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All members of the *Youth & Policy* editorial group are involved in education, professional practice and research in the field of informal education, community work and youth work.

The journal is run on a not-for-profit basis. Editors and Associate Editors all work in a voluntary and unpaid capacity.

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Young People, Welfare Reform and Social Insecurity

Margaret Melrose

Abstract

This article traces the continuities between welfare reforms pursued under New Labour and those proposed by the Coalition government in the UK. It suggests that these reforms sought and continue to seek to discipline young people to accept low-paid, insecure work and unemployment and thereby entrench their poverty and disadvantage. The article argues that faced with this social and economic insecurity many young people may opt for informal opportunities in the shadow economy where they will become further dislocated from the socio-economic mainstream.

Key words: Young people, poverty, unemployment, neoliberalism, informal economy

IN FEBRUARY 2011 the Coalition Government published its Welfare Reform Bill following earlier publication of the White Paper, *Universal Credit: Welfare that Works* (DWP, 2010). The reforms promise 'the most far-reaching programme of change that the welfare system has witnessed in generations' (DWP, 2010:1). This article shows that rather than a radical new departure, the proposed reforms promise continuity with welfare reforms developed under New Labour and previous Conservative governments. By doing so they move us further in the direction of neoliberal orthodoxy (see also Crisp et. al., 2009a).

Like previous welfare reforms, these proposals adopt individualistic explanations for the structural problems of poverty and unemployment and suggest 'a behaviourist, supply-side explanation of "welfare dependency" ' (Peck, 1999:345) as their cause. Coalition welfare reforms, like those of New Labour, are concerned with producing suitable subjects for the global economy and are therefore preoccupied with disciplining welfare claimants and modifying their behaviour in relation to job-seeking activity (Schram, 2007). These reforms are designed to engage welfare claimants in the practice of reconstructing themselves from 'passive recipients' of 'welfare' to 'active contributors' to 'workfare' (Schram, 2007; Dean, 2007). In this sense, they are intended to 'create workers for jobs nobody wants rather than to create jobs for people who do not have them' (Peck, 2001:6) and arguably represent new modes of governance of the poor.

This article is particularly concerned with the ways in which the institutionalised social insecurity that neoliberal social policy represents forces socially and economically disadvantaged young people into abject positions. It suggests that the effects of reforms proposed by the Coalition,

like those of New Labour, will further entrench poverty and social disadvantage amongst the young. Faced with unpalatable choices between unemployment, low paid and unrewarding work, reduced educational opportunities and harsh discipline administered through the benefit system, marginalised and disadvantaged young people may opt for 'alternative careers' (Craine, 1997) in the informal economy.

The discussion begins by tracing the establishment of the neoliberal government agenda and its consolidation under New Labour. It then explores Coalition plans for welfare reform and the ways in which New Labour policies such as *New Deal for Young People* paved the way for these. The discussion continues by considering levels of unemployment and poverty in the UK among those aged 16-24 and reflects on the ways in which Coalition welfare reforms may further entrench their poverty and disadvantage. The consequences and costs of not investing in young people are then explored along with the alternative opportunities that young people may find in the informal, shadow or criminal economies.

The article concludes by arguing that it is imperative that policies are developed to ensure that young people are provided with labour market and educational opportunities which will offer meaningful alternatives to the stark choices with which they are currently confronted. If such alternatives are not developed the future social and individual costs will be significant and may be felt for generations to come.

Establishing the neoliberal agenda

Since the 1980s, and the election of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government neoliberalism has been the primary default position of successive British governments (Peck, 2001). The neoliberal social and economic policies pursued by consecutive governments since that time have resulted in fundamentally restructured labour markets and a transformed welfare state. The labour market has polarised with an expansion of 'flexible', 'hyper-casualised', insecure and low-paid work at one end and highly skilled, highly rewarded (and highly rewarding) secure work at the other (MacKinnon et. al., 2011; Goos and Manning, 2007; Bell and Blanchflower, 2009). The 'bridge' between these two poles, the skilled manual work which previously filled the space between these extremes, has, however, been rapidly disappearing (Bell and Blanchflower, 2009:36).

At the same time the welfare system has been transformed to a workfare system which institutionalises social insecurity and which is designed to regulate and control the behaviour of the poor and unemployed rather than provide them with income security (Schram, 2007; Dean, 2007; Peck, 2001). The workfare state emphasises the responsibility to 'work' rather than the right to welfare in times of hardship. In a workfare state, 'There is no hiding place for those who don't accept their responsibility to find work' (Blunkett, 2001).

On the one hand the restructuring of the labour market and the shift from welfare to workfare can be understood as reflecting economic necessities related to globalising forces and pressures. On the other they reflect the increasing tendency towards neoliberal hegemony (Melrose, 2010; Crisp et. al., 2009a; 2009b; Dean 2007; Schram, 2007; Peck and Tickle, 2002; Peck, 2001). Their combined effect has been to entrench marginalisation amongst those already experiencing social and economic disadvantage and to reverse, from 1979 onwards, the historical tendency of the post-war period to reduce the gap between rich and poor. Nowhere is this more evident than amongst socially and economically disadvantaged young people (Melrose, 2010; Fahmy, 2006; Furlong and Cartmel, 2004; 2006; Macdonald et. al., 2005; Webster et. al., 2004).

Although labour market restructuring and welfare retrenchment were instigated by the Conservative administration of 1979-1997 they were consolidated under the New Labour administration of 1997-2010 'with palpable zeal' (Crisp et. al., 2009a:67). In order to secure the votes of 'Middle England', and thus its own electoral success, New Labour cast itself in the image of its Conservative predecessors. This involved binding itself firmly to the 'ideological softwear' of economic globalisation (Peck and Tickle, 2002) – neoliberal social and labour market policies.

The discussion below traces the ways in which the New Labour legacy paved the way for the further advancement of 'work first' workfare policies under the Coalition government before moving on to consider Coalition proposals for welfare reform. It then considers young people's labour market position and levels of poverty currently experienced by those aged 16-24.

The New Labour legacy

Upon coming to power the New Labour government appeared to acknowledge the damaging consequences of a generation of young people being 'written off' by its Conservative predecessors. In response to high levels of long term unemployment amongst those aged 18-24, New Labour introduced the *New Deal for Young People* (NDYP). Because this remained wedded to neo-liberal principles, the NDYP programme was constituted as a shift from 'passive' to 'active' welfare measures and revealed a tendency to 'privatise social issues such as poverty and unemployment' (Grabham and Smith, 2010:81).

NDYP thus marked a crucial turning point in the transformation from a welfare state to a workfare state (Fergusson, 2007; q.v. Grabham and Smith, 2010; Barker and Lamble, 2010; Peck, 2001; Lund, 1999) and reflected a fundamental shift in New Labour thinking about 'the causes of and remedies for unemployment' (Peck, 1999:345). Through this programme, New Labour revealed

its propensity to focus on supply-side issues, to emphasise a moral discourse of 'rights and responsibilities' (DSS, 1998) and to neglect 'the demand side, structural causes of unemployment' (Peck, 1999:345; q.v. Barker and Lamble, 2010; Joyce et. al. 2010; Melrose, 2010; Crisp et. al., 2009a). Thus individualistic explanations for poverty and unemployment were invoked and these structural problems were re-presented as problems of 'worklessness', 'employability' or 'welfare dependency' (Joyce et. al., 2010; Crisp et. al., 2009a; Theordore, 2007; Danson, 2005; Peck, 1999; Theodore and Peck, 1999).

Believing that unemployment could be tackled by effecting behavioural change amongst the unemployed, NDYP extended the element of compulsion introduced by the Conservative's Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA) in the 1980s and enhanced the penalties for those who 'refuse to take up the opportunities' provided by the programme (Brown, 1997 cited in Field and White, 2007:7). Thus conditionality and the disciplinary effect of the benefit system were strengthened and NDYP went 'considerably further than the adoption of American 'workfare' principles for claimants who are under 25' (Stepney et. al., 1999:110). Subsequent extension of conditionality from the unemployed to the economically inactive through the Pathways to Work programme (2003) fundamentally altered the structure of the benefit system (Crisp et. al., 2009a).

The proposals for welfare reform advanced by the Coalition extend conditionality still further and strengthen the punitive nature of sanctions available for non-compliance. These reforms and available sanctions are discussed below.

Putting the poor to work

On coming to power the coalition government of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats zealously embraced the need for welfare reform by arguing that the benefit system 'is too complex and that it does not sufficiently incentivise work' (Lindsay, 2011). Its proposals for welfare reform promise to 'radically change the structure of the social security system' (DWP, 2011a:4) and have 'everything in common with the Benthamite utilitarianism of the nineteenth century Poor Law' (Dean, 2007:593).

The Welfare Reform Bill (2011) introduces a single benefit, 'Universal Credit', to support those who are out of work or employed in low-paid work. The new benefit will consist of a basic allowance with additional elements for 'children, disability, housing and caring' (DWP, 2010:3). It has been estimated that 1.7 million households will be worse off as a result of these measures while 2.7 million will receive higher payments (Wintour, 2011).

Universal Credit extends the conditionality introduced by New Labour and increases the punitive nature of sanctions for non-compliance with those conditions. The Welfare Reform Bill allows for

the construction of four categories of claimants: 'full conditionality'; 'work preparation'; 'keeping in touch with the labour market' and 'no conditionality'. The first three categories are subject to different conditionality regimes while the fourth (no conditionality) will apply to single parents with a child aged less than one year of age. Henceforth, all other claimants will be classified under the first three categories.

The full conditionality group includes 'job seekers' and those currently being paid JSA. In order to qualify for benefit this group will be required to be 'actively seeking and available for work' (DWP, 2010:27). The 'work preparation' group includes people with a disability or health condition (currently in receipt of Employment Support Allowance [ESA]) which limits their capacity to work 'at the current time' (DWP, 2010:24). The 'Keeping in Touch with the Labour Market' group includes lone parents or the 'lead carer in a couple with a child over age one but below age five' (currently in receipt of Income Support) (DWP, 2010:24). These claimants will be required to attend regular 'work-focused interviews' and 'periodic interviews to discuss plans for returning to work' (DWP, 2010:35). Failure to meet the conditions imposed on each group will result in financial sanctions which will increase in severity with each failure to comply. Where claimants are deemed to have 'serially and deliberately breached conditions and where other sanctions have not worked to change their behaviour' benefits may be withdrawn for a period of up to three years (DWP, 2010:29). The Welfare Reform Bill therefore makes sanctions for non-compliance more severe and more unpalatable than those introduced under New Labour (Barker and Lamble, 2010:324).

In addition to the changes outlined above, a 'cap' on the level of benefit payable to any household has been introduced. This means that when Universal Credit is combined with other payments such as Child Benefit and Housing Benefit, household benefit levels cannot exceed £26,000 or what the DWP describes 'median earnings after tax and national insurance for working families' (DWP, 2010:23). The DWP estimate that as a result of this change around 50,000 households will lose £93 per week (DWP, 2011d:2).

... And removing them from their homes

As well as the introduction of Universal Credit, the Welfare Reform Bill (2011) announced changes to Housing Benefit regulations. The Comprehensive Spending Review (2010) proposed that Housing Benefit would no longer be paid 'for people under the age of 35 who live alone' (Dorling, 2011:15-16). Previously this had applied only to young people aged under 25 years. The Welfare Reform Bill further proposes a 'cap' on the level of housing benefit payable to any household. This means that tenants in the private rented sector will only be able to afford 'the lowest third of market rents' (DWP, 2011b). This change is intended to 'contain the levels of rent met by housing benefit in expensive areas and apply downward pressure on expenditure more generally' (DWP,

2011b:1). For tenants in social housing, limits on housing benefit payments are proposed for those whose homes are 'under-occupied' (DWP, 2010:19). It is estimated that these changes will affect 670,000 (approximately a third) of working age housing benefit claimants. Each affected claimant is likely to see an average reduction of £13 per week in their housing benefit payment. They are faced with the choice of making up the shortfall or moving to cheaper accommodation (DWP, 2011c:8-9). The proposed changes to housing benefit, according to the DWP (2011d:2), are 'likely to affect where different types of families will be able to live' and it is acknowledged that 'some households are likely to present as homeless'. Astonishingly, however, the DWP impact assessment of this measure suggests there will be no impact on health and well-being (DWP, 2011d:3).

The welfare reforms proposed by the Coalition are based on moral authoritarianism and resurrect the principle of 'less eligibility' established in the New Poor Law (1834). This principle ensured that the able-bodied poor would only be granted poor relief 'in conditions so rigorous that no-one would voluntarily seek it in preference to work' (Thane, 1978:29). Like their nineteenth century counterparts, and their New Labour predecessors, those currently pushing through welfare reforms are wedded to the notion that people 'choose' not to work. This is the assumption underlying the claim that welfare reforms need to 'incentivise' work. But, as Bell and Blanchflower (2010b:17) have argued, 'the reserve army of the unemployed is a conscript army rather than a volunteer army' and, as previous research has shown, the benefit claimants aspire to the same goals, and share the same values, as everyone else (Dean and Taylor-Gooby, 1992; Dean and Melrose, 1996) and many are desperate to work (MacKinnon et. al., 2011; Harris et. al., 2009; Crisp et. al., 2009b).

These inconvenient facts do not, however, stand in the way of the Coalition government using social policy as a means to effect behavioural change amongst the poor and unemployed (Barker and Lamble, 2010; Joyce et. al. 2010; Melrose, 2010; Theodore, 2007; Dean 2007; Schram, 2007). The welfare reforms proposed by the Coalition are designed to guarantee that benefit recipients are actively performing the work of self-regulation and self-reconstruction (Dean, 2007). This is necessary because, 'as the nature of work in the global economic order changes' (Schram, 2007:235) 'a new class of docile workers who can cheerfully work under the more privileged elements of the population while accepting low pay for demeaning work' (Schram, 2007:234) is needed. And welfare reform is the means by which these new recruits are produced (Schram, 2007).

