable. In El Salvador, for example, I was warmly accepted by the project staff group who were eager to engage with me in critical discussions about their programme: it almost seemed as though they wanted to draw me into the role of "complete participant" (Burgess 1984) in terms of critically examining their work and offering feedback on it. On the other hand, during the field visits, the role was more that of "observer as participant", sometimes engaging with their Promoters and members of the village communities and adopting a

participant observer role, at other times observing more passively.

In Karagwe, Tanzania, I had negotiated to be attached to Save the Children (UK) - this involved, for example, being accommodated in their staff house, negotiating access through them and making extensive use of their logistical facilities. I did, however, avoid depending on them for transport, having hired a truck (with driver) and driven down from Uganda to this remote and inaccessible part of Tanzania. Within this organisation I was a well known name and again I was asked - from the outset - to work in a transparent manner and to offer feedback on their work. As with Acisam, they felt they were working with a high degree of professional isolation and were eager to draw on my experience from other contexts: in Karagwe they particularly wanted to tap into my experience of working with separated children. It seemed unreasonable, and possibly unethical, to refuse this and I found myself rejecting the "detached researcher" role in favour of a more engaged role which incorporates an element of "research as praxis", an acknowledgement that the researcher can and maybe should be changing the status quo. Like Mies (1993.67), I found myself rejecting the "methodological principle of a value-free, neutral, uninvolved approach, of an hierarchical, non-reciprocal relationship between research subject and research object". Having accepted this role-relationship with project staff, the ensuing interviews and group discussions (especially the extended and repeated interviews with key project staff) became much more interactive; with Oakley, A (1981), I found that by being responsive to, rather than seeking to avoid, respondent reactions to the interview situation, the quality of interaction was greatly enhanced, and the result was that both parties became engaged in a joint exploration of key issues.

Almost all of the literature on the researcher role and on interviewing seems to be predicated on the assumption that the role of the researcher is to elicit data, ideas and perceptions that are pre-existing in the mind of the informant. I came to question this assumption. Two background factors seem to be important here: first the almost universal paucity of written information about the projects, and second the high degree of professional isolation being felt by project staff. These factors seemed to have created a situation in which precise formulations of their work - what they were doing, how they were doing it and the rationale behind it - had not always been clearly worked out. I found that an interactive interview

process, especially in groups, provided a setting in which both parties could jointly explore different ways of constructing the reality that they are working with. The researcher as well as the respondent introduced language and concepts that assist in this process. This can be a feature of research interviews with children (Tolfree and Woodhead 1999) but in this study it seemed also to apply to adults. Fieldwork, then, can be seen as a process of constructing knowledge and meanings and not merely a means of eliciting and recording data.

One of the ways in which this reflexive approach was used was in comparing issues arising in one of the case study projects with those arising in another. Not only did this process help to sharpen differences and similarities of approach: it was also appreciated by project staff who, as already indicated, often felt they were working in isolation from other ideas, especially in other regions. The following statement by the Director of Acisam is recorded in my research file[68]:

> *We are very interested and struck by the things you have said when you compare this culture with others..... The interchange is really enriching.*

On occasions, when reflecting back as a means of checking that I had fully comprehended something which had been explained to me, I found that I was also interpreting it in a different manner from the way in which it was explained: sometimes this seemed to be helpful to the respondent and advanced their understanding of the issue: on other occasions I had misunderstood what had been said and needed clarification.

One of the most gratifying outcomes of the study was the request by two of the projects - Hi Neighbour and Acisam - for permission to use the case study of their particular programme in their own publicity and fund-raising. In both cases they indicated that they found the analytic discussion of their work to be valuable.

Jarvie (1982) raises the interesting issue of the paradoxical nature of the role of the participant observer - he/she is both a stranger and friend, insider and outsider, pupil and

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[68] Tape-recorded interview

teacher. Hecht (1995) describes the term "participant observation" as an oxymoron: participation implies involvement while observation implies a degree of detachment. My role vis a vis Rädda Barnen added another dimension to this paradox: at times I was associated with the organisation and needed to distance myself in order to shed the power which stemmed from the fact of working for a funding agency, asserting my independence as a freelance consultant. At times it was helpful to play the my role of "ignorant outsider" or as Lofland (1971a) describes it, "an acceptably incompetent" outsider - with permission to ask foolish questions: at other times I was seen as the "expert" who could compare situations with others and engage in analytic debate. It was often my experience that as the fieldwork progressed I came to be seen more as an insider in the sense of absorbing the norms of the organisation and the capacity to engage in detailed discussion about the issues raised by it: yet clearly I remained an outsider in terms of my tasks and role. During the fieldwork in Serbia, I recorded the following incident:

> *One interesting happening in today's workshop was that the Centre Manager came in to greet me and then began a long "speech" of welcome which drifted into a plea for international assistance for the new refugee arrivals. I felt embarrassed by this as it was clearly an intrusion, so I interrupted the speech when the opportunity arose, said a few polite words in reply, then turned to the workshop leader and asked (through the interpreter) if I could offer a childhood experience to the group in order to re-start the current theme of discussion. This was successful in reverting to the topic, and later the leaders gave me feedback that they really appreciated this as they felt that the workshop had effectively been hijacked and had been wondering how to restart things. One psychologist commented 'that makes you one of us'.*

Gans refers to his experience as a participant observer as being "psychologically outside of the situation", and "deliberately uninvolved". In general this was also my experience, but on occasions this was definitely not the case. It was in the fieldwork for the case study of the work of Hi Neighbour that it was an agency requirement that I should take part in their workshop groups as a participant observer. This was based on their opinion that to have a non-participating foreigner observing group interaction from the outside would be inhibiting and possibly provocative to the children. Although my role, coupled with the language

barrier, sometimes left me feeling quite detached, on occasion I felt very much caught up in the emotional climate of the group. On one particular occasion, taking part in a very large workshop attended by some 50 newly-arrived adult refugees, I felt, powerfully, the changing emotional climate which moved dramatically from a sense of overwhelming despair and hopelessness to an extraordinary release of energy and commitment on the part of the refugees to take action to improve their situation. I recorded the following in my fieldnotes:

> *A concluding exercise involving hands, then pressing palms with someone else to symbolise strength flowing was very powerful. The old, strong man opposite me was reluctant to be involved, then did so and commented that I could write in my notebook that the Englishman had given strength to a refugee from Krjina, which clearly meant something for him.*

Clearly he had detected my involvement in the dynamics of the group, at the same time implying an understanding of my researcher role symbolised by the notebook.

Age and gender issues did not seem to present particular problems: my age (late middle age) was probably an asset in establishing credibility, while at the same time it was vital to have a good amount of energy and stamina to cope with the demands of the fieldwork. Gender did not appear to be a major problem, with most projects having a reasonable gender balance among their staff. There were certainly some occasions when it was helpful to have a female interpreter: an example was an interview with a young women in El Salvador who revealed a great deal of relevant but personal information about her role as a child soldier and her subsequent work as a "Popular Educator". In terms of ethnicity, association with a Swedish organisation was sometimes helpful in establishing a sense of neutrality in the politicised environment of refugee camps and post-conflict situations.

