

Sedouh LeGrand

Doctoral researcher, School of Social Policy

Contact

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Year started: 2003

F/T or P/T: Part time

Supervisor(s): David Prior and Basia Spalek



Research topic

'Restorative justice and youth crime in Kinshasa: Views from the Congolese Diaspora in Britain'

Qualifications

- BA (Hons) Theology
- PGCert in Applied Community Studies

Background and professional experience

My background is largely in community work, including working with communities, families and teenagers with disruptive and criminal behaviour; conceiving and implementing community-based projects as well as working to develop communities, involving tackling social exclusion in the areas of race, gender, sexuality, disability, class and religion.

Teaching/training experience

Training experience

- MA in Social Research
- Teaching in HE

Teaching experience

- Supply teacher in secondary schools and colleges in the Midlands, covering various subjects across the curriculum such as RE, Humanities, History, Geography, French, English, Sociology, Criminal Law etc.
- PG teaching assistant at the University of Birmingham, teaching Introduction to Social Policy and History Society and Social Policy to first year undergraduate students.
- ESOL Teacher, Roselodge in partnership with Bournville College, teaching English from pre-entry level to level 2 (proficiency).

Research Overview

Criminology is an international scientific discipline, but there have been all too few studies on youth crime and crime control in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa. Patterns of crime and disorder and the shaping of the response to them are largely absent from western criminology, with the possible exception of South-Africa.

This PhD research aims to enlarge the picture somewhat, by exploring how members of the Congolese communities in Britain perceive youth crime in the UK and how this understanding affects their perception of the DRC's situation.

The research attempts to answer the following questions:

- How do members of the Congolese Diaspora see the approach to youth crime in the UK and how does their understanding affect their perception of the Congolese situation?
- What model of restorative justice could be applied in Congo's urban areas?
- What agencies can be developed to drive and evaluate restorative ideas and practices in DRC's urban areas?

The research is qualitative and used semi-structured interviews to collect information to answer these main research questions. Direct contacts and snowball sampling approach were employed to gain access to participants from DRC living in the UK, more particularly those who have some experience of dealing with youth crime, or who understand or are directly or indirectly involved with youth crime issues in both the UK and DRC.

This research might assist the third sector and government understanding of what is going on in the Congo in a number of ways. First, at a conceptual level, it will show to these actors that the problem of criminality by young people go beyond conventional western definitions of "delinquency" that some government officials and non-governmental organisations are using. Hence it will provide them with a new forum where a deeper understanding of contextual parameters, some structural and other individual, at the centre of this relatively new phenomenon may be fostered. Equally the forum will show the importance of creating the institution of restorative justice within the existing criminal justice system as a better response to the threat posed by these young people but also as one way of promoting the establishment of stable democratic institutions not just in Congo but in Africa. In this sense the forum will help them dissipate bit by bit the confusion that has always existed between security service, police, policing, military and paramilitary in African countries since their independence and which is at the centre of police brutality, resulting in the general public being traumatised. That will help governmental and non-governmental bodies to broaden their knowledge base of offending behaviour by the youths and how to respond to it, in the first place.

Then at a practical level, in terms of responding to criminality, the present research will help to broaden the status quo of the voluntary sector's modus operandi, which until now with the possible exception of some human rights watchers organisations, is limited to concerns pertaining to religion, employment, health, education and food security. The study will help to create a new different kind of NGOs, set up specifically for criminological enterprise, to run, monitor and evaluate restorative programmes, train facilitators/mediators (including the police, magistrates etc), promote bottom-up approaches in management style, power sharing, accountability, multi-agency approaches (representing the state, community, voluntary sector and traditional authorities) etc. which will help influence democratic values required to run restorative schemes but also the culture of people in general. To establish a good working relationship between govt, NGOs and traditional leaders or chiefs (Le Pouvoir Coutumier)

If the problem of youth crime is approached in this way the potential could be that the living conditions of local communities and young people themselves may be improved, businesses and different opportunities might be attracted too.

Publications

Book Reviews

Contributions

Carried out research for Spalek, B (2008), *Communities, Identities and Crime*, Bristol: The Policy Press.

Sedouh is a member of the **Global Community Research Group**.

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