

OSU Libraries Undergraduate Research Prize
Research Journal

Elaine Householder

I. Research Topic:

This past quarter, I was enrolled in International Studies 615: Children and War, taught by Dr. Sharon K. Houseknecht in the Sociology Department. For this class, we were assigned an 11-12 page term paper on a topic of our choice, relating to the subject material, to be completed by March 15th. Topics were to be determined in consultation with Dr. Houseknecht prior to February 20th.

Dr. Houseknecht and I met to discuss the parameters of the assigned formal research paper and possibilities for investigating a topic of interest within these defined guidelines. As I am in the process of completing Honors Thesis research comparing symbolic associations of violence among youth in Northern Ireland and South Africa, naturally, my attention was drawn to these particular arenas of conflict. Since South Africa could not appropriately be classified as a war zone, even during apartheid's heyday, Dr. Houseknecht and I concluded that a paper centered on implications for youth arising from the conflict in Northern Ireland would be most suited to the subject matter of "Children and War."

Our class had already engaged in brief discussion of an article, written by Orla Muldoon, concerning the impact of Northern Ireland's "Troubles" on young people. However, Muldoon's article, "Children of the Troubles: The Impact of Political Violence in Northern Ireland," was written in 2004. Six years have passed since publication of Muldoon's article and twelve have lapsed the comprehensive peace agreement was signed in Belfast in 1998. Further, despite the decommissioning of the Irish Republican Army (a sectarian paramilitary organization operating in the region) in 2005, sporadic outbreaks of sectarian violence continue to occur today. With Dr. Houseknecht's guidance, I decided to: a) examine the continued impact of protracted sectarian conflict upon youth in Northern Ireland since publication of Muldoon's article, and b) analyze the ways in which Northern Irish youth have engaged in or opposed sectarian violence since 2004.

II. Information Needs:

According to Dr. Houseknecht's guidelines for successful completion of this assignment, my term paper needed to rely upon eight "Scholarly References." These scholarly references were defined as academic literature which exists in hard-copy format and has been peer-reviewed. As such, scholarly references could not include government or non-governmental agencies' internal publications, or news media sources. Three of these scholarly sources could be derived from assigned readings completed throughout the course. A separate bibliographical list could also be provided for "Non-Scholarly Sources" provided the above requirement had already been met. In total, our bibliographies had to be comprised of fifteen sources.

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I met with librarian David Lincove on March 2nd to discuss my research needs and identify potential sources which would meet Dr. Houseknecht's guidelines and were suited to my topic analyzing youth participation and abstention from sectarian conflict since 2004.

Professor Lincove suggested that government and non-governmental publications and news articles from both Northern Ireland and Great Britain would provide both statistical information and an idea of the political climate of the region since 2004. Further, Professor Lincove encouraged me to search the Public Affairs Information Service (PAIS) for scholarly sources and supplement a political perspective on the Northern Irish conflict with resources derived from research databases in Sociology, Psychology, Criminal Justice and Social Work. Finally, Professor Lincove guided me toward search strategies which would maximize my results.

III. Research Tools:

Professor Lincove instructed me to consult the bibliographical information provided with especially useful sources in order to identify additional sources. Professor Lincove also advised me to search within results to narrow my focus and to limit potentially unrelated resources returned by search engines using the "w/number" feature.

We also identified several keywords to guide my research on the topic:

1. Children
2. Northern Ireland
3. Belfast Agreement

Per Professor Lincove's suggestions, I began to research the issue of youth violence in Northern Ireland since 2004 using the Library's collection of online databases.

I first looked for scholarly resources using the Public Affairs, Sociological Abstracts, Psych Info, Criminal Justice, and Social Work Abstract databases. I found all of my scholarly references utilizing this method. The Psych Info database proved especially successful in this regard, as I found pertinent information regarding intergroup contact and friendship quality in Northern Ireland, as well as children's understandings of sectarian categories through this database. In addition, the Social Work Abstracts database provided useful sources which adopted a more pragmatic approach to the issue, and addressed issues like depression in practical terms.

Again, according to Professor Lincove's suggestions, I looked for government and non-governmental publications which would provide an idea of ways in which policy-makers have attempted to address the issue of sectarian violence among youth since 2004. Surprisingly, the British Parliamentary Debates, Northern Ireland Assembly records, and the Northern Ireland Commission for Children and Young People show that this issue remains largely neglected within the parameters of formal government. As such, I was unable to locate many relevant governmental publications to supplement my consulted resources. However, the Office of First

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Minister and Deputy First Minister had published an article in 2004 concerning three to eleven-year-olds understandings of the conflict which I was able to incorporate into my research.

Finally, I used LexisNexis Academic, in consultation with Professor Lincove, to find appropriate news articles related to youth participation and opposition to sectarian violence in Northern Ireland and investigated crime and delinquency levels using police service statistics. I located the bulk of my non-scholarly resources through news articles included in the LexisNexis database, which proved invaluable to completing my term paper. News articles I consulted touched upon recent youth rioting in the region, as well as youth protests for peace. These articles were thus truly invaluable in providing a holistic analysis of youth responses toward violence since 2004.

IV. Reflections:

One of the most challenging aspects of completing this assignment was the difficulty of locating relevant scholarship concerning youth violence that had been published since Muldoon's article (the reference text) was published in 2004. Although I believed myself to be quite familiar with the Ohio State University's collection of research databases, without Professor Lincove's assistance, I would not have been able to utilize these library's resources to their best advantage. Professor Lincove guided me towards databases which would add both context and complexity to my analysis. With his help, my paper became a much more comprehensive overview that incorporated perspectives from various disciplines such as sociology, criminology, public affairs, and political science.

Truly, the most rewarding part of this experience was developing more effective research strategies with the support of Ohio State University library faculty. Much of the results expressed in my term paper reflect of a degree of original research, as my paper moves beyond a mere critique of other's perspectives of the subject of youth violence in Northern Ireland towards original data collection and review. I not only analyzed newspaper articles and editorials for trends in youth violence, I reviewed nearly a decade worth of police statistics per Professor Lincove's suggestion. Given its emphasis on extremely current primary source material, my term paper reflects findings that have, to my knowledge, not yet been analyzed by scholars within the discipline.

Overall, working in consultation with an Ohio State University librarian not only enabled me to complete my term paper within the given parameters - collaborative work added richness and a degree of originality to my analysis that would have been missing without Professor Lincove's fresh perspective. I now feel confident in the favorable review of my work and am truly proud to present it to you for submission for the Ohio State University Libraries' Undergraduate Research Prize.