On one occasion in Serbia, during a workshop group, an adult female participant suddenly launched into an angry tirade, addressed to me in what seemed like a very personalised manner: she particularly emphasised the need for the UN Contact group to know how difficult things are for them and why can't we stop the war? This appeared to be a curious kind of transference response to me, as an outsider, representing the broader international

community.

In South Africa, during the initial fieldwork it did not appear that being white and male was a major issue: however, it was clear that in this of all contexts, the deployment of a black researcher would be most appropriate, and this is what was achieved. The overall experience of the study was that personal qualities were more significant than considerations of gender, age and ethnicity: the capacity to be non-threatening, a demonstrated interest in and respect for the work of the various organisations, a willingness to work in a transparent manner and a relaxed and informal style all seemed to help achieve a climate of relationships in which honest answers were given and critical issues could be raised and discussed openly.

12.5 Interviewing

The fieldwork obviously made extensive use of interviewing, though in practice this took various different forms. In all of the case study contexts, there were certain key informants - usually project staff - whom I needed to interview at length. Generally these were planned in advance, often taking place with groups of key staff, and were generally tape-recorded. I generally found it most helpful to move from very open-ended questions (e.g. "Tell me how the project first started": or "Please could you tell me the history of the centre?") to more specific questions. This was important for two reasons: first an early objective was to establish trust and rapport, to establish the research process as a non-threatening one before gradually moving, where necessary, to more tenacious and challenging lines of questioning and clarification. Second, as Becker (1958.655) suggests, "The volunteered statement seems likely to reflect the observer's preoccupations and possible biases less than one which is made in response to some action of the observer".

Within some of these group interviews, I found that interesting discussion was sparked off among the participants: this enabled them to discuss things they found interesting without the agenda necessarily being set by the researcher.

I found that once a high level of trust was established and I was able to demonstrate my

respect for their work it was also possible to be quite confrontative in asking challenging questions. I do not believe that this ever caused offence. Humour often helped in establishing a climate in which this was possible and on several occasions respondents teased me, good-naturedly, for my endless and persistent questioning.

At the other end of the spectrum, the fieldwork provided opportunities for conversations with a huge variety of different people: in some instances these were predicted in advance, making it possible to enter the conversation with a set of questions in mind. On other occasions meetings were unanticipated, making it necessary to "think on my feet" and follow up on issues raised in response to very open-ended questions. In addition to the more planned and structured group and individual discussions with project staff, I frequently made use of informal and unstructured interviews with them which were embedded in the field visits - often during the long journeys to project sites.

Language, of course, was a major issue. Many interviews were conducted through an interpreter, but aside from the specific issues raised by this (see discussion below) finding words, in whatever language, was sometimes difficult. In some contexts, key informants were people with very limited educational background, and sometimes there was a real struggle to find concepts and the words to express particular issues. A good example of this was an interview with a Rwandese refugee woman, conducted in English, in which I really struggled to understand exactly what she meant in saying that "we encourage children to forget about difficult experiences". Often the context of interviews presented their own problems - in this latter instance, we were sitting in a tent while a tropical thunderstorm raged outside!

This interview also raised a significant ethical issue which reflected the sensitive subject matter of the study. The interview had as its main objective the eliciting of socio-cultural information about attitudes and responses to critical life-events such as death, loss and separation. Although I explicitly invited this English-speaking Rwandese woman to talk about the issues in a general rather than a personal way, in the middle of the interview there was a sudden and massive self-disclosure about her own experiences in the genocide (she lost both parents and four of her five siblings). I felt that I should not avoid responding in

an empathic way but it was clearly beyond my role as researcher to enter into a social worker mode: in any case, it was not clear to me what sort of emotional support, if any, it would have been appropriate to offer in this culture. Throughout the study, there was an ever-present danger of unwittingly contravening cultural norms.

A slightly similar situation arose in Serbia and is described in the following extract from my fieldnotes:

> *I took the opportunity of an informal discussion with a group of mainly older women (almost all of whom attended the group later on). I was not well-prepared for this, but as they made themselves available to me I used the opportunity of trying to gain some observations about the work of Hi Neighbour and some reflections about refugee life. In the event this prompted some quite personal and emotional self-disclosure by the women, which had not been my intention, but was actually appropriate and I felt that my colleagues and I were able to respond appropriately and in a way that was consistent with their work.*

Unlike the situation with the Rwandese woman, I was left feeling comfortable with the way in which this incident was handled: the discussion revealed some significant insights into the work of the project and provides a good example of useful data being revealed as a result of the reflexive approach of the researcher.

In general I found interviews with children more difficult than I had expected. Although in many instances children were pleased and probably flattered to have contact with a white foreigner who was interested in them, frequently I found that there simply was not sufficient time to establish trust and rapport, and hence it was sometimes difficult to engage children in thoughtful conversation. On the occasions when I was a participant, for example in workshop activities, this helped to establish rapport and paved the way for more useful individual or very small group discussions. I also came to question the validity of interviews as a means of understanding the world-view of children and have subsequently developed alternative methods of enabling children to participate in research (Tolfree 1998, Tolfree and Woodhead 1999). Some recent research in the UK has contributed to the development

of more appropriate and child-centred methods - see for example Abebaw et al. (1998) which developed the idea of peer research.

12.6 Interpreters: Problems and Issues

Many issues were raised by the need to work with an interpreter. It imposed many limitations: the pacing of interviews was slow, and there was a constant concern that meanings, and especially nuances, were being lost or distorted, which led to the need to constantly check and clarify understandings. On the other hand, the slower pacing of interviews provided two advantages: first it gave more time to think and formulate the next question, and second it provided opportunities to be more alert to non-verbal forms of expression, though cultural factors mean that these had to be interpreted with care.

With translators I found an unexpected paradox: the requirements of a good translator are many: a sophisticated knowledge of both languages and an ability to translate quickly; knowledge of the particular specialist language of the project and an awareness of the key concepts used; an ability to establish rapport and good communication with people - including professional staff, members of the general public, and children; and a capacity and willingness to work hard, sometimes in difficult circumstances. These are tough requirements to fulfil, and in practice I found that if the person possessed them, especially a good knowledge of the concepts used within the project and good interpersonal skills, there was a real danger in the interpreter going beyond his or her role and "taking over" the interview. As my experience with this grew, I learned the importance of discussing my requirements in advance, predicting some of the difficulties, and closely monitoring the interpreter's performance and discussing problems early on. In El Salvador, the first interpreter used had to be quickly replaced because he lacked the specialist language required and was so slow in translating that the flow of interviews was lost. He was replaced by a psychologist who was fluent in English, and I found that she was so interested in the subject matter of the study, and open in her interpersonal style, that we gradually moved into a situation where I could allow her to go beyond the normal bounds of the interpreter role. On occasions I would ask a question, which she translated, and then entered into a discussion with the respondent until she was satisfied that the latter had

understood the question and that she had understood the response. I came to trust her judgement in this and was confident that, far from introducing her own agendas, she was simply ensuring that good communication was taking place. On occasions she asked my permission to ask a question, and almost inevitably this made a useful contribution to the interview.

In other situations, however, I was sometimes left with the feeling that the interpreter was summarising responses and that some of the richness of the data was being lost. The problem, of course, is that one does not necessarily know how accurate or full the translation is. In my case, I had at least minimal knowledge of French (important with interviews with Rwandese people), Spanish and Serbo-Croat, which was helpful in detecting when translation was less than comprehensive.