Below I consider how New Labour's NDYP began the process of producing young people as a 'new class of docile workers'. I then go on to consider current levels of unemployment and poverty amongst young people before considering the ways in which educational and other reforms proposed by the Coalition may further entrench young people's socio-economic marginalisation and disadvantage.

Career opportunities?

When NDYP was introduced, Gordon Brown, like his Conservative predecessors, promulgated the idea that being unemployed and claiming benefits was a 'lifestyle choice' for young people. Participation in NDYP was therefore made compulsory for 18-24 year olds who had been unemployed for six months or more. Under this scheme young people were offered four options and informed that a 'fifth' option, of 'remaining on benefits', would no longer exist (DSS, 1998). They could:

- enter subsidised – or preferably unsubsidised – employment (subsidised employment allowed employers to receive £60 per week for employing the young person);
- work in the voluntary sector for three months and receive an appropriate qualification;
- join an 'Environmental Task Force' (young people would receive £15 in addition to their benefits. At the time of the introduction of the NDYP this was the equivalent of £1.30 per hour for a 40 hour week);
- enter education or training (under this option, young people would still receive their benefits but it was only available to those who did not have minimum qualifications – NVQ level 2).

Financial sanctions (in the form of loss of benefits) for non-compliance with NDYP requirements were introduced and in 5% of cases benefits were suspended for 26 weeks (Fergusson, 2007:73). This effectively meant that the benefit claim was closed and the claimant had therefore to re-apply and start their claim again before they could receive any benefit.

NDYP did not intend to increase employment opportunities for young people through job creation measures – rather, it intended to improve young people's 'employability'. In the event it increased employability by only 5% (Di Georgio, 2005). Only about a third of young people moved into 'sustained' employment (meaning longer than 13 weeks) as the result of NDYP and of these, approximately a quarter were 'reclaiming benefits within a year' (Fergusson, 2007:72).

International evaluations of other active labour market programmes have shown that they are not 'an unqualified success' (Bell and Blanchflower, 2010c:3) and furthermore, 'almost all evaluations show that special measures are not effective for disadvantaged youths' (Grubb and Martin, 2001 cited in Bell and Blanchflower, 2010c:3; q.v. Dean et. al., 2003). What is more, these programmes may reproduce existing inequalities between ethnic groups (Fergusson, 2007).

As many commentators have previously observed, what makes the difference to young people's employment opportunities are local labour market conditions and the opportunities provided by those markets (MacKinnon et. al., 2011; Joyce et. al., 2010; Shildrick et. al., 2010; Bell and Blanchflower, 2009; Crisp et. al., 2009b; Theodore, 2007; Danson, 2005; Webster et. al., 2004, Theodore and Peck, 1999). If local labour market conditions do not provide adequate employment

opportunities for young people, no amount of training programmes, or equipping them with skills which lead them only into low-paid work, will reduce their risk of poverty or unemployment or 'churning' between low-paid work and unemployment (Shildrick et. al., 2010; Fergusson, 2007).

Young people and unemployment

When compared with the unemployment rate of older adults the rate amongst young people has remained stubbornly high since the 1980s. Since that time it has been approximately double that of older adults (Gregg and Wadsworth, 2010; Palmer et. al., 2008). Rather than providing young people with pathways into secure employment NDYP appears to have successfully established patterns of cyclical unemployment and relegated them to the margins of an increasingly polarised labour market (Fergusson, 2007, Goos and Manning, 2007). This has entrenched young people in patterns of 'low pay, no pay' (Shildrick et. al., 2010; q.v. Bell and Blanchflower, 2010b; 2010c; Goulden, 2010; Melrose, 2010; Webster et. al., 2004; Furlong and Cartmel, 2004).

Given that the rate of unemployment amongst young people has been consistently worse than that of adults for almost three decades it is perhaps not surprising that young people have fared worse than older adults in the recent recession (Bell and Blanchflower, 2009). Redundancy rates in the general population, for example, are running at 11.8 per thousand workers but rise sharply to 17.7 per thousand workers for those aged 16-24 (Bell and Blanchflower, 2010a:4). 16-24 year olds constitute approximately one fifth (19.5%) of the working age population but since 2008, 74% of the decline in employment has been amongst this group (Bell and Blanchflower, 2010a:3).

In the UK the proportion of youth to adult unemployment is currently very high in comparison to other countries across the world and increased quite substantially between 2007 and 2008 (Bell and Blanchflower, 2009:26-27). In the last quarter of 2010, the unemployment rate for the whole population in the UK was 7.9% – an increase of 0.1% on the previous quarter. However, the unemployment rate for 16-24 year olds was 20.5% in the same period – an increase of 1.5% on the previous quarter and three times the rate for older adults (Parekh et. al., 2010). By December 2010, the number of unemployed 16-24 year olds was 'the highest figure since comparable records began in 1992' (ONS, 2011). Rising rates of unemployment amongst young people and an increasing ratio of youth-to-adult unemployment is in contrast to trends seen in the rest of the world (Bell and Blanchflower, 2009:29).

When the rate of unemployment amongst young people is considered as a proportion of their age groups, the statistics are all the more alarming. 35.6% of 16-17 year olds are currently unemployed as are 17.1% of 18-24 year olds. In the period from 2008 to 2010 the employment rate for 16-24 year olds fell from 34.4% to 25.8% and in the same period from 64.8% to 58.7% for 18-24 year olds representing a fall of 8.6% for the younger age group and 6.1% for the older age group (Bell

and Blanchflower, 2010a:5). Young people aged 18-24 now make up nearly a third (31.9%) of all those who are unemployed (Bell and Blanchflower, 2009).

Young people's precarious and disadvantaged labour market position is even more marked amongst ethnic minority groups (www.poverty.org.uk/06/index.shtml?2). Whereas 12.5% of young white people aged 18-24 were unemployed between April and September 2008, this figure rose to 26.3% for young black people (Bell and Blanchflower, 2009). Although unemployment in the whole population has risen since 2008 'the unemployment rate for young blacks in 2009/10 is already higher than in 1998' (Bell and Blanchflower, 2010a:8).

In this recession, unemployment has increased across all groups of young people but those from ethnic minority groups who have no qualifications have been especially negatively impacted: nearly half (47.4%) of young black people who have no qualifications were unemployed in 2008 as were over a third (38.3%) of young Asian people and under a third (30%) of young white people (Bell and Blanchflower, 2009).

The numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) have also risen sharply. Figures announced in February 2011, for example, show that 15.6% of young people aged 16-24 are currently NEET (BBC News, 2011). This compares with 13% in 2009 (ONS, 2010). Coles and colleagues (2010:4) suggest that the recession is responsible for this increase.

It is estimated that 25% of young people will experience NEET status at some point in their lives and that of these by far the largest proportion (43%) will be NEET for six months or more (Audit Commission, 2010:14). NEET levels increase dramatically with age – the latest figures suggest 8.5% of 16-18 year olds are NEET rising to 18.1% of 18-24 year olds (BBC News, 2011). There are wide local variations in NEET populations (from 2% in some areas to 14% in others) (Audit Commission, 2010). It is also claimed that the number of young people classified as NEET but who are not claiming JSA or involved in New Deal programmes is rising and, in 2007, was 21,000 higher than the number inherited by New Labour (Field and White, 2007).

However, it is not only young people who have no skills or qualifications who have experienced NEET status in the recent recession: young graduates are also experiencing unemployment (Bell and Blanchflower, 2010a). The experiences of two graduates illustrate this well. The first, a young male, graduated in 2008 with a 2:1 in English. He has not been able to secure full time, permanent, work since graduating and accrued debts of £16,000 while at university. He says, 'I guess the only thing I have to look forward to is unemployment, debt and a chance not to stand on my own two feet and make something of myself'. A young woman who graduated with a First in Classics has been unemployed for the majority of her two years since graduation. She had only been able

to secure temporary, part-time, retail work. She says, 'Is it really fair that as I approach my mid-twenties my parents are expected to support me financially?' (BBC News, 2011).

Disinvesting in youth

Given young people's precarious labour market position, the rate of unemployment amongst them and the numbers who are NEET it is perhaps unsurprising that large swathes of young people live in what are officially defined as 'low-income' households. Young people aged 18-24 are currently entitled to £51.85 per week from benefits (DWP, 2010) while those aged 'under 18 are usually entitled to nothing' (Kenway et. al., 2010).

The official measure of poverty or 'low-income' in the UK is defined in terms of households receiving less than 60% of median income (before housing costs [BHC] – this is the measure preferred by government). Poverty can also be measured as 60% or less of median income after housing costs (AHC) (Parekh et. al., 2010; Harris et. al., 2009). Both measures produce different estimates of the number of households living in poverty. In 2008-09 the poverty line for a single adult was defined at £119 per week (AHC) or £164 per week (BHC) (Parekh et. al., 2010:22).

Poverty can also be measured at 70%, 50% or 40% of median income – the 60% measure is essentially arbitrary. Households living with less than 40% of median income are considered to be in 'deep' poverty and the proportion of the population living in 'deep poverty' is now almost half (44%) of all those who are poor compared to approximately a third (35%) in 1996/1997 (Parekh et. al., 2010). Single, working age adults, (without children) constitute an increasing proportion of those living in 'deep' poverty.

In 2008/09 just over one fifth (22%) of households in the UK were determined to be 'low-income' (ONS, 2010). A third of all people in low income households are working age adults without dependent children – many of these are young adults who are working and in-work poverty is currently at an 'all-time high' (Parekh et. al., 2010:17). There are 1.7 million young people aged 16-24 living in 'low-income' households and, of these, 1.1 million are single adults without children – a much greater proportion than for older age groups (www.poverty.org.uk/41/index.shtml?2).

Approximately one third of 16-24 year-olds have incomes insufficient to provide for basic necessities (Pantazis and Ruspini, 2006). This compares to just under a fifth (19%) of older working age adults. 'This has been the case since at least the mid-1990s' (www.poverty.org.uk/34/index.shtml.2). As with rates of unemployment, the statistics are stark and even more alarming when ethnicity is taken into account. These suggest that 20% of white families, 30% of Indian and Black Caribbean, 50% of Black African, 60% of Pakistani and 70% of Bangladeshi families are

living in households with less than 60% of average UK incomes (www.poverty.org.uk/06/shtml?2 q.v. Palmer and Kenway, 2007).

Unemployment and poverty of course have long term consequences. As Bell and Blanchflower (2009: 38) have argued, young people's unemployment results in 'deep scarring, not just blemishes'. This 'scarring' means that young people who have experienced unemployment are more likely than those who do not to experience repeated spells of unemployment throughout their working lives and/or to experience a 'wage penalty'. Young people who have been unemployed are likely to earn unremittingly lower wages when they are in work (Gregg and Wadsworth, 2010; Bell and Blanchflower, 2009). This wage penalty has been estimated to be between 12% and 15% at age 42 or somewhat lower (8%-10%) if the individual does not experience repeated spells of unemployment (Gregg and Tominey, 2004).

Experiences of poverty in childhood and young adulthood are also associated with a host of negative outcomes. These include: the risk of recurrent poverty in adult life (Smith and Middleton, 2007) as well as poor physical and mental health; poor educational outcomes; worklessness; involvement in crime and criminal victimisation; greater incidence of drug and alcohol use; difficulties with relationships and low-levels of subjective well-being (Goulden, 2010; Griggs and Walker, 2008).

Pulling the rug from under their feet

It is clear from the scale of poverty in working households that work is not necessarily the route out of poverty, especially for young people whose work is very likely to be temporary, short term and low-paid (Goulden, 2010; Crisp et. al., 2009b). It is equally clear, however, that the consequences of not tackling unemployment and poverty amongst the young will do long lasting damage to them as individuals, to their future prospects and to their communities.

Extending educational opportunities to those who are unemployed or underemployed (ie. working part-time rather than full-time because they cannot secure full time work) by, for example, raising the school leaving age, has historically been one means by which youth unemployment has been tackled in times of recession (Gregg and Wadsworth, 2010). When New Labour came to power in 1997 their commitment was to 'education, education, education'. They vowed to widen participation rates in education and training for those aged 16-18 and their initiatives in Higher Education intended to increase educational participation among young people from 'non-traditional' backgrounds (Callender, 2002).

In many respects New Labour were successful in achieving these objectives. A record number of young people stayed on in education in 2009, for example (Gregg and Wadsworth, 2010) and in the decade from 1999-2009 there was a 44% increase in the number of young people going to

university – a rise of almost 150,000 (UCAS, 2010). Many of these young people were from 'non-traditional' backgrounds: for example, from lower income households and ethnic minority groups.

Similarly, and perhaps uncharacteristically for a government so firmly wedded to neoliberal principles, in the 2009 Budget the 'Futures Job Fund' was announced. This was an initiative which intended to make £1.1billion available to create 150,000 new jobs, 100,000 of which were intended to support 18-24 year olds who had been unemployed for ten months or more back into employment (DWP, 2009). While the goals of the Future Jobs Fund might arguably be regarded as limited given the scale of youth unemployment at that time, it did at least recognise the need for demand side interventions to tackle the issue. However, instead of extending demand side measures such as this to support young people who are unemployed into work (Crisp et. al., 2009b), in May 2010 the Coalition also announced the withdrawal of the Future Jobs Fund (Coles, 2011). This increases the chance that young people aged 16-24 will be NEET and unemployed.

