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**Ulster University, Northern Ireland**  
*in collaboration with*  
**HUMAK University of  
Applied Sciences, Finland**

## **Unit 3**

# **Youth Work in Diverse Societies**

## **Diversity in Practice**

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# Introduction

## Community Youth Work Practice in a Diverse Society

This unit was developed by a team from the Departments of Sociology and Community Youth Work in the School of Applied Social and Policy Sciences at Ulster University in Northern Ireland. We are grateful to the practitioners, from across the community youth work sector, who have shared their experience of practice in this session.

This unit provides a digital platform which considers the theory and practice of diversity in Community Youth Work. Session three provides examples from youth work practitioners and their experiences of working in diverse societies.

## Setting the Scene

In Unit 3, we invited practitioners, from a range of geographic locations, who practice across several thematic areas, to share ideas and views about how they demonstrate diversity in youth work.

Watching Video 3 and reading the accompanying module content, you will consider their first-hand knowledge. You will reflect on the skills discussed and most importantly, their values and self-awareness, and how these are essential elements in youth work practice.



The experiences shared by youth workers offer reflection on practice that directly link to the teaching in Unit 2, which examined knowledge and theory, skills, values and the self as essential elements in the application of diversity in youth work practice.

We have reflected on the context of youth work, specifically in Northern Ireland, an increasingly diverse place

where people express different nationalities, sexuality, gender or social status, faiths or no faiths, and cultural identities.

Readers were invited to consider how, in some instances, such differences can lead to divergent “world views” or viewpoints on life and these themes, such as national identity and/or ethnicity and other issues, which may impact on young people in your area of practice.

The practice of diversity in youth work supports young people to confidently express their identities; it facilitates awareness and visibility of issues relating to diverse themes, such as sexuality, disability and gender. All these elements make up a diverse society.

Examples, discussed in Video 3 from Northern Ireland, include cross-community work, intercultural dialogue and practice supporting migrants, working with the indigenous Irish Traveller population in Northern Ireland and youth work with young people with Autism Spectrum conditions.

The third part of the unit offers us the opportunity to learn from youth work in context as we consider and reflect on examples of theory in practice, reflection on knowledge, policy and programmes, models, skills and - most importantly - values and the self in youth work with young people in diverse societies.

# What you will learn

This unit will help you to critically consider knowledge about the diversities that exist in society with reflection on examples from Youth Workers in Northern Ireland.

Through engagement with real life examples it will further enhance your thinking on the purpose of Community Youth Work practice in a diverse society.

By considering real life perspectives of youth workers it will provide examples which will help you further develop skills in self-awareness, personal and professional attitudes and also in the need for anti-oppressive youth work practice.



## **Unit 3 Contents**

1. Reflect on Shared Experience of Theory and Knowledge of Community Youth Work practice in diverse society.

Unit 3 will use examples of experience from practitioners in order to examine terminology, theories and contemporary practice models. The unit will examine how diversity is understood and applied in practice.

Reflective practice will ask participants to consider power, powerlessness and situate these concepts and debates in the context of their practice. Students will critique concepts like inclusion, stereotyping, participation, values, beliefs, interculturalism and multiculturalism which have frequently been drawn upon in debates on diversity.

2. Consider the Applied Skills of Community Youth Work practice in a diverse society.

Learning from the experiences of practitioners in practice, students will critically consider participation and anti-oppressive practice and how these models are applied in practice. Students will be invited to consider

how community youth work demonstrates diversity in the context of their own region.

Participants will explore and consider the important skills, including listening, communication, programme planning and challenging stereotyping and discrimination in practice.

3. Develop self-awareness, personal and professional attitudes and values using applied examples.

Self-awareness is discussed by practitioners in practice and students will examine personal values, background and beliefs. understanding stereotyping in tackling inequalities. In addition, they will reflect on the professional attitudes and values which might be required to tackle unequal treatment of minorities in their own region/area of practice.

Students will gather a wider understanding of personal and professional attitudes and values in relation to anti oppressive youth work.

# Questions

How do we reflect on practice?

What is the importance of reflection in considering diversity themes in youth work?

**In order to consider the themes and questions we will learn from the practice of youth workers, sharing their knowledge and experience.**

## Engaging with Interactive Video Content

*"Inclusion is belonging, inclusion begins with you"* Dylan Clarke (2019)  
Inclusion and diversity mean recognising everyone's experiences and identity. Speaking at a Community Youth Work Practice and Autism Spectrum Conditions conference in Derry, Northern Ireland (25/01/2019), Dylan succinctly captured the purpose of youth work in a diverse society when he, as a young man with autism, addressed youth workers about the condition.