I came to realise that the interpreter is really an extension of the researcher, someone who mediates between the interviewer and respondent, hence the importance of good inter-personal skills and an ability to establish rapport with people. This was most clearly in evidence in conversations with children. Unless the interpreter has an appropriate manner, good skills in establishing rapport and expressing empathy, an ability to use appropriate language and gestures, and so on, the researcher's skills have little impact because it is the interpreter who is at the forefront of the interaction.

In Serbia, the project insisted that their own staff undertake the interpreting: this was as a result of previous bad experience with interpreters who lacked the specialist language needed. This caused me a great deal of anxiety at first, with fears of partial or biased translating. In practice, it generally worked well, and as trust and transparency rapidly developed, my fears of bias evaporated.

12.7 Recording

I found that the early days in the field are characterised by a sense of bombardment with data - or as Schatzman et al. (1973.95) describe it, the researcher is "threatened with a crush of observations and interpretations". The following diary extract typifies the problem:

I was able to make a very few, cryptic notes but I feel sure that so much of what I observed quickly disappeared from my memory in the midst of bombardment with interesting observations and thoughts[69].

Note-taking was severely restricted by the context of the fieldwork, much of which was literally in the field, standing up or sitting on the ground while conversing with people. This made detailed, or even minimal, note-taking extremely difficult. It might be expected that the many hours spent travelling would afford good opportunities for making notes: not so. When in a Land Rover travelling at maximum possible speed on dirt roads, staying in the seat is difficult enough without trying to keep pen on paper: conversation and even thinking was often inhibited under these circumstances. These factors conspired to create a situation in which detailed recording took a great deal of time at the end of the day, relying on memory and cryptic notes.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) acknowledge the difficulty in taking contemporaneous notes and the need for congruity between not taking and the context of the setting under scrutiny. Their injunction to record as fully and as soon after the observed actions as possible was heeded. I was appalled to find how quickly my memory faded, and this absolutely required the discipline of same-day recording, even if this meant staying up for half the night. The following extract from my diary is very typical:

The most frustrating thing today has been that we hit a rich seam of ideas, mainly from Cecelia, but there has been absolutely no opportunity to write notes before the end of the day. I have this fear of losing important insights, and just had to write notes as soon as I got home, tired and exhausted from the heat[70].

The availability of a lap-top computer was extremely valuable, and with the ever-present problem of interrupted (and sometimes non-existent) power supplies, I became proficient at

[69] Research diary, Case Study 2
[70] Research diary, Case Study 1

word-processing by candle-light, and adept at searching out generators to re-charge batteries the next day.

Careful investigation of the market in portable, high-quality cassette recorders before beginning the fieldwork was probably the most productive investment of time of the whole study. The purchase of a Sony Professional Walkman and a high quality, multi-direction microphone enabled me to acquire sound recordings of excellent quality, sometimes in difficult circumstances (such as the interview in a tent during a tropical downpour mentioned above). Gaining permission to record electronically was never a problem, and it was usually possible to identify in advance where permission was likely to be refused or where the recorder would create inhibitions. The nett result was that some of the richest sources of data were recorded in detail which more than warranted the time invested in transcribing them. The facility of recording people's actual words was particularly valuable in analysing the data. Occasionally technical problems intruded - ranging from low voltage supply and problems in obtaining replacement batteries to faulty cassettes.

The discipline of maintaining a daily research diary was well worth the time expended, often at the end of a long and exhausting day. I did not adopt Burgess's (1984) clear distinction between methodological notes and analytic notes, nor did I follow Glaser and Strauss's (1968) recommendation for separate analytic memoranda: like Hugman (1988), I used the diary as a tool for reflecting on the day's events, in terms of personal responses, methodology and emerging ideas and theory. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983.165) assert, recording one's own personal and emotional reactions can be of analytic significance, while methodological notes were valuable in facilitating critical reflection on the process of the research and planning of the next phase of the study. The recording of emerging ideas leads us into a consideration of the issue of data analysis.

12.8 Data Analysis

It is generally recognised in ethnographic research that the analysis of data does not occur at a specific stage in the research - rather it is a continuing process, from the pre-fieldwork stage through to the writing-up phase (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983). Schatzman and

Strauss (1973) state that most field researchers cannot predesign their analytic operations with exactness and that the concept of analysis can be thought of as the working-through of thought processes rather than as a formidable academic abstraction: this was reassuring. They too advise the researcher to start analysing data early on, with a moving back and forth between gathering and analysing data.

On more than one occasion I recorded in the research diary the feeling of being "bombarded with disconnected pieces of information", but frequently found that the process of writing up fieldnotes and the diary was a valuable tool for reflecting on the data and beginning the process of formulating categories. On one occasion I wrote in my diary for a Sunday (a rest day, in theory!):-

> *I ended the week with serious mental indigestion, feeling that I had seen and heard so much that I couldn't absorb it: neither was I managing to step back in order to establish patterns to the material and identify other areas that I need to cover. So I started the day by sitting down quietly and drafting a framework for the case study.... As a result of this I suddenly feel less confused and much more comfortable with what I'm doing and where I'm going*[71].

The following extract from the same diary illustrates the process of not just making connections between data, but interpreting what had been left unsaid:

> *In the afternoon we had an excellent interview with James, which I tape- recorded in full.... It was particularly interesting for me to see something of the very coherent strategy SCF are pursuing, though I have doubts and concerns about some elements about it.... It is of interest to me that he made no mention of mental health issues until this very last part of the strategy: he did not, for example, suggest that meeting the care/nurturance/support needs of unaccompanied children is probably the highest priority for those highly vulnerable children who have lost parents under traumatic circumstances... . What seems clear so far is that mental health needs*

[71] Research diary, Case Study 4

seem not to be integrated into their programme as a whole, hence, it seems something of a bolt-on approach. Interesting, I have only become aware of this as I write this entry into my diary!

During the fieldwork in Serbia for one of the last case studies to be compiled, I also found that significant progress could be made with cross-case analysis. I recorded the following in my diary:

Probably the highlight of the day was a sudden and quite unexpected burst of ideas for the more discursive section of the report. I forget what sparked this off, but I suddenly found myself making comparisons between the 7 programmes, and decided to sit down and try to sketch out a framework for the part of the book which will aim to draw out the main issues, differences and themes to emerge from the collection of case studies. I really got into this, and in a very short space of time - less than an hour, I got this written down.

Having got myself into this mode of thinking, I kept putting it away to get on with other things, but kept coming back to it with new ideas. It's strange how this kind of creativity comes in unexpected bursts like this. I guess this is part of the value in having time to think and write during fieldwork visits.

Nevertheless, in my study, there were three particular points where there was a strong emphasis on analysis: first, at the stage when individual case studies were compiled. However, as indicated above, even at this stage there was an element of cross-case analysis. Second, as the case studies were being finalised it was possible to move more systematically into an analysis of the issues emerging across all seven case studies: this involved coding and interrogating the data, this process culminating in producing the report required by Rädda Barnen and which led rapidly to the decision to publish the report in book form (Tolfree 1996). Finally, when I was able to commit a block of time to the present thesis, bearing in mind a lapse of almost two years since the production of the book, I decided to begin the process afresh. This was the stage where all of the tape-recorded interviews and group discussions were transcribed fully and the data was re-coded. This was a more

systematic and comprehensive analysis of the data and revealed many new themes and understandings.