The likelihood that young people from deprived communities will stay in post-16 education has also been put in jeopardy by the Government's announcement of the abolition of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA). EMA was introduced in 2004 to support young people from deprived neighbourhoods and low-income households to stay in education past the age of 16. Children from families earning less than £13,000 per annum received £40 per week under this scheme (Coles, 2011) and it had been particularly successful in encouraging young people from low-income backgrounds, particularly young men, to remain in education (Coles, 2011).

The government has also enabled university tuition fees to be tripled from approximately £3,000 per annum up to £9,000 per annum. This may mean that young people from 'non-traditional' backgrounds will no longer consider university an avenue that is open to them – particularly those from low-income backgrounds who may be facing unemployment and/or enormous debts upon graduation.

Investing in futures?

In its hurry to slash public spending and reduce the budget deficit the Government seems only to have considered the short term savings from abolishing schemes that support young people into better futures. The long term public and personal costs of reducing this investment do not seem to have been addressed.

The Audit Commission (2010:8) estimated that the public finance costs of the 2008 NEET cohort would be £13 billion over their lifetimes. Sub-groups within the NEET population are estimated to have much higher public cost implications but low-cost interventions delivering early prevention can result in large savings (Audit Commission, 2010:8). The public expenditure savings that

could be achieved, for example, from early intervention to prevent a young offender from further offending might exceed £2 million per case while failure 'to identify and support children with special educational needs could result in a life time cost to public expenditure of £575,000 for each child' (Coles, 2011:24).

In addition to public finance costs, the personal costs to NEET young people are also very high. In comparison to their peers: they are four times more likely to be out of work; five times more likely to have a criminal record; six times less likely to have qualifications and three times more likely to experience depression (Audit Commission, 2010).

The case for investing in young people and their futures can therefore be made on several levels if a generation of young people are not to be 'written off'. As Gregg and Wadsworth (2010:47) argue,

> *The justification for intervention to prevent long or frequent periods out of work or education among young people does not rest just on the current unemployment, but on the long term scars that these young people experience and potentially feed into the next generation.*

A place in the shadows

The young people being discussed in this paper are caught between the invisible hand of global markets and the iron fist of the neoliberal state (Wacquant, 2003). This means that investment to create opportunities for them is unlikely to be a priority of government. The risk of not making such an investment, however, is, as we know from the 1980s, that a large proportion of them may simply 'vote with their feet' and take to the streets to pursue alternative careers in the informal, criminal or shadow economies (Melrose, 2010; Furlong et. al., 2003; Novak, 2002; Craine, 1997, Bourgois, 1996).

As the informal economy becomes an increasingly important alternative to low paid work or unemployment (CEEDR, 2006:86) young people will be able to generate the incomes they are denied by formal opportunity structures through engagement in sex work, drug dealing and a range of other illicit or criminal forms of endeavour (Melrose, 2010; Coontz and Griebel, 2008; Katsulis and Blankenship, 2008; Collins and Judge, 2006; Williamson and Folaron, 2003). These informal, shadow economies are easy entry, requiring minimum qualifications but promise very high financial rewards for those who are low-skilled or unqualified (Melrose, 2010; Sanders, 2008; Agar, 2003; Bernstein, 1999). What is more, the opportunities available in them have expanded over recent years (eg. Coy, 2008; Sanders, 2008; Hagedorn, 2007 cited in Pitts, 2008:49; Cross and Johnson, 2000).

Young people, even those who are poor, grow up in 'ideological contexts that emphasise success,

wealth, career' (Sassen, 2007:104-106 cited in Pitts, 2008:61). Many therefore do not want to be 'docile workers' who will accept 'low pay for demeaning work'. Many have no interest in producing themselves, or being produced, through the benefit system, as the compliant new recruits of the new world order (Schram, 2007). And who could blame them? No-one wants to be created as a worker for jobs no-one wants (Peck, 2001).

The limited research, as opposed to evaluations, that have been conducted on post-NDYP outcomes suggests that at least some young people, especially 'those most in need and those who are best informed avoid the programme in spite of sanctions' (Fergusson, 2007:77). Some young people exclude themselves from the programme and 'disappear' or become 'invisible' to the benefit authorities particularly 'some minority ethnic groups' (ibid).

It is these young people who may be most at risk of being attracted by opportunities in the informal or shadow economy. This is because the low-paid, demeaning work that is available to them, and the disciplinary effects of the welfare system, are not attractive to them and, in many deprived neighbourhoods, opportunities in the informal or shadow economy are the only alternatives available (Melrose, 2010; Abel and Fitzgerald, 2008; Pitts, 2008; Sanders, 2005; Furlong et. al., 2003; Novak, 2002; Craine, 1997). While these opportunities may provide immediate and short term solutions to the problems of poverty and unemployment they act in the long run to further entrench the poverty and disadvantage of their participants and the communities in which they develop (Bourgois, 1996).

Conclusion

This article has discussed the continuities between welfare reforms pursued by New Labour and those proposed by the Coalition. It has suggested that both have employed individualistic explanations of young people's poverty and unemployment and thus have proposed measures such as harsher discipline through the welfare system, threatening to withdraw benefits, to force young people to accept low-paid and demeaning work. Thus through the institutionalisation of social insecurity the iron fist of the state is being used to produce young people as suitable recruits for the global economy.

The article has shown that poverty and unemployment amongst those aged 16-24 are at record levels and has suggested that neoliberal social and labour market policies will do little to tackle the structural causes of these problems. In the Budget of 2011 the Chancellor announced the creation of 40,000 extra apprenticeship schemes for young people and 100,000 extra work experience schemes. While these measures do at least acknowledge the need for demand-side stimuli to tackle young people's unemployment, the number of schemes made available will provide opportunities for only about a tenth of those who are currently unemployed. So while this is a welcome measure it does not go far enough.

The discussion has suggested that if the government does not break with the prevailing tide of neoliberalism and invest to create opportunities for young people, both in education and in the labour market, the damaging personal and social consequences may be felt by young people for many years to come. If young people continue to cycle between low-paid, demeaning, insecure work, unemployment and an increasingly harsh and punitive welfare system, many more of them will 'disappear' or become 'invisible' and take their opportunities in the informal or shadow economy. This is ultimately destructive of the young people who participate in these shadow opportunities and the communities in which they live.

The argument therefore indicates that real investment in creating opportunities for disadvantaged young people is necessary to provide them with hope for their future. This would require investment in job creation, training, educational opportunities and in youth services to support young people to make the most of their future potential.

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Buses from Beirut: Young People, Bus Travel and Anti-Social Behaviour

Stephen Moore

Abstract

The article explores the close association between young people and anti-social behaviour on public transport and challenges the assumption that any policy interventions should focus specifically on young people's behaviour. It seeks to place an understanding of young people's perceived anti-social behaviour within the context of public transport as a social event, in which people actively construct their understanding of appropriate behaviour on buses. The article tentatively suggests a number of key variables which impinge upon the traveller's construction of behaviour as anti-social or excusable and claims that travellers of all ages use these variables. If, as the discussion suggests, anti-social behaviour is almost entirely in the 'eye of the victim', then instead of focusing all efforts on combatting anti-social behaviour – usually by stigmatising young people, resources should instead be used to create tolerance and understanding of others' behaviour on public transport.

Key words: Anti-social behaviour, bus travel, public transport, disorder, incivility, young people

'The back of those buses is like Beirut'[1]

THE QUOTE above from Steve Pound, a London MP, describing the levels of anti-social behaviour on one London bus route was widely reported at the time (2006) and apparently reflected widespread concern over this issue. The interview from which the quote was taken likens travel on London buses to a lawless war zone. What the quote does not identify is the 'enemy' who cause the fear, but research has demonstrated that it is young people who are most commonly seen as the perpetrators of anti-social behaviour (Hayward and Sharp, 2005; Millie et al, 2005; Moon and Walker, 2009; Squires and Stephens, 2005).

This article explores the issue of anti-social behaviour on buses and in particular the way that the behaviour of young people has come to be the focus of complaints by adult travellers and of subsequent disciplinary actions by Passenger Transport Executives and the Police. It begins by establishing the importance of buses as a means of travel for a significant proportion of the population and highlights the fact that anti-social behaviour on buses is more likely to affect the less affluent sections of the population who have higher bus use.

Having established the social importance of bus travel and therefore the significance of the issue, the article then sets out the close association made between young people and anti-social behaviour, before challenging it as too simplistic and stigmatizing of young people. It is suggested that by creating a more nuanced view of how anti-social behaviour is defined on buses, a rather different view of such behaviour can be achieved which in turn implies that policy changes are needed in dealing with anti-social behaviour.

Six factors are tentatively suggested as important in influencing perceptions of behaviour on buses and it is noted that these factors tend to result in young people's behaviour having a greater likelihood of being perceived as anti-social than adults. Finally, the article suggests potential policy implications which result from the research.

Public Transport Use

According to the Department for Transport (DfT) (2010) there are approximately 5.1 billion passenger journeys made in buses in England each year. Research for the DfT (2009) found that about 40 percent of the adult population over 16 claim to be regular bus users, with 27 per cent travelling by bus at least once a week and a further 13 per cent doing so at least once a month. A further 18 per cent of the adult population used buses, but less than once a month.

Bus use overall, is highest in the larger cities and is lower in rural areas. The larger the conurbation, the greater the level of use. So in Greater London 42 per cent of the population use buses on five or more days a week, whilst other major cities in England and Wales average about 32 per cent of the population using it on five days or more. In smaller towns the figure falls to about 20 per cent and declines to a floor of 15 per cent in rural areas (DfT, 2009). Although a broad cross-section of the population use buses, certain social groups are more likely than others to make regular use of it. Bus transport is the most common and frequent mode of public transport used by Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups (DfT, 2005), with 55 per cent of these groups using bus travel on three or more days a week compared to 41 per cent of white respondents. Furthermore, BME groups are more likely than white respondents to use the bus for work, shopping and social or leisure trips. Meanwhile, women are more frequent users than men and buses are more likely to be used by those in the lowest income groups (DfT, 2009).

Although no studies have been conducted specifically on young people's bus use by social class, gender or ethnicity, we do know that 14 to 24 years olds have the highest level of bus use of all age groups. Indeed, over 58 per cent of all young people travel by bus on at least three or four days a week, and 'the majority of these use the bus at least five days each week' (NYA, 2007:2). Even within the category 'young people', there are differences, with 14 to 16 years having the highest levels of bus use (NYA, 2007) Approximately 33% of young people travel to school by bus (DfT,

2009). In London, 17 per cent of all use of the bus system is by young people (Burton, 2008) and under-18s make over 1,100,000 bus journeys a day, with 800,000 of these made by those aged 16 or younger. Bus travel is of particular significance to young people living in rural areas, where young people typically travel 40 per cent further than urban dwellers (and therefore spend considerably more time on buses) each week because services and facilities are likely to be further away (NYA, 2007). According to the National Youth Agency (NYA), the importance of public transport for young people is growing rather than declining, with only 32 per cent of those aged 17-20 now holding a driving licence compared to 43 per cent in 1997.

> *Young people rely heavily on public transport and local bus services in particular, to access education and youth provision. Recent research shows that 30 per cent of all young people travel by bus and when their views are sought, public transport comes top of the list of young people's concerns* (NYA, 2007:2).

It is clear from these statistics that buses are an important part of the lives of some people, and particularly young people, with widespread and frequent use.

The confluence of large numbers of people from different social backgrounds coming together to share a restricted social space creates an environment in which there is a strong possibility of conflict. It is likely that public transport and buses in particular, provide the most common social space in which the majority of adults have close physical and social interaction with young people not of their own family and vice versa.

Anti-Social Behaviour on Buses

A national study of perceptions of anti-social behaviour on public transport in England conducted for the DfT in 2008 found that 22 per cent of travellers claimed to have been a victim of one or more incidents of anti-social behaviour or crime while on public transport in the previous year, and a further 76 per cent claimed to have witnessed anti-social behaviour or crime. This study also found that the most common reason for feeling unsafe on buses was the perceived anti-social behaviour of young people, with 32 per cent of respondents concerned about this (DfT, 2008).

According to the DfT (2004), there could be an increase of 3.5 per cent in public transport use in England if potential passengers felt more secure against the threat or occurrence of anti-social behaviour and this figure increases to 11 per cent in London (LATC, 2008). When non-bus users were questioned about personal safety on buses, 31 per cent stated that they felt that personal safety on buses was poor or very poor, amongst bus users, 15 per cent expressed similar concerns about personal safety (DfT, 2009). According to research by Transport for London (TfL) anti-social behaviour in general is regarded as a significant problem by 65% of all Londoners, with 29 per cent

of this anti-social behaviour experienced on buses (TPED, 2008). In one unpublished survey of 1000 adult London residents in 2007 using an online questionnaire, 51 per cent claimed that anti-social behaviour was a deterrent to using public transport.[2] The most commonly cited group regarded as acting in an 'anti-social manner' on London buses were groups of young people (Burton, 2008). These claims were supported by further research carried out by Transport for London using focus groups to explore the concerns of travellers.[3] The adult members of focus groups tended to see groups of school children as lacking 'respect', behaving selfishly and, colonising the top decks of buses, where they were 'loud', with a tendency to shout and swear. A commonly cited attitude was that these groups were 'aggressive and intimidating' to other passengers.

The chart below illustrates the negative images that travellers hold for young people, based on an online panel survey of 561 adult bus-users. When prompted, 65 per cent of travellers agreed with the statement that 'young people do not queue properly' and 46 per cent agreed that young people are 'rude to other passengers and to drivers' (Burton, 2008).