Inclusion means that all young people are facilitated to participate, and as Miller and Katz (2002) cited in Hickey (2019) state "Inclusion is a sense of belonging, feeling respected, valued for who you are, feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others". The challenge for youth workers is to be aware of diversity in all aspects of practice. This includes from planning the content and delivery of activities, to ensuring accessibility for young people, and challenging

language/discourse. This includes in both verbal communications and report writing.

In Video 3 one youth worker describes how she demonstrates inclusion by challenging and stopping limiting beliefs (McKeever:2019). It is important that young people feel worth, as everyone has a desire to belong, a need which should be met in our practice with young people. The focus should not be about the young person fitting into an inaccessible society that treats difference as a problem. Rather there must be equity in youth work where the need of the individual is met - this is inclusive practice.

It is incumbent on youth workers to have advanced levels of knowledge regarding current and emerging themes in diversity, from a global, national, regional and local or thematic perspective. Reflective practice is an important



dimension of youth work. Youth work allows practitioners to reflect "in", "on" and "about" their work with young people (Friel:2019). It is also important to consider reflexivity, defined in this instance as the capacity to consider "thoughts, feelings, sensing and responding in action, moment by moment in practice" (Friel:2019).

As you watched Video 3, you will have heard a range of themes discussed by youth workers about diversity awareness in practice. Take an opportunity to reflect about your context and how you address themes such as participation and inclusion. There may be models and theories that inform your practice. You may be attentive and reflective about skills and methods by which you engage with young people individually or in group work.

Laura Lundy (2007) describes participation as consisting of four elements, these are **space**, where young people are facilitated in safe spaces to express themselves,

**voice**, where the views of young people are allowed expression, **audience** when young people are listened to and **influence** when the views expressed by young people are acted on, as appropriate. Hart's (1994) Ladder of Participation is useful for youth workers in considering how they, and their organisations, practice with young people.

### **Ladder of Voice (Participation)**

8. Youth/Adult Equity
7. Completely Youth-Driven
6. Youth/Adult Equality
5. Youth Consulted
4. Youth Informed
3. Tokenism
2. Decoration
1. Manipulation

*Roger Hart et al. (1994)*

Each rung of the ladder indicates varying degrees or levels of youth participation, from level 8, where young people initiate and share decisions with adults, to level 1 where young people are manipulated by adults or are used to support causes led entirely by

the adult. The Hart Model of Youth

Participation is a useful representation and exemplar for determining what level of decision making is suitable for the group needs and how participation is implemented in context. This is vital in all societies which we now consider diverse.

You can read more about the models in the accompanying link to useful resources. Also, consider your practice as you read about space, voice, audience and influence. How do you actively demonstrate participative structures and inclusion in a way which supports diverse perspectives? In what ways do the views of youth workers and examples of diversity in practice, discussed in the accompanying Video 3, relate to your work?

It is important that youth work practitioners consider, and go beyond traditional approaches. This means challenging the conventional methods of practice and long established, usual ways of engaging with young people and groups. By reconsidering youth work from a strengths-based approach, we can challenge the deficit approach to practice and consider innovative approaches. These approaches should strive for

opportunities in youth work that allow young people to experience their optimum, optimal well-being, belonging, and understanding. This is a desired outcome in practice that demonstrates inclusion and participation (Friel:2019).

It is useful to consider how you actively engage the diversity of young people in your community of practice. How can you take the opportunity to consider new ideas and methods, and refine skills in work with groups and individuals?

In considering the practice of diversity in youth work, this module encourages reflection on increased normalisation of inclusive practice, thereby leading to a more integrated approach in youth work. By fostering such awareness, we ensure a strength based, and rights-based approach. This means we consider the environment we create for youth work, ensuring accessibility and inclusion, with a dynamic focus on diversity in youth work practice, in the wider community context and in the society in which we carry out youth work.

Dr. Breda Friel (2019)

# Links to other Information and Reading

Here is a list of additional information which will assist you to explore questions around diverse societies and community youth work practice. The resources here will help you further understand this topic and apply to your own work.