An essential aspect of the analysis for each individual case study was what Bloor (1978) refers to as respondent validation. Sharing drafts of the case study with project staff was important for two reasons. First, in the words of Bloor (1878.548-9), because it establishes "a correspondence between the sociologist's and the member's view of the member's social world by exploring the extent to which members recognise, give assent to, the judgements of the sociologist". This is a valuable form of triangulation, though as Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) point out, respondents' reactions to the ethnographer's account are coloured by their own social position and perceptions of the research. A second reason, already noted in this chapter, is because the undertaking made at the outset to share drafts of the material was highly significant in developing trust and encouraging mutual transparency. In most cases it was appropriate to present drafts of the case study in English: with the case study on the work of Acisam, however, it was necessary to have the study translated into Spanish. The need for translation of materials is a point emphasised in the Association of Social Anthropologists (Association of Social Anthropologists 1987).

In most cases, project staff suggested minor changes to the text: in one instance my observation and interpretation regarding a gender issue was questioned, but having re-examined my data I felt that what I had written was correct and therefore did not change it. In general, the drafts met not just with agreement but a strong sense of satisfaction, and were followed, in two cases, with a request for the project to use the case studies for their own purposes.

Having adopted a multiple case study approach, it seemed most logical to adopt a thematic organisation of the material (the fifth of Hammersley and Atkinson's (1983) five textual strategies). It was also appropriate to adopt their fourth strategy, a separation of narration and analysis, a strategy which had already been adopted within each of the case studies. The final re-coding and re-interrogation of the data revealed that many interesting issues emerged from the fieldnotes but were not necessarily prominent within the actual case studies. It is partly for this reason that it was decided not to include the original case studies

in the thesis.

The use of a lap-top computer during the fieldwork meant that I had word-processed field notes and I found WordPerfect 7 very adequate, without the need for a specialist ethnographic data analysis package such as Ethnograph. WordPerfect's capacity to introduce the numbering of text lines, and the "search" facility were both significant factors in interrogating and organising the data. Having re-defined a set of codes I then extracted data into separate files of notes around specific categories, and in some cases then coded these data further in order to generate sets of sub-categories.

One of the problems with the study was that of the diversity of the data. Having consciously selected seven projects with diversity of approach as one of the main criteria, it was not surprising to find that a large number of codings were needed in order to encompass the range of issues to emerge. Ultimately it was, of course, necessary to select a relatively small number of key issues to incorporate into the final report. This selection was different for the original report for Rädda Barnen as compared with this thesis: both required difficult decisions on what issues to leave out.

The overall aim of the study was to explore varieties of approach by a selection of diverse projects, and to generate concepts and theories from the data gathered: hence within an overall framework of case study research, a grounded theory approach was taken - i.e. the attempt to discover theory from data rather than an attempt to test theory. Hence the grounded theory approach is an inductive one - i.e. the attempt to generalise from particular cases. A feature of the grounded theory approach is the constant integration between data collection and theorising.

The main emphasis has been on developing substantive theory, although the study has made a small contribution to the development of formal theory - e.g. in respect of further developing our understanding of the construction and relativity of childhood.

Glaser and Strauss (1968) suggest that the researcher should ignore the literature of theory in order to avoid the danger of contamination by prior concepts. However, as Bulmer

(1979.652) argues, this implies an impossible separation of the chicken and egg, and that, quoting Schleffler, he suggests that "observation contaminated by thought yields circular tests; observation uncontaminated by thought yields no tests at all".

Glaser (1978, cited in Burgess 1982) suggests three general approaches to developing links between theory and research:

1. The researcher reads through the data that is gathered and gives commonsense impressions in theoretical language
2. Categories are developed that are described with data
3. Data are systematically analysed and constantly compared until a theory results

This is not, however, to be seen as a linear process. This constant comparative approach is concerned with generating and plausibly suggesting, but not testing, many properties and hypotheses about a general phenomenon or set of phenomena (Glaser 1965).

In this paper Glaser (page 433), acknowledges that a continuing problem with qualitative analysis is that of reliability and how the research report can convey credibility: "Qualitative analysts will usually present only enough material to facilitate comprehension, which is typically not enough data to use in evaluating all suggestions..... And in his turn, the reader is likely to feel that the theory is somewhat impressionistic, even if the analyst strongly asserts he has based it on hard study of data". Lofland (1974) comments on the lack of consensus among qualitative field researchers not only on how their research is conducted but also on how the research report should be formulated, while Becker (1958.653) comments that "the full weight of evidence for conclusions and the processes by which they were reached are not usually presented, so that the reader finds it difficult to make his own assessment of them and must rely on his faith on the researcher". Ultimately, then, much depends on the integrity of the researcher and, as Martin and Turner (1986) suggest, research findings may have to be assessed on the quality of the analysis rather than on the methodological approach adopted.

As already indicated, a decision was made not to include the case studies within the thesis:

the main reason was that much of the data used for this thesis was drawn from field notes and tape-recorded interviews and that the original case studies did not incorporate all of the relevant material. I felt that the drawing of relevant sections of the fieldnotes and case studies into text boxes, or reproduced as shorter quotations or as summaries was a more useful way of incorporating material than appending the case studies. However, as Hugman (1988) rightly points out, making data visible, within a discursive style, is, at best, a partial means of satisfying the reader that the conclusions are firmly rooted in evidence.

Chapter 13: Conclusions

13.1 Introduction

This final chapter seeks to draw together some of the main themes and issues to emerge from the study. It also looks back to the initial output of the fieldwork, the publication of the book "Restoring Playfulness" and identifies some evidence of its impact. First, however, it may be helpful to return to the starting-point of the study - a dissatisfaction with approaches based on western notions of post-traumatic stress and the therapeutic modalities which stem from it, and in returning to this debate, to locate some of the findings of the study within the discourse of post-modernity.

13.2 The Globalisation of Knowledge and Post-Modernity

As recently as 1996, UNICEF unequivocally asserted that 10 million children worldwide have been traumatised by war: such assertions appear to rely on large-scale studies which are based on checklists as the empirical basis, as in their study of 3,030 Rwandese children in 1995 (UNICEF 1996a) - see further discussion in Chapter 11. The WHO, ECHO and UNICEF - three extremely influential inter-governmental bodies - have continued to claim that early intervention by "trauma programmes" is vital in preventing long-term mental and behavioural disturbances in the current and future generations (Agger et al 1995, quoted in Summerfield 1998). These kind of extravagant and unjustified claims have lain behind the pumping of millions of dollars into trauma programmes, with PTSD portrayed as a "hidden epidemic" (Summerfield 1998). With the intensification of the crisis in Kosova at the time of writing this chapter, it is interesting to note that the language of trauma has firmly entered the vocabulary of newspaper and television reporters: they too have started to make exaggerated predictions such as the Serbian troops in Kosova leaving behind a "province traumatised for generations" (Borger 1999).

It is not difficult to see the attractiveness of trauma programmes. They can be initiated with little infrastructural investment, they avoid the need to address long-term sustainability issues, they attract a great deal of media attention and, perhaps, most significantly, they are politically neutral, avoiding the need to address the more difficult and contentious issues of

protection, justice and human rights.