Schoolchildren … %

Category	Don't Know	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
Not queuing properly	7	3	16	9	39	26
Making the buses overcrowded	5	4	25	11	37	18
Being rude to other passengers	6	3	28	17	33	13
Being rude to drivers	11	3	25	15	32	14
Standing up when another person needs a seat	7	15	33	12	25	8
Being polite to other passengers	6	11	34	23	24	2

Legend:
- Don't Know
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Source:

Burton, S. (2008) *A Problem Oriented Policing Approach to Tackling Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour on London's buses*.

(TfL, p.6 http://www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/2008/08-47(F).pdf)

This sense of intimidation is echoed in a study on anti-social behaviour conducted by the Department for Transport, which showed that by far the most common form of anti-social behaviour complained about by adults was the 'aggressive and/or intimidating behaviour of young people', with 32 per cent of adults citing this (DfT, 2008).

It is important to note here, that it is not necessarily criminal behaviour or even 'serious' anti-social behaviour which upsets 'fare-payers', but a wide range of low-level, 'incivilities'. For example, the 2008 Department for Transport study found that, when travellers were asked about specific behaviour which made them feel unsafe, the most common behaviour mentioned was of 'pushing and shoving' and groups who were 'noisy and disruptive'. This emphasis by travellers on low level anti-social behaviour, rather than more serious crime, reflects the reality of low crime rates on buses and public transport. When questioned specifically about 'crime' (as distinct from 'anti-social behaviour'), less than 5 per cent of respondents said they had been the victim of 'a theft or a violent or sexual incident.' (DfT, 2008), and in London (which has the highest crime levels for bus travel) there is only one reported crime for every 50,000 bus passenger journeys (LATC, 2008).

This concern about the behaviour of young people on buses is illustrated by the responses to the Transport for London online survey. Unprompted, the most frequently mentioned concern on buses was 'threatening behaviour' of other passengers (25 per cent), closely followed by concerns about large groups of schools children/youths (19 per cent) and drunken passengers (15 per cent). However, amongst those who travelled most frequently, the single biggest concern was about 'large groups of youths' on buses (TfL, 2007).

Young People's Perceptions of Anti-Social Behaviour on Buses

A number of studies have been conducted to gather the views of young people themselves (Stafford and Pettersson, 2004; Storey and Brannen, 2000; NYA, 2007; BYC/NCB, 2010; DfT, 2004). These provide a rather different view of anti-social behaviour on buses. Research on behalf of the Department for Transport exploring young people's experiences of travelling on public transport found that, on average, about 30 per cent of young people aged 10 to 18 claimed that an adult passenger had been rude to them in the previous 12 months and a similar number claimed a driver had been rude to them – in both cases 'without reason'. Approximately 14 per cent claimed they had been upset by the behaviour of an adult (DfT, 2008). Furthermore, only 18 per cent of those aged between 10 and 12 years describe staff as 'usually helpful', declining to 10 per cent for those aged 15 and above (DfT, 2005).

A survey commissioned by The British Youth Council (BYC) and the National Children's Bureau (NCB) of young people aged 18 and under found just over 50 per cent of these young people claimed to have experienced offensive behaviour on the part of drivers, and 45 per cent said that

other adult passengers had been rude to them as well. According to Storey and Brannen (2000), in their study of 700 young people in South West England:

> *Young people who do use buses express a low sense of entitlement to public transport services. They report 'dirty looks' from older passengers and describe a voluntary segregation of passengers, the elderly to the front, the young to the back, a separation which fails when buses are crowded or when smaller, shuttle buses are operating*
> (Storey and Brannen, 2000:17)

We shall see later that when this voluntary segregation breaks down, particularly during the end of the school day, there is considerable scope for conflict.

Crime Concern, in a project to train bus drivers, noted strong feelings felt by young people during interviews on attitudes of school bus drivers:

> *Above all, the criterion against which bad drivers were found wanting was 'respect'. The children made much of their right to be treated as any other member of the public, and were angry that some drivers thought they could get away with talking and behaving towards them in a manner which would have got them into trouble had they done it to adult passengers*(Crime Concern, 2004:7).

Similar views emerged in a survey of 700 young people by Storey and Brannen (2000) who noted that young people experienced a relatively high level of 'confrontations with bus drivers and… (felt)… that they were singled out because of their age. They sensed that drivers expected young people to cause problems on the bus'. Interestingly, when asked how this disrespectful behaviour influenced them, 'all but one' of the young people interviewed argued that the driver's attitude was a factor in the level of anti-social behaviour. (Crime Concern, 2004). Some support for the reality of these attitudes comes from both Scotland (Granville and Campbell-Jack, 2005) and England (London Assembly Transport Committee, 2008) where there is clear evidence that bus drivers are more likely to drive past young people waiting at bus stops if they appear to the driver to be potential 'trouble-makers'.

> *Only 20 per cent of young people in the survey said they felt 'very safe' travelling on a bus on their own. Particular concerns were expressed about drunk or 'rowdy' people, with 84 per cent stating that these groups make them feel unsafe on public transport* (BYC/NCB, 2010).

Furthermore, according to the BYC/NCB research this failure to recognise young people as 'victims' of anti-social behaviour and the focus on them as the perpetrators, has led to the unintended consequence noted in the report that young people are more likely to travel in groups as a result of concerns over travelling alone:

It is no surprise that young people wait for and travel on transport in groups. In the survey, 53 per cent said they do not like waiting alone for public transport... On the bus, 21 per cent feel 'very safe' travelling alone, compared to 77.4 per cent when travelling with family or friends (BYC/NCB, 2010:2).

So, younger people are more likely to travel in groups because of concerns over anti-social behaviour, which then serves to confirm adults' perceptions of young people as causing anti-social behaviour.

It would seem then that young people are perceived by older people as the main perpetrators of anti-social behaviour, whilst young people perceive adults and drivers as behaving in a rude and disrespectful way towards them. Clearly, there are very different perceptions of what is happening on buses.

Why have young people got such a bad name from adults and why is it that they are also highly likely to perceive themselves as victims?

I would suggest that the answer lies in the failure to recognise the complex social nature of bus travel. However, before moving on to look at this issue, it is important to remember that young people are themselves more likely than adults to be victims of anti-social behaviour by other young people (DfT, 2008).

The Social Nature of Bus Travel

In his discussion of travelling on public transport, Augé has suggested that buses are 'non-places' where people seek to stay in their own shells and isolate themselves from others listening to music or reading. Augé describes this as a state of 'solitary contractuality', where people are freed from a sense of community and social collectivity (Augé, 1995).

This belief implicitly underpins much of the research and policy innovation regarding anti-social behaviour on buses, with (adult) travellers becoming victims of (young) people who perpetrate acts of anti-social behaviour against them. The victims are seen as effectively passive subjects who are simply unlucky to be in that particular place at the time of the anti-social behaviour. Anti-social behaviour may be said to be visited upon the luckless traveller (Augé, 1995; Cornish and Smith, 2006; Burton, 2008). This is an important point, as whether celebrating the behaviour of young people on public transport (Scott, 2000), or condemning it (Burton, 2008), both approaches see the causes of the anti-social behaviour in the activities of the young people. Therefore to limit anti-social behaviour on buses, the focus must be on changing the behaviour of the young people.

This, I would argue is a mistaken view and one which clouds our understanding of anti-social

behaviour on buses. Clearly, buses are primarily a means of transportation, taking people from one place to another. However, the meaning attributed to this travel and the expectations of behaviour during the journey varies from one individual to another. Buses are not simply places where people eschew their cultural expectations or their social lives; rather, they are better understood as places where people bring views and attitudes on board with them. Most importantly, people perceive and understand the nature of their bus travel in very different ways. It is precisely the different perceptions of bus travel that provide the key to understanding the framework within which people judge other traveller's behaviour.

In her ethnographic study, Scott (2000) recognises the cultural element of bus travel and graphically illustrates the behaviour of young people on buses where she describes the pushing and shoving in which the pupils engage to get on the bus after school:

> They (the students) push each other, unapologetically, on the pavement, or onto the bus, laughing, sometimes accidentally pushing adults, for which some apologise. Sometimes, self-confessed, unrehearsed, admissions to 'going to far' are gauche… they make concessionary gestures …pausing to face the adult concerned, and then bowing heads or raising both palms. These conciliatory gestures are usually spurned by a throw of the head by the maligned adult, who glares, now in conflict mode, ready to admonish (Scott, 2000:21).

When behaviour comes to be defined as anti-social, this is the result not only of (young) people acting 'badly', but of other travellers actively evaluating and defining the behaviour as anti-social. Therefore to understand fully the association between young people and anti-social behaviour it is necessary to explore the perceptions of the 'victims'. Mackenzie (2005) in an ethnographic discussion of anti-social behaviour on London buses, provides case studies of travellers, who, when faced with disruptive behaviour on buses, engage in a complex process of deciding what is actually happening, who is the victim and perpetrator and what reasons there are to intervene or ignore. This involves seeking clues as to the reasons for the apparent anti-social behaviour which include searching for any actions on the part of the 'victim' which may have provoked the anti-social behaviour. For example, in one case of apparent unprovoked assault, in which Mackenzie and other travellers initially felt compelled to intervene, the motive eventually emerged that the 'victim' apparently owed the 'perpetrator' money. This contributes to the eventual decision of Mackenzie and other male travellers not to intervene further. In another example, a woman blocked others from sitting next to her by placing a case on the adjacent seat and refusing to remove it, despite other travellers having to stand. Mackenzie suggests that people felt that perhaps the woman had a reason why she needed the bag next to her and so, none of the 'victims' (those who were forced to stand) actually challenged her. The point Mackenzie's observations illustrate is that travelling with others places a person in a complex social situation in which travellers have to unravel the appropriate meanings of the situation. This suggests that there are few objective measures to categorise behaviour as anti-social or not.

By clarifying the factors which influence how travellers (and these can be both adults and young people) come to define themselves (and be defined by others) as 'victims' of anti-social behaviour we can construct a much better understanding of anti-social behaviour on buses and why young people tend to be labelled as the perpetrators.

Research undertaken on behalf of Transport for London (cited in Moore, 2010), provides some useful insights. When asked what specific behaviours they most disliked, the focus group participants pointed to a very wide range of unrelated activities as anti-social, ranging from eating smelly food to pushing and barging. This was not surprising as we have seen that there is no clear definition of what is anti-social. However, although certain forms of behaviour were more likely than others to be defined as anti-social, it was not primarily the behaviour itself which was important, but the context within which the behaviour was experienced and interpreted. So, the same behaviour could be considered as acceptable or anti-social depending upon a number of factors.

The importance of social interaction on buses has been highlighted in recent years with the retreat of the 'formal agents of control' – the bus conductors. These were withdrawn five years ago in London, for example, as being too expensive. Financial reviews since then have reiterated that the costs are too high to reinstate bus conductors. (KPMG LLP, 2009). Various measures have been taken to introduce other forms of 'formal authority'. Revenue Enforcement Officers routinely check on fare payment and anti-social behaviour and Transport Police are used on routes where criminal offences regularly occur . However, these measures only cover a small number of buses at any one time. A slightly different approach has been the introduction of CCTV. In London, for example, Transport for London has fitted its entire 8,000 strong bus fleet with CCTV, totalling approximately 50,000 cameras. However, CCTV is extremely resource intensive (London Assembly, 2008) and is of limited use for routine control of anti-social behaviour, as opposed to its use in combating more serious criminal acts (ibid). The result is that informal social control and how to promote this has become far more important.

Drawing primarily upon the focus groups and Transport for London research, but also on online discussion forums (Hancox, 2009; 2010 online) and on Scott's ethnographic research (Scott, 2000), it is possible to suggest six factors which influence how people perceive behaviour on buses. I have used quotes from an online discussion on the London Evening Standard website (This is London,Online) about young people and anti-social behaviour to illustrate some of these points.

The purpose of the travel. People use buses for different reasons. The lone commuter travelling to work on a crowded bus sees the journey as an extension of the working day. For school pupils the bus journey represents a pleasant, social interlude between two adult-controlled situations; that of the school and of the home. (Burton, 2008; Scott, 2000). Both sets of travellers, commuters and

school students, may well be on the same bus and a clash of expectations ensues, between leisure/fun for the young people and the work related necessity of commuting.

I too (try) to get the bus each morning but cannot as it is completely full of schoolkids. Yes, they are loud and yes some of the lazy blighters do only go one stop but the most annoying thing is that we (workers/commuters) cannot board the buses because they are full of kids. What about the workers who'd like to get into work on time?
(Lorraine, London Evening Standard, online).

And a reply from a 13 year old

i think that the free bus travel is good because i am 13 and i use it everyday from going to school to goin out wiv mates to experience more places 2 hang out and have a good time…i am one of them teens u is talking about i get on the bus i loudmouth me mates i get rude with whoever i can were out for a laugh we get high off of it so F... OFF!!!!!
(Gina, London Evening Standard, online).

Whether a person is travelling alone or in a group. Closely related to the perception of bus travel is whether the person is travelling alone or in a group. A group of people travelling together is likely to feel secure, to wish to communicate and generally may be perceived as more boisterous than the lone individual who wishes to travel undisturbed. Whereas the lone traveller may wish to cut themselves off from those around them, on crowded buses the group may seek to stay close, thereby forming a barrier to others and increasing the discomfort of others. Scott illustrates this with her description of male secondary pupils leaving school, after a day controlled by teachers, the journey home representing a time when friendship groups can come together…'each seems absorbed in his own friendship groups … released from time-tabled regimentation and scrutiny, they relax, oblivious to adults' (Scott, 2000: 21).

you just forget that others are around when you're in a group – it's not like you're trying to annoy them (Young Person Focus Group).