## Journal Articles, Books and Reports

Curry, D., Schneider-Munoz, A., & Carpenter-Williams, J. (2012). "Professional child and youth work practice—five domains of competence: A few lessons learned while highlighting the knowledge base". *Journal of Child and Youth Care Work*, 24, 6-12.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327477291\\_Professional\\_Child\\_and\\_Youth\\_Work\\_Practice\\_Five\\_Domains\\_of\\_Competence](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327477291_Professional_Child_and_Youth_Work_Practice_Five_Domains_of_Competence)

Friel, B. (2019). "Overwhelmed: Living in an Intense World" cited In Friel, B. Harvey, C. Mc Ardle, E. (2019) *Community Youth Work Practice and Autism Spectrum Conditions: Understanding, Inclusion and Participation*. Conference Report. Ulster University, YCNI.

Friel, B. and McDermott, P. (2018) *Shared Stories, Safe Spaces*. Derry-Londonderry, North West Migrants Forum.  
[https://pure.ulster.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/76415442/Shared\\_Stories\\_Report\\_A4\\_v2.pdf](https://pure.ulster.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/76415442/Shared_Stories_Report_A4_v2.pdf)

Furlong, A. (Ed.). (2017). *Routledge Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood*. London: Routledge,  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315753058>

Fusco, D., & Heathfield, M. (2015). "Modeling Democracy: Is youth "participation" enough?". *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education*, 7(1).  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.14658/pupj-ijse-2015-1-2>

Harland, K, & Morgan, S. (2003) "Youth Work with Young Men in Northern Ireland: An 'Advocacy' Approach". *Youth & Policy* 82 p74-85

Hart. R.A. (1994). *Childrens' Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship*. UNICEF.  
[https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/childrens\\_participation.pdf](https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/childrens_participation.pdf)

Hickey, J. (2019) "Considering autism using a strengths-based approach Victoria University, Melbourne" cited in Friel, B. Harvey, C. Mc Ardle, E. (2019) *Community Youth Work Practice and Autism Spectrum Conditions: Understanding, Inclusion and Participation*. Conference Report. Ulster University, YCNI.

Lundy, L (2007) "'Voice" is not enough: conceptualizing Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child", *British Educational Research Journal*, 33:6, 927-942,  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01411920701657033>

Shakespeare, T (2018). *Disability: The Basics*. Routledge, London

Wright, E., & Ord, J. (2015). Youth Work and the Power of 'Giving Voice': a reframing of mental health services for young people. *Youth & Policy*, (115), 63-84.  
[https://marjon.collections.crest.ac.uk/15741/1/Youth%20Work%20and%20the%20Power%20of%20Giving%20Voice\\_Wright%20%20%20Ord%20115.pdf](https://marjon.collections.crest.ac.uk/15741/1/Youth%20Work%20and%20the%20Power%20of%20Giving%20Voice_Wright%20%20%20Ord%20115.pdf)

## **Websites**

Kyol Blakeney. *Understanding Systematic Oppression and Institutionalised Racism*. TEDTalks, YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SBFdtqWOGM>

MYAN *Life in Australia: Celebrating young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Australia*. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vr5DWRqkptk>

TalentSprout. *Self-awareness*. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HlhEMk7CZ-A>

# Wrapping Up

Unit 3 of the module "Community Youth Work Practice in a Diverse Society" was developed by a team from the Departments of Sociology and Community Youth Work in the School of Applied Social and Policy Sciences at Ulster University in Northern Ireland. Practitioners, from across the community youth work sector shared their experience of practice in this session offering an opportunity to learn from applied examples of diversity in community youth work.

Themes include inclusion and participation, with the Lundy (2007) and Hart (1994) models discussed. Students were asked to consider youth work practice in their own context by considering and challenging the "taken for granted" ways of practicing youth work.

By reflecting "in", "on" and "about" their work with young people (Friel:2019) students were invited to consider reflective practice and reflexivity, defined in this instance as the capacity to consider "thoughts, feelings, sensing and responding in action, moment by moment in practice" (Friel:2019).

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## Unit 3

Friel, Breda and McDermott, Philip (2019). *Youth Work in Diverse Societies Youth Work Units 1, 2 and 3*. Youth Work eLearning Partnership (YWeLP). Available at

<https://www.youthworkandyou.org/ywelp-four/>

### Contact:

Dr Breda Friel

t. +44 287167 5765

e. [bn.friel@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:bn.friel@ulster.ac.uk)

Community Youth Work,  
School of Applied Social and  
Policy Sciences,  
Ulster University,  
Northern Ireland

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