Part of their media- and donor-appeal relates to the attractiveness of targetting individuals perceived as being vulnerable. Writing in a very different context (the question of targeting food aid in South Sudan), Simon Harrigan writes "I think it is now clear that agencies like to target vulnerable individuals..... The implication is that, either aid agencies know better or are more interested in sounding like they are assisting the needy - assuaging the conscience of the industrialised world - rather than actually helping them, or more precisely, helping the structure that cares for the needy. Not targeting the vulnerable takes quite some getting used to as an idea as it seems to go against every notion about chivalry and humanitarianism that exists" (Save the Children Fund 1998.51). There are interesting parallels with the concerns of this study.

The exportation of western psychological knowledge and practices reflects a globalisation of knowledge - or, in the words of Bracken and Petty (1998.1), a "homogenization of psychiatry". Kleinman (1987), however, suggests that the globalisation of psychiatry reflects a confusion of issues of validity with those of reliability. This was discussed in Chapter 11.

The construction of PTSD can perhaps be seen as a typical positivist attempt to objectify, in terms of universal symptoms, and based on assumptions about the internal workings of the human mind, a range of subjective experiences. Moreover, it was suggested in Chapter 6 that meanings are not just individually constructed but may reflect shared experiences within a particular community and in a particular cultural context.

However, positivist approaches such as the construction of PTSD are being increasingly challenged. It has sometimes been suggested that over the past decade or so we have entered the age of post-modernity. The notion of post-modernism has many strands to it: for our purposes, some of the key characteristics include - a rejection of modernity and a questioning of our reliance on scientific rationality, a greater valuing of a pluralistic range of styles and techniques and a greater appreciation of cultural diversity; a valuing of the importance of subjective experience and diversity of responses to common situations; an

acknowledgement of different realities; "an intense distrust of all universal or totalising discourses" (Harvey 1990.9); a questioning of the authority of "experts" and a greater valuing of eclecticism (Chambers 1997, Rosenau 1992, Gardner and Lewis 1996). Perhaps most important of all, in the words of Harvey (1990.48): "The idea that all groups have a right to speak for themselves, in their own voice, and have that voice accepted as authentic and legitimate".

In many respects, these trends are to be seen in some of the key conclusions of the present study, which include the following:

1. The meanings of events which might be traumatising cannot be assumed but can only be understood from the subjective viewpoint of the individual, and within his or her particular cultural and social context
2. There is no universal prescription for psycho-social problems stemming from armed conflict and displacement. There are many pathways to promoting the psycho-social wellbeing of children
3. It is vital to recognise and value what already exists within the local community and which may contribute broadly to the process of healing and recovery. What people do is rooted in practical knowledge of what works for them, and this may be more significant than knowledge and ideas developed outside of their situation and possibly outside of their culture
4. The notion of the individualistic self is not universal. The effects of experiences are often constructed collectively rather than individually, especially within cultures where the sense of selfhood is corporately rather than individually experienced
5. It is important that people's own definitions of problems, needs, resources and priorities should be heard and acted upon, without the imposition of external interpretation: hence, for example, a stated priority of certain material, or physical health needs should not be interpreted as a defensive avoidance of psychological issues
6. The need to move away from seeing this area of practice as the preserve of highly-trained technical specialists and towards the diffusion of knowledge and understandings and a broad sharing of responsibility

The case studies were chosen to reflect diversity, but not necessarily to encompass the full range of possible programme approaches. So any conclusions that can be drawn from the study must be regarded as tentative and need to be subjected to further testing. Nevertheless, some important themes have emerged, and at this point it may be helpful to draw some of these together and to formulate some broad conclusions.

13.3 Some Key Themes to Emerge from the Study

13.3.1 A thorough understanding of the local culture is of foundational importance

Despite the rhetoric of some organisations which emphasise the importance of cultural understandings, the reality is that a great deal of work is based on partial (or even non-existent) understandings of the local culture: there is clearly a lack both of systems for accessing socio-cultural information and of practical tools for expatriate staff to use to develop their understandings and sensitivity. It was particularly depressing to see such a low level of cultural awareness among UNHCR and NGO staff in the Karagwe camps for Rwandese refugees.

Chapter 6 argued the need to adopt a phenomenological approach in understanding how people construct meanings to their experiences, with particular reference to traditional and religious belief systems and political ideology. Different societies respond to distressing events in markedly different ways and evolve coping mechanisms which are specific to the particular culture. The promotion of culturally unfamiliar means to deal with those experiences is destined, at best, to be ineffective, and at worst to inflict further distress. The example, drawn from one of the case studies, of a Norwegian psychologist getting a group of Sudanese boys to verbally express, and weep about, their experiences was a dramatic example in a culture which does not sanction such conversations with a stranger, nor crying on the part of boys, especially in public.

A key issue - one which is difficult to fully understand by those of us who are socialised into a highly individualistic culture - is that understandings of distressing events, and culturally-appropriate means of responding to them, may be collectively framed rather than

experienced principally from an individualistic perspective. This may require a shift from western individualised approaches to culturally-sensitive corporate and community-oriented strategies.

From these issues flows the obvious conclusion that programmes should self-consciously attempt to build on traditional responses to difficult experiences, to strengthen people's capacities to cope, to enhance existing social structures rather than introducing parallel, potentially competing and unfamiliar structures, and to assiduously avoid any interventions which undermine traditional ways of coping. There seems to be considerable scope for acknowledging, and building the capacity of traditional healers and a whole range of traditional activities. The case study of the Unaccompanied Children from South Sudan was a particularly rich source of examples, with the NCVT in South Africa providing imaginative ideas on using traditional forms of healing and adapting traditional children's games.

13.3.2 Western knowledge and local resources and insights

In the developing world, there is frequently to be observed an uncritical valuing of western knowledge: as Chambers (1983.76) asserts "the association of outsiders' modern scientific knowledge with wealth, power and prestige generates and sustains beliefs in its universal superiority, indeed beliefs that it is the only knowledge of any significance". Often, too, there is a compliant acceptance of the strings attached to resources from overseas agencies.

This study suggests that some of the most creative programmes are based on a blending of western knowledge, drawn principally from psychology and sociology, with local understandings, resources and insights. It is clear that numerous communities have experienced overwhelming psycho-social problems as a result of war and displacement, but often lack the language and concepts to understand and make sense of these experiences. Moreover, the circumstances of war - repression, disappearances and the generalised insecurity and fear which surround them, often lead to a response of silence (Lykes 1994) which in turn may prevent people from sharing experiences and which may inhibit the expression of feelings. The phenomenon of "frozen grief" was specifically identified by project staff in both El Salvador and Serbia. A key role for external agencies is to provide

frameworks for understanding events and their impact, but to develop approaches which enable people to work on their experiences in culturally appropriate ways. It is interesting to note that the work being undertaken by the NCVT in South Africa, and by Acisam in El Salvador arose significantly from a dissatisfaction with the applicability of western psychological approaches (in societies which are, in some respects, quite westernised); this led to a self-conscious evaluation of how such approaches might be blended with knowledge, ideas and practices derived from local traditions.