The context of time or event: The social acceptability of behaviour or at least the perception which behaviour generates varies by context or event. So noisy groups may be particularly irritating at rush hour or at the end of the school day, but possibly less so at other times, or a person may feel that they have particular rights to behaviour and are angry at this denial of these rights by others.

I am six months pregnant and use the bus every day. I have not once been offered a seat since I became visibly pregnant. I have seen people look at my bump and then stare out of the window, lift their paper up and generally do anything to avoid having to give a seat up…

Many adults set a very bad example when it comes to behaviour on public transport so it's no wonder that kids don't behave. (Julia, The London Evening Standard, online).

I think pushing is just the nature of the bus, you have to in order to get on.
(Focus Group member referring to rush hour).

Scott vividly illustrates this as she describes the 'contest for space' between secondary school pupils travelling home and adult travellers. The adults can accept the behaviour of a majority of the students, indeed, when questioned by her, remember their own behaviour when leaving school; but there is a minority of the students who generate hostility amongst the adults by spontaneous 'clowning and playing to the crowd' (as she categorizes it). These are seen, by some adults, as behaving unacceptably.

Scott also illustrates how the same secondary school student can, at one point of the journey engage in what might be viewed as anti-social behaviour, but later in the same journey, becomes a model of good behaviour. As one particular boy's friends get off the bus, eventually leaving him alone, his behaviour changes…'Well you just don't act daft…You can't be stupid unless there's someone to be stupid with'.

The degree of empathy towards perpetrators of anti-social behaviour: Those who can imagine themselves as having behaved in the same way as the perpetrator will be far more accepting of anti-social behaviour.

I had free travel when I was at school (in Hertfordshire), and I didn't turn out to be a menace to society. I have a job, pay taxes, and do charity work on the side. Don't stereotype all children, it's not fair. There will always be ASBO kids – breaking the law and rebelling is part of growing up (Karen, London Evening Standard, online).

Empathy for misbehaving young people is particularly strong amongst those who can remember similar they performed when young. This is a 'senior teacher' in Scott's research reminiscing about travelling home from school:

It was great fun. We always had a laugh. Once, the bus stopped outside Binns (a department store in a main shopping street), and we poured an open bottle of ink out of the window (Scott, 2000: 23).

The degree of personal security: A person who feels secure in the knowledge that nothing untoward will happen to them (for example they may know the perpetrators or they may themselves be travelling in a group) will be less likely to perceive behaviour as anti-social.

... I pity the single women, women with children and the elderly who have no choice..(but to go on the particular bus route). (Implying the particular traveller is safe).
(Andy, London Evening Standard, online)

As Scott notes, when faced by large numbers of young people after school, 'adults seem to be conducting risk-assessment' to decide what their response to the young people's behaviour should be. On the basis of the result of this, travellers will determine what behaviour they will accept (Scott, 2000).

The External Context: This refers to the way in which people interpret behaviour on buses in terms of their broader views of society. They 'import' these views to interpret the behaviour of young people on buses. This may be linked to a commentary on the wider society, which can be critical

I'm not surprised by this at all. The country is turning into a nation of hoodlums who think they can get their own way whenever they want – and free travel is part of it ('Aston', London Evening Standard, online).

You can't hear yourself think, let alone talk it's so noisy. You can never get a seat whilst the kids can't make up their minds whether they want to sit down in the seats they've taken or stand up. They all eat and throw their food and rubbish everywhere. Of course you can't say anything to them because they are the 'untouchables' in society today.
('Trunk', London Evening Standard, online).

The factors I have suggested above can help provide a framework to explain why young people are more likely to be associated with anti-social behaviour by older people, but also why young people feel unfairly picked upon and finally, why young people themselves feel intimidated by the behaviour of other young people. These six factors apply to everyone to a greater or lesser extent travelling on public transport, it is just that young people are more likely to be travelling in groups, more likely to view bus travel as a social event and be more likely to push and shove.

However, when many young people travel on public transport, they too feel intimidated and upset by noisy groups, aggressive behaviour and other forms of anti-social behaviour. In this, they are no different from other travellers. Young people are just as (or even more) likely to perceive behaviour as anti-social if they are travelling alone and perhaps feel particularly insecure when the bus they are on is travelling through the catchment area of a different school. However, having said this, boisterous, noisy behaviour is not necessarily categorised as anti-social behaviour by other travellers, young or old – it depends upon the circumstances – and in particular, the degree to which the onlooker can sympathise with the behaviour witnessed, is relevant.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

Anti-social behaviour is recognised as a significant problem on buses and, indeed on public transport in general. Concerns about anti-social behaviour lower passenger satisfaction with travel and also discourage a significant number of people from using buses. Anti-social behaviour has largely been associated with groups of young people and the response of Public Transport Executives and the police has been to initiate policies, often punitive, which focus on young people. This article suggests that the association of young people with anti-social behaviour on buses stigmatises young people and leads to further negative attitudes from bus drivers, adult travellers and police who are 'sensitized' to young people's behaviour.

Anti-social behaviour is a complex concept which is dependent upon individuals perceiving themselves as 'victims'. It is not something which existing independently of perception – indeed even the legal definition of anti-social behaviour as 'behaviour likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to individuals not of the same household' is intentionally vague. What is considered as anti-social expands with intolerance and shrinks with increased tolerance. What is important then is not simply to focus upon the actual (anti-social) behaviour and the alleged perpetrators, but also to explore the specific factors which influence the way 'victims' come to define activities of certain groups as anti-social. It is equally important to understand how 'perpetrators' perceive their actions and finally, to understand how these two differing perceptions generate anti-social behaviour. In this article, six specific factors have been proposed which might impact upon how behaviour is categorized as anti-social or not by bus users. By focusing on these contexts and their influence on perceptions of behaviour, it may be possible to approach the problem of anti-social behaviour in a different, less stigmatizing way.

This approach, of seeing anti-social behaviour as being a product of the interaction between 'victims' and perpetrators suggests that the answer to anti-social behaviour on public transport lies less in the introduction of formal interventions in the shape of increased policing of the public transport or in the re-introduction of bus conductors, and more towards policies which seek to increase greater awareness of public transport as a shared, social experience. Instead policies should be introduced which seek to expand public tolerance and passengers' awareness of other travellers differing social perceptions. A good example of how this was achieved with some success was the Transport for London Considerate Traveller Campaign which used posters, internet sites and videos on you-tube to change people's perception of travel on public transport. The campaign successfully shifted opinions and was credited with lowering anti-social behaviour on buses and tubes between 2008 and 2010 (see Moore, 2010). On a wider basis, youth workers have a key role in expanding notions of tolerance across generations through intergenerational projects which bring together young people and adults to explore their different perceptions (see Moore and Statham, 2006).

Notes

1. Steve Pound, MP for Ealing North, referring to London Bus Route 207 (Evening Standard Online 13/12/06).
2. 1000 online interviews with London residents who used public transport, aged sixteen or older. The research used a quota sampling to reflect the population of London. The fieldwork took place in mid-2007. and each structured interview lasted for 20 min.
3. Nine in-depth discussion groups of 6 to 8 regular public transport users, aged 13 to 50+, divided into age and gender groups.

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Participation and Activism:
Young people shaping their worlds

Kalbir Shukra, Malcolm Ball and Katy Brown

Abstract

This paper explores contemporary youth activism and youth participation to identify the framework of change that characterises the formal and informal democratic political participation of young people. Spontaneous political activity of young people that challenges the state sits side by side with state facilitated youth participation projects. The similarities and differences between official projects and independent political activism are highlighted and analysed in the context of changing social policy, the marketisation of youth work, the history of youth participation and social movements and debates in youth and community work. A distinction is made between approaches to youth participation that see young people as consumers, as creators or simply as problematic. Attention is also drawn to the innovation of Young Mayor and Young Advisor Projects in town halls, current campaigns and alliances in the defence of a public sector that includes youth work based on a critical dialogue for transformative social change.

Key words: Youth Participation; activism, protest; civil society; Big Society.

AFTER POLICE shot dead Mark Duggan in 2011 people protested outside Tottenham police station looking for an explanation. Frustration and anger over a young black man being shot in an area where young black men are disproportionately stopped and searched by police triggered rioting in Tottenham that then spread across England. There is debate as to why individuals joined in with setting high streets alight, confronting the police and taking whatever they wanted, whether this was indicative of an instinctive act of solidarity in recognition of shared experiences of repressive policing or whether it was for other reasons. Nevertheless, there is some agreement that there are significant numbers of young people and adults who are alienated, angry and feel that mainstream society offers them little hope for a good life. Whereas in response to the 1981 riots, Lord Scarman and Michael Heseltine reformed policing and invested in the regeneration of the inner cities, in 2011 we have seen little sympathy from political leaders for the circumstances of the rioters.. If the riots were the 'voices of the oppressed', then the state was not interested in listening. Whereas many politicians have been prepared to welcome the rioting/unrest in Yemen and Tunisia, as the start of the 'Arab Spring', there has been little sympathy in political circles for similar events in England. Here it was deemed criminal on the basis that British democracy offers channels for

expressing dissent, opposition and change. This article is not a commentary on the riots. Rather it offers a critical analysis of the framework of change through democratic participation offered to young people, both through youth work and through the alternative forms of political activism that young people carved out independently of official structures in the run up to the 2011 riots.

At the end of 2010, a resurgence of youth activism in Britain following the Coalition Government's austerity budget placed young people and their political engagement centre – stage. University occupations, college demonstrations, school student walk-outs and campaigns to defend youth facilities projected young people into the headlines as new civil rights activists and defenders of hard won rights and services. Simultaneously such young people were also dubbed 'anarchists' and 'criminals'. Media images of falling fire extinguishers, breaking glass and flying metal barriers were accompanied by descriptions of young people out of control and hell bent on wreaking havoc on the streets and disrespecting establishment figures – whether through graffiti on a statue of Churchill, attacks on a royal car, or opposition to Coalition policies.

The emergence of a diverse new student and youth movement once again swept away the myth that young people are not interested in politics. Whether they responded to tuition fee hikes, the end of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), closure of specific youth centres or other service cuts, significant numbers of young people raised their voices against the Government's decisions and also against attempts to prevent them from engaging in public protests. Young people tried to occupy buildings and public spaces such as the Tate Modern, the roof of Millbank Tower, the Green outside Parliament, university campuses, city banks and local streets but they were obstructed and prevented by police officers on horseback, with dogs or batons. Buildings were protected with additional security guards, streets were cordoned off with barriers and threats from senior police officers that young people who demonstrate might find themselves hurt or in trouble were publicised. Not only did these various methods appear to prevent young people from entering areas but they also stopped many from leaving.

There were both collective and individual consequences for those who took to the streets. Some were contained through a process of outdoor imprisonment termed 'kettling'. Police on horseback were seen charging crowds and preventing people from leaving demonstrations, for others there was a risk of being arrested or stopped and searched. The mobilisations became highly charged experiential 'crash courses' in power and conflict for the young people who were involved and their families. Young people drew on their familiarity with digital technology to outmanoeuvre the police. The police in turn, monitored Facebook and Twitter to find out what was being planned. Some young people threw out the stale politics of the old left and introduced new tactics to avoid being kettled. Revamping old methods like occupations, they built new people's coalitions in the face of the Coalition government.

In the midst of struggle, young people organising against cuts in education in England connected with large scale spontaneous protests in Tunisia, Yemen and Egypt. For example, the 29th January demonstration against cuts in education that was due to finish at Millbank, continued seamlessly on to join the protestors at the Egyptian Embassy. Such large scale informal political education that young people and their families are undergoing echoes much of the spontaneous student activity across other parts of the world, and may yet produce a broader youth social movement in the UK.

Ironically the British state's efforts to manage and contain the spontaneous political activity of young people sits next to many state facilitated youth work initiatives to increase young people's participation. Youth participation work has flourished in recent years, with 'participation' frequently discussed as a normative requirement in youth work policy and practice and in debates within related social science disciplines (Cooke and Kothari, 2001). Research funds, social policy, local and global political agendas, commissioning, education and inspection frameworks were all framed by a demand to increase political and institutional legitimacy or efficacy through greater user, client or citizen engagement. Many of the placards observed on demonstrations and the discourse surrounding the mobilisations at the centre of the current activism indicated a low level of perceived legitimacy of mainstream politics.

In this article, we seek to identify some of the similarities and differences between official youth participation projects and political activism that is independent of the state. We draw on our analysis of direct youth work practice, youth participation projects and more recent observations of young people's protests against the tuition fees, abolition of the EMA, cuts to youth clubs and closure of neighbourhood services. We aim to identify different types of youth participation and explore what their distinctive as well as overlapping roles may be.

History of Youth Participation

'Youth participation' is widely presented as a recent development backed by the New Labour Government. One study on youth participation in local government stated:

> The subject of youth participation in both local and national politics has been an on-going political and policy concern in the UK and elsewhere since the early 1990s. The more recent decline in voting (across all age groups but particularly amongst young people) at local and national levels has raised the prominence of this issue and resulted in debates about the importance of encouraging youth participation in political life. In this context the case for youth participation has often been associated with concerns about the future health of democratic practice in Britain
> (Molloy et al, 2002: 15).