These two projects are also interesting (and perhaps surprising) in that they have both retained the idea of individual counselling and therapy, though they have adapted their practice to suit local culture and conditions. The Case Study located in the refugee camp in Yemen provides a particularly interesting example of how teachers received training on the psychological affects of war and displacement on children: but during the enforced withdrawal of Rädda Barnen, the teachers decided not to pursue the approach which this training had advocated, but instead they developed a range of responses which blended western knowledge and traditional practices.

This raises the interesting question of whether there is a place for western psychological approaches outside of the cultural contexts in which they were developed. It is not easy to provide an unambiguous answer, but the following issues may provide some useful pointers.

First, the case studies included at least two programmes in countries where western psychological practices are widespread - Sweden and Serbia. In both of these countries, the small nuclear family is the norm, the "sense of community" in general seems to be extremely weak and the autonomous, individualised self is very much the norm. Under these circumstances, more community-oriented programmes are clearly less applicable, and there is a more general familiarity with the idea of individualised counselling and therapy.

Second, while it is generally true that the beneficial outcomes of trauma counselling are

unproven[72], it is also important to note that not one of the seven programmes included in the collection of case studies was undertaking any form of evaluation of the outcomes of their work. The lack of investment in documenting their experience and in systematically evaluating its impact is a serious weakness in all seven programmes reviewed by this study. Much greater priority needs to be given to work on the difficult task of defining programme objectives in terms which lend themselves to measurement, defining indicators, and involving participants or beneficiaries in assessing the impact of the programme. In turn, this raises the question of the role of donor agencies such as Rädda Barnen in helping local NGOs to develop their institutional capacity: this is dealt with in 13.3.10 below.

Third the study suggests that the most promising direction for future work, given the stage of our present knowledge, consists of a diversity of approach and experimentation with new methods which fit local conditions, traditions and practices, coupled with a much greater investment in documenting and evaluating programmes. A pragmatic approach based on the knowledge and understandings of the people themselves, and of what works under particular conditions, seems more appropriate than an ideological commitment either in favour of, or in opposition to, approaches based on a particular discourse.

This begs questions about the relationship between donor agencies and those organisations which actually implement programmes, and in turn this raises the issue of the potential for an over-valuing of modern, western knowledge, and an undervaluing of local knowledge. Robert Chambers (1983 and 1997) provides compelling evidence, drawn from a wide range of different fields of activity, of the undervaluing of local, indigenous knowledge, and he argues passionately for the complementarity between the knowledge, skills and resources of "insiders" and those of "outsiders". This study suggests that there is considerable scope for combining the etic (i.e. the outsider's mental frame and more global understandings) with the emic (i.e. the understandings of the local insider). Outsiders' knowledge should, however, be the servant and not the master of the insiders. For this to happen, "One first step is for the outsider professionals, the bearers of modern, scientific knowledge, to step

[72] See, for example, Raphael et al (1995) for a useful overview. Summerfield (1998) draws attention to the lack of independent evaluation of trauma programmes

down off their pedestals, and sit down, listen and learn" (Chambers 1983.101). This brings us to the important issue of participation.

13.3.3 Participation and empowerment

Underlying all of the case studies is the need to hear the voices of the affected people, uncontaminated by prior assumptions of what they might have to say: it is vital that real and sensitive attempts are made to allow them to articulate their knowledge, their resources, their perceptions of their needs and their priorities. These should form the basis of action on the part of agencies wishing to assist them.

Responsiveness and sensitivity to local cultural knowledge and practices is most likely to be optimal in programmes which have been developed with the maximum participation of the people themselves. In contrast to the overtly-espoused "top-downism" of some clinical approaches (e.g. Raundalen and Stuvland 1990), it is clear that programmes which have been developed as a result of participation with the people themselves are most likely to be both rooted in the culture, and owned by the people themselves. The case studies based in Yemen and Ethiopia/Kenya provided good examples of this sense of ownership.

Unfortunately terms like participation and empowerment can readily be degraded. In a context in which such concepts have achieved a certain political correctness on the part of donors, there is sometimes a tendency to create the illusion of participation to please donors but which may be little more than manipulation, decoration or tokenism (Hart 1997). Real participation requires a sense of humility combined with a real valuing of people's knowledge, ideas, skills and resources.

Another important issue to emerge from this study is that of "human agency", which implies that people are actively engaged in shaping their own worlds. Terms like "beneficiaries" and "target groups" imply assumptions of passivity and dependence. The case studies include many instances in which people are seen as taking actions themselves which contribute to their own well-being and that of others in their families and communities. The role of the external agency should be seen as complementing and strengthening their activities, not replacing or undermining them by creating parallel structures. The issue of

children's agency and of child participation will be specifically dealt with in 13.3.7 below.

13.3.4 The importance of context and community

It has already been suggested that the problems of people affected by armed conflict and displacement in some cultures need to be understood in collective and not just individual terms. An added factor which emerged very clearly from some of the case studies is that, in general, people do not and cannot split off their emotional reactions to distressing events in the past (and sometimes in the present) from a whole range of other current issues which are being faced. Often these issues are the causes of the conflict and/or the consequences of it: poverty, wholesale disruption of community structures, lack of access to schools, health and other services, inequality, abuses of human rights and so on. In El Salvador, this was a particularly clear theme, with people experiencing problems with the peace settlement and its meaning to local people as profoundly as the problems they experienced with the war.

This leads to the general conclusion that the most appropriate response is likely to be not the isolation of particular psychological issues, but a more holistic approach which addresses psychological reactions as part and parcel of a range of other pressing issues facing the whole community, or at least particular sections of it. With this in mind, it was concluded that community mobilisation strategies often seem to be the most appropriate responses. These serve two purposes: community empowerment may enable people to achieve significant outcomes (for example in securing access to resources, strengthening community supports, mobilising self-help activities etc.) but also the process of empowerment brings its own benefits. The resilience literature clearly demonstrates the value of active coping. And in the context of new refugee emergencies, where huge numbers of people are placed in the situation of massive dependence on the international community for meeting even the most basic survival needs, the great dangers of dependency, apathy and depression (Caplan 1961) may be mitigated by an approach which, from the outset, seeks to empower refugees to identify their own priority needs and to take collective action in response to them.

Within refugee communities, and within other communities whose social structures have been destroyed or fragmented by conflict, approaches which help to re-establish previous social structures, which facilitate the setting-up of new and adaptive social structures and

which assiduously avoid the imposition of alien structures seems to provide a useful framework for action. A networking approach which focuses on the diffusion of understandings of the effects of conflict and displacement on people's psychological well-being would appear to be a far more appropriate strategy in most contexts than one which seeks to isolate "psychological trauma" from the host of other issues facing people, and to isolate "traumatised people" from the population as a whole for individualised treatment.

One particular observation to emerge from the case studies is that whereas many of the programmes featured are in some way attempting to diffuse innovation within the community (some use the language of change and change-agents) not one of them has a theoretical framework for achieving this. It was surprising to find that a complete lack of familiarity with the writings of such theorists as Rogers and Shoemaker (1971), Beckhard and Pritchard (1992) and Smale (1993) whose work is of direct and immediate relevance in offering a framework for analysing processes of change.

From the experience of the case studies, the thesis attempted to identify some of the key characteristics of a community-based approach, and went on to float the hypothesis that the concept of resilience, normally applied to individuals, might also be applied to communities, and an example, derived from a village in El Salvador, was cited.

Chapter 8 did, however, offer some notes of caution. Some writings on the theme of community work tend to use the term "community" in a somewhat idealised and disaggregated manner. Community divisions based on ethnic, religious, political or social class considerations may impede the effectiveness of community oriented approaches. Moreover, in more westernised cultures where the nuclear family is the norm and where the "sense of community" may be weak, the approach may be more difficult to apply. On the other hand, experience of the work of Hi Neighbour in Serbia demonstrated how a "community" approach can be adopted within the community of refugee collective centres, and how refugees living isolated lives within host families can also be brought together as a "community in exile".

13.3.5 The central importance of the family

Children experience the world partly via the mediating role of the family. One of the few areas of virtual unanimity among researchers is that children cope most effectively with stresses if they are supported by a caring family, and that separation from the family may have a greater impact on the child's sense of well-being than the immediate dangers associated with armed conflict. Research quoted in Chapter 7 also suggests that there is a direct link between children's well-being and that of their parents (or other care-givers), especially mothers. It was therefore not surprising to find, within the case studies, examples of work which prioritised the supporting and enhancing of parental competence.

Recent conflicts have seen unprecedented numbers of children orphaned or separated from their families: this was particularly dramatically illustrated by the exodus of Rwandese refugees following the severe outbreak of genocide. The plight of these children was particularly serious: not only had they, in many cases, witnessed the most terrible violence, including the killing of parents or others, but were now having to cope with the uncertainties and constraints of refugee life without the protection and care of familiar caring adults. The case study on the work of the Standby Team in Karagwe, Tanzania, illustrated that this area demanded, and received, high priority. Programmes to trace the families of separated children had been set up quite quickly but a number of deficiencies were identified by the case study.

It was suggested in Chapter 7 that not only do children become separated as a result of conflict and in the process of flight, but that the actual refugee situation also brings with it a number of factors which may prompt further separations. There is an urgent need for agencies to develop conscious strategies for the prevention of separation, for example by developing their understanding of why children continue to experience separations, by identifying children who might be vulnerable and responding to their particular needs, and by the promotion of policies which avoid the unintended separation of children from their families.

The actual care arrangements for separated children raised a number of interesting issues. The need for culturally-sanctioned care arrangements emerged clearly, with examples of

both appropriate and grossly inappropriate forms of group care, and evidence, in Karagwe, of fostering programmes planned on a large scale which raised serious issues which were not being addressed. These included the whole question of what fostering actually means in a culture where care outside of the extended family system is not widespread; issues of the motivation of foster parents and of the quality of care of the child compared with that of other child members of the household; and the issue of how risks involved in fostering are assessed. A key issue is that of the sustainability of fostering into a repatriation situation, with evidence, derived from other parts of Africa, that fostered children may be vulnerable to abandonment upon repatriation. As a result of these concerns, further research is now being undertaken by Rädda Barnen and the Refugee Studies Programme at Oxford University.

13.3.6 The role of schools and teachers

The closest contact children have with adults, after members of their own family, may well be with school-teachers. It was significant that refugees themselves frequently seem to identify the introduction of educational programmes as an urgent priority. Again it was not surprising that, within several of the case studies, the role of the teacher in contributing to the psycho-social wellbeing of children, was emphasised. Chapter 10 offered a seven-point analysis of the potential role of the teacher in this respect, and it is significant to note that this analysis has been adopted in UNHCR's recent training materials covering all aspects of the care and protection of refugee children (UNHCR and Save the Children Alliance, in press). Three of the case studies demonstrated the considerable impact that the school can have on children's sense of well-being where their work is embedded in the life of the community as a whole.

However some notes of caution were also offered, with reminders that not all children will be attending school and that gender imbalances are often marked. A broadening of the role of the teacher had been successfully achieved in the school depicted in the Case Study based on the refugee camp in Yemen, but it was noted that in other situations teachers may experience insurmountable difficulties in taking on tasks which conflict with their role and self-concept as teachers.

13.3.7 The concept of childhood and child development

Chapter 11 suggested that behind the discourse of vulnerability (see discussion in Chapter 2) there may lie a conceptualisation of childhood which is derived from European and North American experience. Several of the case studies revealed accounts of the extraordinary capacity of children to cope with the most extreme adverse conditions: they also provided some clues which suggest that children may be much more active in pursuing coping strategies than is frequently assumed. This led to a discussion of the need to see childhood as a social and cultural construction and to avoid universalist assumptions about the vulnerability, innocence and passivity of children: this line of thinking found parallels in the literature of child abuse. It was suggested that western images of childhood may belie the degree of resilience of children from other cultures; they may lead to assumptions about how conflict and forced migration impact on children's development and well-being, and lead to responses which may disempower them and actually serve to undermine their resilience.

A significant conclusion to be drawn from this discussion is the need to recognise children's agency: there may be considerable scope, in planning programmes to benefit children, to see children as social actors, as active participants rather than as passive beneficiaries, and to consider the social mobilisation of children and adolescents as a promising programme strategy.

13.3.8 Research issues

It is a very clear and specific conclusion of this study that much of the research into the impact of conflict and forced migration on children has profound methodological weaknesses. In numerous instances, methods are used which virtually ensure that the researchers find confirmation of what they are looking for - symptoms of post traumatic stress. The method determines the problem. Surveys and questionnaires embody the concepts of outsiders (Chambers 1983) but not necessarily the issues which have the greatest meaning to the people concerned, while checklists may ignore everything apart from pre-determined categories. The unexpected is not discovered: new questions remain unexplored. In many instances, this inevitably leads to the conclusion that what children "need" is some form of therapy based on the PTSD discourse. A self-fulfilling prophecy is

created in which universalist assumptions about the effects of certain types of experience on a globalised concept of childhood lead to researchers achieving little more than finding what they were looking for, and hence remain locked within one particular discourse.

Only one study (MacMullin and Loughry in press) has been encountered which uses child-friendly and participative methods, and attempts to identify how children themselves understand and construct the meanings and impact of their experiences on themselves, their families and communities. Significantly, these children drew attention mainly to their social environment, which brings us to the next conclusion.

13.3.9 From treatment to social development

The people heard by this study were directing attention not to their inner worlds but outwards to their social world, which, in most cases had been devastated not just by the war but by the many social, political and economic issues which lay behind the conflict. A central conclusion of the study, therefore, is the need to shift the discourse away from a preoccupation with individual pathology and intra-psychic intervention, and towards a social development approach which addresses people's reactions to conflict and violence within its wider context. Within communities which have experienced the disruption and displacement which has characterised almost all recent conflicts, the rebuilding of social networks and the restoration of a sense of community emerges as perhaps the most vital and central need. This emerged clearly in several of the case studies, notably those of the Standby Team, the Separated Children from South Sudan, the work of Acisam and of the Somali refugees in Yemen. As Summerfield (1998.34) concludes, "A venerable body of literature.... has shown that uprooted peoples do well or not as a function of their capacity to rebuild these social networks and a sense of community". It is clear that the fortunes of children cannot be separated from those of their families and communities: the targeting of vulnerable children, which is obviously popular with many donor agencies may be much less appropriate than a broader community development approach, especially if the strengthening of parental capacities is seen as a central concern. Supporting the community to support families effectively may well be the most appropriate means of supporting children.