This latest upsurge in youth participation work was reinforced by the mapping conducted by the National Youth Agency and British Youth Council (NYA/BYC, 2004). This revealed that there was evidence of 'considerable growth in the level of participation work' since 2000. Despite youth participation being rediscovered and legitimised towards the end of the 20th century, it was of interest to youth workers and political activists long before this period. In his study of the history of youth work, Bernard Davies (1999) identified a series of initiatives to develop a youth voice in youth work throughout the 1970s. Moreover, youth work – along with its associated community work – has long been an agency for promoting youth participation in various guises, through training young people to become productive members of society, providing constructive leisure opportunities or managing behaviour. As Packham (2008:69) argues:

> *Enabling participation is a central aim of youth and community work. Facilitating effective participation enables communities to have a voice and agency, and it assists service providers and policy makers to make sure that what they do is wanted and required, so being more efficient and effective.*

The history of youth participation begins long before the 1990s and is in effect the history of how youth work has been part of managing young people's behaviour and ideas. The Woodcraft Folk, the Scouts and Guides through to present day empowerment projects are all concerned in some way with young people and their participation in society (Gilchrist, Jeffs and Spence, 2001). Youth participation is also part of the history of social movements, old and new. They were all concerned in some form with participation, for example girls work in early 20th century was about engaging young women workers in the question of industrial reform (eg.Turnbull, 2001) and after inner city revolts in 1981 Britain, participation was partly about creating channels for ethnic minority political engagement (Shukra, 1998).

While youth participation in itself is not new to youth work, under New Labour, 'Youth participation' was specifically championed. As Tony Taylor (2008) notes, the political participation of young people has gone from being feared by mainstream youth services of the 1980s to becoming 'the flavour of the New Labour decade'. In reconstructing youth participation, what altered was the way it came to be described, articulated, valued, defined, understood and deployed in youth work. The acceptability of youth participation programmes was such that they were also supported across the mainstream political parties, at party conferences, in Conservative and Liberal Democrat-led local authorities as well as those under Labour. Youth participation has in effect become both professionally and politically uncontentious.

Critiques of youth participation

Despite participation being promoted as unproblematically good, critiques of youth participation

are not hard to find (eg. Nelson and Wright, 1995). Critiques particularly focus on problems related to quality assurance or professional practice. Many question whether there is enough institutional support for youth participation and others on whether it is sufficiently valued, authentic or tokenistic (Sapin, 2009; Batsleer, 2008; Shier, 2001; Arnstein, 1969). Consequently youth work training and literature often focuses upon improvement and addresses the required skills and knowledge that youth workers should develop to become better at delivering youth participation work (Sapin, 2009; Batsleer, 2008 Badham and Wade, 2008). Some critics have gone further and questioned the shift from participation as an aspiration to be encouraged and cultivated, to becoming a policy driver that demands engagement in a contractual or coercive way (Clark, 2008; Croft, 2008). Some have even described the drive towards 'participation' as a new form of 'tyranny' that allows dominant groups to reassert power or correct deviant behaviour (Cooke and Kothari, 2001).

Critical thinkers in youth work, including Bernard Davies (2005), Jean Spence et al, (2006), Mark Smith (1999, 2002), Tony Jeffs (2001) and Tony Taylor (2008) have identified building relationships based on voluntary participation as a vital starting point for youth work of any kind. The 'voluntary principle', as it has become known, is core to the process of finding a voice, informal or political education, critically responding to social policy, promoting democracy, equality and inclusivity, and as such it is understood as crucial to a non-coercive approach to participation. The voluntary principle came under enormous pressure under New Labour as youth work was conflated with preventative, targeted work such as that delivered by Connexions, some work with young offenders and the focus on 'NEEThood' (Davies and Merton, 2009). The central tenet of young people's voluntary involvement in youth work is continuing to struggle to survive under the Coalition's approach to volunteering.

In their bid to turn excluded young people into productive members of civil society and the market economy, New Labour strongly encouraged young people's uncritical engagement in mainstream society. A whole raft of policy developments took notions of youth participation and community engagement (voluntary or coercive) out of the fringes and into the centre of government policy and local governance. The Education and Inspections Act (2006) and Aiming High for Young People (July 2007) secured local positive activities for young people, and enabled some youth control of or access to budgets and services (National Youth Agency and Local Government Association, July 2008). Under the Coalition Government, this type of participation continues as a central theme in its plans to develop a National Citizens Service, increasing youth volunteering as well as insisting on participation in community work in exchange for benefits.

Mainstreaming Youth Participation

The policy framework surrounding youth work has long supported a participative approach, though it may not have been promoted locally and its intention may never have been to develop

critical understanding of social and political relations. Tony Taylor (2008) demonstrated that the Albermarle Report called for including young people in the political process and setting up Youth Councils as early as in 1959. Taylor also argued that when youth workers attempted to put this into practice, they were disciplined for it. By contrast, towards the end of New Labour's time in government, a plethora of youth participation projects, youth parliaments, the NYA campaign *Hear By Right* and more recently Young Mayor Projects were being replicated around the country and eliciting interest from across Europe. Several developments allowed for youth participation to be mainstreamed in this way:

1. The quantity and range of policies and associated resources demanding greater participation boosted the support for engaging young people as well as adults in decision-making (Packham, 2008). These included policy drivers relating to the promotion of 'active citizenship' (Crick, 1998), 'social inclusion' and 'community cohesion' (Cantle, 2008). Internationally, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child established the right of children to be listened to in Article 12. Nationally, consultation rights were also included in policies such as Children Act 2004 and Education Act 2002 (NYA, 2009).

2. Youth participation came to be seen as a solution to a perceived 'democratic deficit' and the alienation of young people from party politics. It became a panacea for growing youth alienation, gang warfare, urban incivility, disorder and cynicism towards representative democracy. At the same time that new forms of discourse that demonised young people were taking root, town halls were 'opening up'. Council governance structures and local political organisations came under pressure to make the inclusion of citizens in governance processes visible. The 2006 Power Inquiry recommended a requirement on all public bodies to involve the public in decision making and policy development (Lowndes, et al, 2006).

3. Policy makers committed themselves to greater local control through a new localism and a 'voice and choice' agenda. This involved local authorities engaging communities in decision making over services (Blake, 2008). Under the Coalition Government, localism remains a key plank in their reforms, which suggests community engagement may be encouraged in the commissioning of local services. This requires youth participation if implementation of localism is to reflect the interests of younger citizens. The National Youth Agency's *Participation Strategy Review Group Report* (2010:6-7) notes the difficulties of maintaining participatory work in the new economic climate. With shrinking resource allocation it argues that the rights based approach to participation work might be strengthened by promoting a 'value for money' case for youth participation.

4. The emasculation of organised working class and social movements of the 1970s produced decades of negotiations and settlements in safe and acceptable frameworks of conflict. Fear of

participation declined as dissent was absorbed through those channels. The State has therefore come to rely on citizen participation by working through institutional frameworks such as trade unions, student unions, school councils or minority organisations. 2009 was a year that saw riots, direct action around Europe and the emergence of new movements, from globalisation and climate change protests to anti-war protests and G20 demonstrations. While strong civic participation was encouraged, independent activism was met with the full force of the law. The policing of protests and activism redefined legitimate participation as participation that takes place as a non-threatening activity that can be controlled, managed or policed. State attacks on student and youth protests that occurred under the Coalition continued in this vein as students confronted their own student union president for limiting the opposition to education cuts. In Manchester in January 2011, the police protected the student union president on the grounds of safety, whilst simultaneously kettling protestors.

Participative approaches, alongside Bernard Crick's (1998) call for the political education of young people through universal citizenship education in schools and other changes were part of a broader agenda for 'civil renewal' (Keaney, 2006). This produced a turnaround in how youth participation work and engaging young people in politics were viewed. Crick's (1998) work, for example, recognised that young people could legitimately be critically engaged in discussing and understanding the political world around them and their role within it. They also threw up several important tensions/contradictions in youth work. Firstly, whilst central government increasingly called for youth engagement in the design and delivery of services, youth work was also driven by market forces and national targets. New Labour's Active Citizenship agenda conflicted with the marketisation of youth work. As one think tank report put it: 'New Labour has been known to devolve with one hand while centralising with the other. In ministerial speeches, issues such as 'new localism', citizen empowerment and civil renewal tend to jostle for space with talk of more audits, targets and regulation' (Rogers, 2006:2). This dichotomy threw up contradictory services for young people so that the same authorities that implemented control orders (eg. ASBOs) and surveillance of young people also sponsored youth empowerment initiatives.

Secondly, youth participation programmes, whatever their intentions, both challenge power relations and give legitimacy to existing structures at the same time. Whilst giving a sense of power, controls are inevitably kept on the work/young people by the adult advisors, structures and funding. Whilst these tend to be motivated by a concern to be supportive, empowering and concerned for the safety of participants, there is always the potential for restrictions to feel controlling and disempowering. The idea that youth work can have a social control as well as an empowering function is hardly new (Rosseter, 1987). It has always been, and remains today, one of the most important aspects of negotiating the youth worker's role with employers and the state and is a crucial element in the art of youth work.

Thirdly, by linking citizenship and social cohesion, New Labour created an expectation that young people need to take citizenship classes in order to participate effectively and shift from the realms of deviance to become respectable young people. The 2009 Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act created an 'active citizenship' route through which migrants must show evidence of volunteering and civic participation activity in any application for citizenship (Grove-White et al, 2010). This was an important move away from thinking of citizenship as a right that is available to all, towards treating it as something that is certifiable by a portfolio of volunteering experience with an exam in understanding 'Britishness' which might allow access to mainstream society. Under the coalition government this link between volunteering and citizenship may well be extended as a passport for those who are citizens to access even benefits. As youth participation becomes more closely linked to volunteering programmes and questions of citizen responsibilities, there is a need to consider how these relate to the range of youth participation approaches.

Market-driven youth participation

An important aspect of youth participation is centred on the idea that it is the responsibility of young people to participate in the market-place, primarily as workers. This sort of participation takes socially excluded young people through accredited programmes and aims to make them market-ready, so that they are able to compete in the global labour market. Participation of young people is as customers of education or training in order to achieve an identity or 'market value' (Pye and Muncie, 2001) as a worker. This is a modernised version of early 20th century market-driven participation models such as the earliest girls clubs that were concerned to improve the prospects of unskilled working class young people in industrial and political life whether through training or improved conditions (eg.Turnbull, 2001: 98-99). Projects like Young Enterprise which go into schools and run programmes to encourage young people to think about their futures, sometimes introducing them to psychometric testing, are contemporary examples of this approach. Such methods, it is argued by Jeffs and Smith (2006), reflect a change in youth work, from being an informal educational process of identity-creation and self-actualisation through processing experiences, to a technical one of fostering employability and transition to work.

In addition to this market-driven version there have been two other approaches to youth participation that have been deployed; these are both civil society centred youth participation approaches. One of them encourages young people to be viewed as consumers and the other turns young people into creators.

Civil Society Approach:
Youth participation with young people as consumers

This form of youth participation is the type identified by a mapping exercise carried out for the National Youth Agency and British Youth Council:

When asked about approaches which involved children and young people alongside adults, respondents from both statutory and voluntary sectors reported that public meetings, consultation documents and question and answer sessions were most commonly used. Statutory sector respondents also reported frequent use of service user forums, while voluntary organisations were likely to involve children and young people in decision-making bodies and committees.

• In both sectors, the most popular approaches specifically targeting children and young people were researching their needs and views, informal discussion and youth councils or forums.

• The tasks that children and young people undertake most frequently to inform decision-making in statutory and voluntary organisations are representing their peers and attending meetings. They are less likely to be involved in more strategic level tasks, such as developing frameworks for assessing services, budget setting or assessing suppliers. However, two-fifths of organisations in both sectors involve children and young people in staff selection (Oldfield and Fowler, 2004:1-2).

Some Youth Parliaments, Young Mayors, Youth Councils, Youth Forums and *Hear By Right*/Participation Works programmes have been particularly effective at developing this civil society approach to participation with the objective of training young people in participation skills/engagement/citizenship so that they can readily understand an existing service, structure, system and negotiate within its confines as consumers of those services. This involves change in the form of improvements to services offered through co-operation in consultation exercises that allow young people to choose between pre-determined options. 'Mystery shopper' projects adopted by some local authority participation projects and supported by the National Youth Agency's *Hear By Right* campaign exemplify this model. A young people's forum in this context tends to concentrate on creating governance structures for young people that shadow existing adult structures. Usually, this will be centred on ways of including young people in civic society with the role of any Youth Advisor being primarily to provide training and knowledge of service/system/structures so that young people engage more effectively with them. The youth advisor of course acts as a gatekeeper, facilitating, shaping and perhaps even limiting participation processes.

The *Hear by Right* programme has sponsored this approach. It provides standard toolkits, kitemark, self-assessment tools and strongly argues for training to be incorporated. *Hear by Right* also requires outcomes to be identified and measured, which can be beneficial to those services who need to argue their case for continued funding or support (Badham and Wade, 2008). This form of citizenship work is reliant on what Freire (1972) describes as 'banking education' to produce political literacy and capacity-building of individuals so they can exercise their right to be involved and engaged. This is increasingly presented as a 'responsibility' rather than a right. Community cohesion is also produced in a particular way: promoting 'Britishness', assimilation, inclusion and conformity (Shukra et.al 2004).

The young person at the centre of this work is largely treated as a consumer of education, training or services and a subject with responsibilities to help improve services and to increase voter turnout. This type of youth work seeks to address gaps in young people's skills and knowledge base that support them to adjust any patterns of behaviour that may be limiting their development or engagement, for example, the concern about young people's political apathy being a result of their lack of knowledge of how the political system works.

Ideologically, the development of such skills and knowledge encourage greater engagement, understanding and faith in mainstream processes. Far from encouraging collective change and self-actualisation, such an approach seeks an active conformity and social control by garnering consent for the way that society is organised.