Recent years have seen some heavy criticisms[73] of the notion of "development": these have ranged from the argument that development is little more than a neo-colonial construction and an ideological tool in global power relations, to the criticism that development perpetuates dependency, with donors standing to gain as much as the recipients. Others have argued that development implies a patronising assumption that "developed" countries are modern and civilised, while "under-developed" or "developing" countries are less advanced, more primitive or backward. The process of modernisation is then seen as emulating western approaches to economic development, with local knowledge being seen either as irrelevant, or as a constraint to development. A further strand to the debate is the argument that it is often assumed that the whole population will benefit from economic development at the macro level, whereas in practice this "trickle down" effect often fails to materialise.

The statements above are, or course, rather exaggerated versions of the current debate about development. It is not the purpose here to enter this debate in a comprehensive manner, but rather to locate the arguments of this thesis within it.

Underlying many of the current criticisms of development is the idea that change cannot be imposed from above or from outside, and that much development activity consists of attempts by well-intentioned agencies to tell countries or communities what they need, and then assist them to fulfil these needs, often by deploying western technologies and approaches. The export of PTSD and associated therapeutic techniques is an example *par excellence* of this: some of its proponents (e.g. Raundalen and Stuvland 1992) actually advocate for a "top-down" approach which tends to ignore the resources and traditions of the population. Brett (undated) suggests that the cultural archive of the community may proffer no answers in times of chaos and rapid change: the experience of this study is that this is patently untrue.

The case studies include good examples of work which avoids some of these criticisms: these include, for example, the Standby Team's early attempts in refugee emergencies to re-

[73] For a useful overview of these debates, see Gardner and Lewis (1996)

create social structures, to empower and mobilise refugees; Acisam's work in deploying village-level promoters, with a mandate given by the community, to work on a range of issues embraced by the notion of holistic community mental health; the NCVT's work in South African communities to set up and support networks of people concerned with the prevention of and responses to violence, using culturally-sanctioned methods; the work of Hi Neighbour in Serbia to enable refugee children and adults to identify and work on the issues they are most concerned with, their psychologists providing them with a form of social interaction, and some tools, with which they can work on these issues; the participative approach taken in the work with the Unaccompanied Children from South Sudan, resulting in a whole range of activities and practices which are rooted in the culture of the refugees; and the work of the school in the Algahin refugee camp in Yemen which developed a distinctive approach to the psycho-social needs of children and which enabled teachers to take on a wider role within the community. All of these are examples of participative work which treats people as partners rather than beneficiaries, which builds on local knowledge, understandings and resources and which seems to avoid creating dependence. All are examples of non-patronising work which empowers people and which enables them to work on their own expressed needs and priorities.

13.3.10 Programme isolation

A final issue, which has not been elaborated in detail in this work, but which was referred to in Chapter 12, is that many of these programmes found themselves to be working in relative isolation from other programmes and developments within this field. The demands made by project staff for the researcher to share experience from other programmes and to offer critical feedback was a tangible expression of the professional isolation they experienced. Paradoxically, each of them suffers from the lack of resources committed by other programmes to the process of documentation, analysis, evaluation and dissemination. One of the surprising findings of the study is that those programmes being implemented by local NGOs with funding by Rädda Barnen, received very little support from the latter, most significantly in relation to such areas as refining objectives, developing methodologies, instituting systematic evaluation and organising practice exchange.

On the other hand, the fact of Rädda Barnen commissioning the study was an indication that they saw the need to systematise knowledge and experience and to find ways of disseminating ideas and experiences. This brings us to the next topic.

13.4 The Impact of the Study

An important question to pose is what impact has the study had, as published in its first manifestation, the book "Restoring Playfulness"? One clear outcome was the launching of a global practice exchange, the first step of which was the convening of an international workshop which drew together project staff from most of the projects featured in the study plus many others, especially in Central America, where the event was held. This has been followed up by other international events.

The publication of a book was not originally a planned outcome of the study - the original intention was to produce a report, but as the material began to be assembled Rädda Barnen decided to publish it in book form. It was extremely well-received by Rädda Barnen, and this was evidenced by the almost immediate decision to have the book translated into Spanish, for distribution particularly in Central America. It is, however, unfortunate, that Rädda Barnen's capacity for sponsoring research and producing books has not been matched by their capacity for actually promoting their materials and distributing their books. It is probably for this reason that the impact within Rädda Barnen's own networks - principally within the Save the Children organisations and academic institutions with which it has close links - has been much greater than within a wider audience.

In terms of citations in other published works, the following have been identified: Rutter and Hyder (1998), Cussiánovich (1997), Uppard et al (1998), International Save the Children Alliance (1996), Abrams (1997) and Brett and McCallin (1996), UNHCR and Save the Children Alliance (in press). It is of interest to note that the ISCA publication (International Save the Children Alliance 1996) - which drew substantially on "Restoring Playfulness" and in which the present researcher was involved as co-author - was widely and effectively distributed, and is acknowledged to have been an extremely influential publication.

Numerous requests to present papers at conferences and workshops have been received: among the more august bodies making such a request are the Refugee Studies Programme at Oxford University, the London Institute of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and the Refugee Council in London. The last of these was both interesting and unexpected: though the book had been aimed principally at a readership working in third world contexts, it emerged that many organisations working with refugee children in the UK found the book to be useful and relevant, and this in turn spawned other speaking engagements.

One of the most rewarding experiences was in Central America: the researcher encountered a group of NGO personnel working in Guatemala when they attended the international workshop referred to above. Some two years later the researcher visited Guatemala to find that this group had enlarged itself into a network which met regularly for the purpose of practice exchange, and moreover that the book was being used as a frequent reference point.

Another gratifying experience occurred recently, when the researcher visited Rwanda. Discussions with the NGO Trocaire revealed that they offered training in psycho-social intervention with children which originally emphasised trauma counselling. More recently, however, they encountered "Restoring Playfulness" and have significantly refocused their work, concentrating more on culturally sensitive and community-based approaches.

13.5 Final Thoughts

This study has suggested that given our present level of knowledge in this field, a pluralist and eclectic approach which encourages experimentation and the development of approaches which build on local knowledge, traditions and resources, is probably the most constructive way forward. The "fox" in the title of this thesis seems to have more to commend it than the "hedghog" approach. A more pluralist approach needs to be taken, especially if this can be combined with greater efforts at documentation and systematic evaluation. If a particular approach makes sense to, and seems to work for local people, it does not matter whether or not it can be "explained" by western psychological theory. Whatever approaches seem to be appropriate to a particular situation, agencies need to take on board a central paradox: on the one hand, children need to be seen as vulnerable yet

resilient, as having possibly overwhelming needs but also considerable personal resources. Refugee families may have been forced to abandon everything in the search for safety, yet they also display an unbreakable strength, an instinct and capacity for survival. Communities may have been torn apart by conflicts and disrupted by displacement, but may still contain the capacity for regeneration and for making available a wealth of resources to assist and support their most vulnerable members. The challenge for external agencies is to begin by really listening to local people and valuing what they have to say, and then offering their own contribution with humility and a realistic appraisal of what they can and cannot contribute. The central task is then to build on people's own capacities in a way which promotes child development, empowers people and encourages individual, family and community resilience.

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