Civil Society: Youth participation with young people as creators

The objective of this alternative approach is to create the space for youth dialogue, discussion, debate and informal learning so young people can decide what they want to do and how they want to do it. As with the first civil society approach, a key area of change would include the development of the young person's understanding and personal development, but this may be less formally delivered than the other approaches. Rather, it is more consistent with youth work as informal and political education with the youth advisor being a facilitator of critical discussion and experiential learning. To maintain the space for such creativity, however, it may nevertheless be necessary and professionally advisable for the youth advisor to retain a level of leadership in how compromises between politicians, officers and young people would be best discussed and negotiated. The youth advisor in this context is required to be highly skilled in navigating the service, systems and structures and identifying potential for young people to help redefine them.

A young people's forum based on these principles creates a space for democratic deliberations. The informality involved here doesn't require that existing structures be shadowed but can create new forms defined by young participants. As such, this can become a space where the civil and civic may come together and where the views of the young people, local political actors and the youth workers can constructively collide. This approach places great demands on all parties but the benefits are equally large. A developing sense of citizenship through political education so that young people can exercise their right to change, creativity and dissent is one of the possible rewards.

A strong focus on group work to develop a sense of collectivity is central to the required cohesion to build new networks and solidarities based on the transparency and accountability of individuals to groups. The individual young person becomes an active critic and creator of both form and content (eg. agendas and structures). Potentially this approach is emancipatory in allowing young

people to develop independent, critical analyses of themselves and the world around them. It can create opportunities to define how young people want to produce change – collectively as well as individually.

Young Mayor and Young Advisor Projects

One particular contemporary approach combines elements from a number of participatory approaches: Young Mayor and Young Advisors programmes. As relative newcomers to youth participation work, they were not visible in the National Youth Agency and British Youth Council (NYA/BYC) mapping of youth participation. They offer opportunities for young people to engage in formal political processes and also address the limitation of some youth participation projects identified by the NYA/BYC. Whereas other projects focus on helping young people making their voices heard, these projects enable young people to shape and speak to strategic issues and resource allocation.

One of the first Young Mayor projects emerged in 2004, creating the office of Young Mayor as an annually elected position with a yearly budget of £30 000. While there is variation in the ways that Young Mayor projects around the country are structured and organised, one example is that of a project that has an elected Young Mayor who is guided and supported by a group of Young Advisors. Young Mayor and Young Advisors are further supported by full time senior officers based in the Mayor's Office. Such projects fulfil different objectives for different constituents, which is arguably why it has continued to gain such widespread support. For local politicians it can address the democratic deficit by involving young people in electoral processes (eg. one project achieved a 48% turnout in young mayor elections compared to a 25% turnout in adult elections). For the young people it is an opportunity to influence decisions and help shape spending and local projects. For schools, it adds to their own citizenship activities. For youth workers it exemplifies a form of citizenship work that moves beyond turning young people into passive consumers of other people's agendas. Instead it can be about cultivating active, opinionated young people who develop through collective political learning and activity.

Young mayoral programmes can also provide local authorities and service providers with an informed consultation group, though the young people decide in which consultations they will participate and on what basis. They provide an official figurehead in the form of a Young Mayor (directly elected by young people) who works to reporting structures such as to a Council Cabinet. Young mayors can be well prepared by a hustings process, campaign trail and election training programme to support them in standing for election. In some projects, many of the young advisors are young people who have been through the election process. While they may not have won the mayoralty, they are able to participate as advisors to the elected Mayor. Advisors do not have to undergo any accredited citizenship training programmes. Instead the emphasis is on working

collectively with other young people, sharing views on how to spend the group's budget, deciding which strategic opportunities to engage with and learning from each other through discussion and activity. Residentials and international exchanges support the crucial process of group development. Engagement in these democratic processes and group activities in turn facilitates the personal development of individual young people, some of whom have entered higher education institutions on the strength of this work rather than their formal qualifications.

A visit to one Young Mayor's programme from an Ofsted inspector highlighted how central young people's views are in this programme. In talking to a young person from the Young Mayor's project an Ofsted inspector asked 'what training did you take so you could be part of this project?' The Young person replied: 'What training do I need to have an opinion?' Formal training can of course be useful in many contexts. This particular programme enables experienced young people to train and support young people through the hustings process during elections. But if the objective is to allow young people to articulate their views, it may not be training that is lacking, but spaces in which young people feel that they can readily give their views. A critical youth work practice assumes that young people already have developing views and skills – whether the worker agrees with them or not. What the young people are understood to need are the opportunities to debate their ideas, challenge each other's views, test out ideas and refine them. It is in the creation of safe spaces where this can happen that the youth worker can also play a supportive though critical role.

The theoretical and ideological approaches that support this approach are drawn from Freire's (1972) alternative approach to education to produce 'conscientization' together with the Gramscian focus on challenging dominant ideologies (Burke, 1999, 2005). A confident youth work praxis based on these ideas can support young people to develop a critical consciousness. In this way, youth participation can nurture the questioning of taken for granted ideas. In the civic realm, youth participation channels those ideas into discussions, meetings, consultations and project development. Youth Parliaments allow for annual open sharing of young people's critical views in the House of Commons when it is vacated by MPs so that young people can hold debates. School children can raise their issues in the structures of school council meetings and university students can debate their concerns in student union meetings.

Why protest?

So why, despite all the training in formal political participation and the forums for debate available to them, do so many young people also become active in protests? Why did young people take to the streets, organise rallies to defend their youth provision or occupy buildings in protest? In the course of our observations with young people during the demonstrations, occupations, actions and rallies the following sentiments were repeatedly expressed:

1. A feeling that most formal engagement opportunities were at the local level whereas the decisions they were protesting about were either taken nationally or shaped by central government decisions;

2. A feeling of being duped by campaign election promises that were not kept – placards and banners on many anti-war and anti-cuts protests have depicted politicians across the mainstream political spectrum as 'liars' or hypocrites;

3. Heightened levels of anger and fear about the severe consequences for themselves or their families of the decisions being protested against;

4. A sense of urgency because of the fast pace of decision making;

5. An urge to connect with others on the issues and express their outrage;

6. A sense of injustice and unfairness in decision making;

7. A wish to support an organisation calling for support e.g. a student union or a campaign group;

8. A wish to be part of or building a wider opposition or a counter-coalition;

9. A need to continue using a provision or service being closed down;

10. Feeling motivated or inspired to protest or 'walk like an Egyptian' e.g. by high profile protests elsewhere.

This protest form of participation sits alongside and outside the sphere of youth participation work not because the aspirations of the young people are different. The difference between youth participation as social movement activism and youth participation as a form of youth work lies primarily in the former's sense of its own independence. In a social movement context, the participants form a variety of movement campaigns and organisations, some of which may be more tightly controlled by organisers than others – but if they start to become part of the state they may start to become emasculated. It is possible, however, for youth participation projects to break out of these constraints and develop their own agendas. Similarly some university students challenge the official student union bodies when they feel constrained. It is also possible for individual actors to identify with all three types of participation: market-centred, civil society and activist.

While the police, media and politicians have created demons out of many young protestors, social

movement activism has historically transformed attitudes and produced cultural shifts, for example, youth movements in the 1960s and 70s encouraged women and minorities to participate more fully in public life. This suggests that social movement activists approach conflict as potentially positive and recognise the significance of ideological struggle in organising for social change. Similarly, some youth workers work with young people drawing on critical education approaches where young people are supported in a group to produce a collective agenda taking into account both the matters that effect or interest them and the diverse views of the young people in the group. Constructive, mutual challenge can be cultivated to develop solidarity and strong relationships in the process of building and reinforcing trust through ongoing contact and conversation. At its best, this democratic approach is valued for producing a strong sense of ownership, commitment and identification with the programme and the civic structures that support it. Such youth programmes can include a flexible, hybrid offer of civic engagement, volunteering and activism with young people engaging in one or more of these areas and experiencing how each can shape the other.

Independent Political Activity or Youth Participation in the Big Society

Until David Cameron's re-launch in February 2011, his 'Big Society' concept remained a fluid and vague concept. It has since become apparent that 'Big Society' is the coalition's prime social policy mechanism to restructure the welfare state, including the broad field of community and youth work for the new 'age of austerity'. The 'Big Society' agenda draws on ideas of citizenship through locally organised volunteering and philanthropy dressed in the radical clothes of the community organising model of community work associated with American activist, Saul Alinsky (1969). Without the context of devastating cuts to the welfare state – including youth services and voluntary and community sectors – there may have been greater support for big society as an alternative ideological approach to civil society. But the rebranding of civil society as either 'Big Society' or 'the Good Society' has been highly contested. The ideological battles being fought to encourage greater buy-in to the 'Big Society' include the struggles between the idea of a market driven society and private enterprise taking precedence over people's welfare. The idea is that privatised provision is inherently superior to state services, that people who want to see services running should run them voluntarily rather than be paid by the public purse. The battle over responsibility for mediating the crisis and allocating blame for it includes the construction of a myriad of new folk devils and moral panics – from migrants taking jobs and housing to people who are obese putting a strain on health services.

Young people's contribution to the 'Big Society' and a major route into employment suggested by government involves volunteering. Volunteering is presented as a public good, building the skills of the volunteer and keeping the individual engaged in work routines. In this form volunteering is conceived of as an activity or a form of labour. It is rooted in market led thinking but as there are

few employment opportunities, its capacity to achieve the aim of increasing youth employment is severely limited. The experience of the 1980s austerity led Youth Training Scheme (YTS) and Community Programme (CP) was that individuals often moved from the programme back onto benefits. The main value of the schemes at that time seemed to be the removal of those on the schemes from official unemployment statistics and a socialisation into accepting lower wages and less secure employment than they might have previously expected.

But during the 1980s and 1990s recessions it was community and youth work that provided the spaces for young people to think and develop. London had the advantage in that era of a well-resourced youth provision through its Inner London Education Authority (ILEA). Following the riots of 1981 and 1985, a series of regeneration funds distributed by central government bypassed local authorities and also provided financial support. Prioritising business and enterprise and a community and voluntary sector it supported some of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. In 2012 it is many of the high profile voluntary and community sector leaders who are emphasising that rather than offering support for the infrastructure to develop Cameron's big society the cuts resulting from the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review are forcing the closure of key community and voluntary sector agencies. This is true of adult and youth services too. Will the loss of so much youth work provision leave young people with fewer avenues for expressing their dissatisfaction and dissent?

Historically we have seen youth and community workers intervene to manage, mediate and control social unrest and outbreaks of violence, from fights between young people to local tensions with the police or even managing tensions over racial violence. A youth worker might intervene to reduce the prospects of people hurting each other or being arrested and perhaps seek to create more constructive channels for people to deal with the issues causing the tensions. These interventions are not usually visible or vaunted but they are valuable and more frequent than members of the public might imagine. Occasionally, the youth worker is wounded in the process. If youth services and youth participation operations are removed, as are the spaces in which young people can safely negotiate their issues under the supervision of another adult, so are the spaces that help young people to identify constructive strategies for improving their lives, whether personal, social, educational or political. They provide positive outlets for anger and frustration. The civility, mutual respect and informal learning that youth workers seek to cultivate through their participatory programmes provides a crucial service not just to young people, but for us all and is a vital precursor to any form of conscientization.

This article has sought to identify the diversity in youth participation approaches – all of which are able to make valuable contributions to the lives of young people and their localities. Some approaches emphasise finding employment whilst others focus on civic or civil society engagement. Without employment, young people and their families may not feel fully engaged with society and

are at risk of impoverishment or being pushed into alternative economies. Engagement with civil society oriented youth participation might develop young people's skills and understanding for deployment at work and in their neighbourhoods. It might equally help them develop a critical understanding of how they can actively contribute to changing society so that everyone can be educated, be healthy, earn and have a roof over their heads

Conclusion: Towards Building New Youth-Led Services for Young People

While New Labour had firmly established itself as the government of youth participation and engagement in the context of its wider inclusion and cohesion agendas, the Coalition government has introduced austerity measures that may destroy the programmes and infrastructure that has been built up over many decades (Nicholls, 2011). Instead the Coalition government promotes the notion of a Big Society, large scale volunteering and its own brand of localism. What does this mean for the sort of youth participation that can or needs to be promoted and developed now?

There is of course an urgency to defend the services for young people and the jobs that are being axed. As this article is being written, a movement is developing, led by unions, local campaigns and students. The process of defending jobs and services is itself an educational and politicisation process akin to youth participation. But as lines get drawn, young people, communities and youth workers, like other workers and community groups, are driven to activism. The Choose Youth Campaign is a case in point, bringing together a diverse range of bodies – many of them established mainstream organisations – that represent significant groups in youth work not accustomed to campaigning in the way they have felt forced to do this year. Members of Choose Youth not only include two major trade unions (Unite and Unison) but also the National Youth Agency, British Youth Council, NCVYS, In Defence of Youth Work, For Youth's Sake, TAG:the professional association for Lecturers in Community and Youth Work, MPs, the Woodcraft Folk and others. Choose Youth developed two broad methods to resist cuts in youth work provision: parliamentary lobbying and mobilisation for protest, recognising their shared interests against government decisions. In this campaign it is also necessary to confirm that youth participation is not inherently 'good' or neutral and that 'participation' is an ideologically loaded term used by people drawing on conflicting ideological positions whilst presenting the term as though it's neutral (Nelson and Wright, 1995). Thus youth participation in work for benefits is quite different to youth participation that offers opportunities to shape services. To imagine otherwise risks glossing over coercive and assimilationist aspects of some approaches to participation that may be emerging and require further critique.

Central to youth work are also conversation and association. The content of conversations can vary considerably depending on the values and perspectives that inform the worker's understanding and outlook. In visioning what a 1970s youth service should look like at an earlier time of high levels

of political activism, Milson-Fairbairn (Dept. of Education and Science, 1969 Para 158) recognised that the whole enterprise of youth work is inherently ideological and that the political perspective one holds informs the youth work one does. They confirmed that: 'We find ourselves unable to answer the question "what kind of youth service do we want?" – until we have answered the previous question – "what kind of society do we want?" In the most stringent sense, we think that a value free approach is not feasible'. For youth workers, community organisers and managers, that involves us in being as transparent and open about our objectives as possible and asking a series of difficult and sometimes uncomfortable questions: What sort of society do we want? What are the barriers and opportunities to developing this? Who are the agents of change and their allies? How can we shape a youth service that supports young people in building such a society?

An approach that seeks to answer these questions in conversation with young people could be immensely honest, transparent and radical. It might make visible the too often invisible ideas, beliefs, politics and perspectives of youth workers and managers who present themselves as neutral or objective. In doing so it could allow for greater transparency and therefore allow people to challenge each other's work and decisions in an informed way. It would minimise the potential for ideological differences to be interpreted as matters of personality conflicts and allow workers to construct alliances and groupings on a principled basis. This is an approach to youth work that those who speak of 'historical' (Davies, 2009) or 'critical youth work' (Taylor, 2009) have adopted since Milson-Fairburn. It frees up youth workers to think beyond the parameters of social policy and management frameworks. It allows young people to think freely. It is a youth work with integrity because it is not asking young people to open up about their views publicly whilst we pretend to each other that what we do is value-neutral. It asks that we also commit ourselves as youth workers to participating in critical debate and dialogue about what sort of world we want to live in and where youth work fits in or doesn't fit in to achieving that. In the transformative spirit of Freire (1972) and Alinsky (1969) we, as workers, are required to be honest about where we come from ideologically and aim to engage as learners as much as facilitators of deliberation. That is a way of working with young people and their communities in the present and the future.

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John Dewey and Experiential Learning: Developing the theory of youth work

Jon Ord

Abstract

Whilst experiential learning is an increasingly established aspect of youth work practice, in the main it is dominated by a simplistic four stage cycle which is attributed to Kolb (1984). However, it will be demonstrated in this article that this is a misinterpretation of Kolb's theory which results in a limited view of 'experience' within experiential learning. It is argued that not only a deeper understanding of Kolb's original theory is required, but a return must be made to John Dewey, perhaps the architect of experiential learning, to fully comprehend its importance. In so doing, a fuller appreciation of young people's experience is acquired, as well as a wider theoretical basis established for existing youth work practice.

Key words: youth work, experience, learning, Dewey

Experiential learning in youth work

ONE OF THE earliest explicit references to experiential learning in youth work appears in Mark Smith's Creators Not Consumers (1980) where he characterises youth work as encompassing this educational practice.

Learning by doing (or experiential learning) is based on three assumptions, that:

1. people learn best when they are personally involved in the learning experience;

2. knowledge has to be discovered by the individual if it is to have any significant meaning to them or make a difference in their behaviour; and

3. a person's commitment to learning is highest when they are free to set their own learning objectives and are able to actively pursue them within a given framework (Smith, 1980: 16).

Smith (1988) as well as Jeffs and Smith(2005), Blacker (2001)and Young (2006) all refer more

explicitly to the common depiction of experiential learning, which is most often referred to as Kolb's four stage model (figure 1). Although Kolb himself refers to this model as Lewin's experiential learning model (1951).

Figure 1: Lewin's experiential learning model (cited in Kolb, 1984: 21).[1]
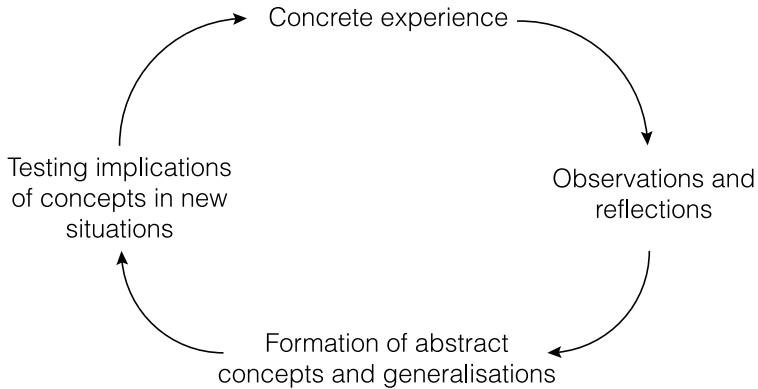
Despite his conversion to informal education from social education as the basis for youth work, Smith (1988) still places a firm emphasis on experiential learning. He cites Houle and suggests:

> For many practitioners, informal education is synonymous with a pattern of learning that might be described as experiential, 'education that occurs as a result of direct participation in the events of life' (Houle, 1980: 221). Such a pattern starts with concrete experience, with people doing things. (Smith, 1988: 130).

Smith (1988) continues to maintain that the model proposed by Kolb provides an appropriate theoretical framework for this educational practice. Similarly Blacker (2001), in describing the importance of experiential learning in youth work, refers to the usefulness of Kolb's four stage process, and Young (2006) also locates youth work with this familiar cycle:

> Learning [in youth work]is seen as a dynamic process, which leads to action. In other words, to be meaningful, learning needs to be tested in reality. This process is reflected in Kolb's experiential learning cycle. (Young, 2006: 79).

Experiential learning is on the list of specific criteria defining youth work by Tom Wylie, recently retired Chief Executive of the National Youth Agency (NYA) who maintains that:

> ... youth work is the application in work with adolescents of a form of practice which has three defining characteristics-their personal and social development; the deliberate use of

*experiential learning and transformative relationships; and adherence to a set of values (which inter alia puts the interests of young people first). (*Wylie, 2008: 54).*

In official guidance on youth work from the NYA it is noted that 'Youth work methods include support for individuals, work with small groups and learning through experience' (NYA, 2007: 1) and what is referred to as 'Kolb's experiential learning cycle' is also one of the key elements of the 'pedagogy of educational groupwork' in Merton and Wylie's (2002) articulation of a youth work curriculum, which was subsequently incorporated into the policy through the *Transforming Youth Work Strategy* (DfES 2002).

In this context, it is hardly surprising that experiential learning as a simplistic cycle has considerable currency in the field of youth work and it is incorporated into a large number of curriculum documents produced by statutory youth services, for example, Wiltshire (2005), Hampshire (2003), Luton (2003), Cheshire (2005), South Tyneside (2005) and Nottinghamshire (2006). Common to this explicit application is an exclusive emphasis on a four stage cycle of 'Plan, Do, Reflect and analyse or learn' (Ord, 2007:68). In practice, the cycle is often simplified even further than that suggested by Kolb and produced simply as 'do, review, plan'.

Figure 2: Do-Review-Plan: A 3-stage experiential learning cycle (Neill, 2004, online).

Rethinking experiential learning

There is a problem with articulating experiential learning in terms of a simplistic cycle, not least because of how it conceives of experience. In the main Kolb (1984) refers to experience as 'concrete'. He says '...concrete experience focuses on being involved in experiences and dealing with immediate human situations in a personal way' (Kolb, 1984: 68). Following Kolb's cycle,

youth work often interprets this concrete experience as the provision of activities, or 'doing': providing of experiences (Young, 2006; Blacker, 2001; Smith, 1988; Jeffs and Smith, 2005). So, for example, youth workers would use outdoor activities such as abseiling to provide a challenging experience and reflect on the learning resulting from it. Or they may set young people a teambuilding challenge, and reflect upon how well they undertook it. Experience is therefore something separate, discrete, or additional to the ordinary lives of the young people. Clearly youth work does involve activities (Spence, 2001) and these activities are often provided as a legitimate additional stimulus or vehicle for learning. However, to conceive of experiential learning exclusively and simply as the provision of discrete activities, followed by subsequent reflection upon their impact, misrepresents the educational basis for youth work. More importantly defining 'experience' in learning as something 'other' fundamentally misrepresents experiential learning as Dewey (1897; 1916; 1938) conceived of it.

In their account, Jeffs and Smith (2005) do make some reference to a depth and breadth of understanding of experiential learning beyond the simplistic cycle. For example, they utilise Dewey's suggestion that the 'business of education might be defined as an emancipation and enlargement of experience' (Dewey, 1910: 340 cited in Jeffs and Smith, 2005: 58). They suggest that enlarging experience is as much about the deepening of an understanding of our experiences as it is about building them up, arguing that we 'work with people so that they may have a greater understanding or appreciation of their experiences' (Jeffs and Smith, 2005: 59). In so doing, learning by experience is liberating: 'We interpret what is going on and this allows us to be "set free" ' (ibid). Jeffs and Smith (2005) and Blacker (2001) also refer to Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) and their three facets of experiential learning: returning to experience, attending to (or connecting with) feelings, and evaluating experiences. In addition they both also refer to the work of Schön (1983) who distinguishes between 'reflection in action' and 'reflection on action'.

There is also another notable exception in Smith (1994), who does offer a much more informed understanding of Dewey. He acknowledges the important distinction between activity and experience, and notes how: 'conversations with local educators are littered with references to experience… [and] in many respects these are the starting point for workers' efforts' (Smith, 1994:29). Smith offers a less simplistic account of Kolb, for example in his appreciation of Kolb's description of knowledge resulting 'from the combination of grasping experience and transforming it (Smith, 1994: 133). He also acknowledges the importance of situated learning, which Dewey emphasised. However in this text, Smith is focused on the process of local education and an articulation of its 'praxis' as well as a discussion of its wider principles such as fostering democracy. As such he is not primarily concerned with articulating Dewey's notion of experiential learning and by Smith's own admission, the writings of Dewey (as well as that of others) run through the text but are not explicated to any great degree. Rather Dewey's ideas underpin, and are used to elucidate Smith's primary purposes relating to local education. It is also possible that

Smith's focus on the embedded self, characterised by his belief 'that we must learn to understand ourselves as social and connected beings' (Smith, 1994:3), together with his reservations about the concept of an autonomous self, precludes any in-depth analysis of the dynamics of experience, which would inevitably have required a focus on the individual.

Smith's (1994) is a fairly lone voice and does not undermine the premise of this article that experiential learning in youth work is almost exclusively framed in terms of the simplistic learning cycle attributed to Kolb (1984). Even Jeffs and Smith (2005) regard it as a useful model for conceptualising the process of experiential learning, suggesting that 'this is a helpful way of looking at the situations we face as educators' (Jeffs and Smith, 2005: 66)[2] and Smith (1994) commenting on such models suggests that 'there can be no denying their practical use and influence.[3]

It will be argued that it is time to reconsider and move beyond such simplistic cyclical models, in the main because they offer an impoverished conception of experiential learning, but firstly it is important to point out that the learning cycle which predominates is itself a misrepresentation of Kolb (1984). The cycle depicted in figure 1 (above) is not Kolb's theory of experiential learning. It is a representation of Kurt Lewin's theory of organisational learning by Kolb (1984). Figure 3 below is Kolb's representation of experiential learning.

Figure 3: Structural dimensions underlying the process of experiential learning and the resulting basic knowledge forms (Kolb, 1984: 42)
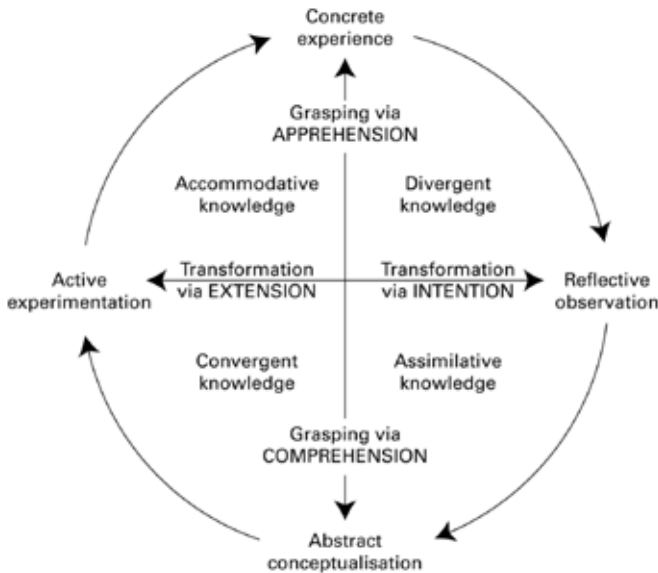
There are important differences between Kolb's representation of experiential learning and the more simplistic cycle, in that the whole inner dimension is omitted from the latter. In part it can be seen that Kolb does conceive of learning by experience in some sense as a progression through a cycle. This is evidenced by the outer circle which progresses from concrete experience through reflection to abstract conceptualisation and further experimentation. Importantly however he also sees experiential learning as a dynamic holistic process which unifies thought and action, as depicted in the inner dimension. Kolb describes this as a 'dialectic' integration of opposing functions. It is this dialectical aspect of learning by experience that the inner circle of Kolb's (1984:29) model of experiential learning specifically refers to. He suggests therefore that: '…all the models … suggest the idea that learning is by its very nature a conflict filled process' (1984:, p. 30). Furthermore '… experiential learning is also concerned with how these functions are integrated by the person into a holistic adaptive posture toward the world' (1984: 32). He continues, citing Bruner (1966), and claiming that at the heart of the creative process of learning is the 'dialectic' tension between 'abstract detachment' and 'concrete involvement'.

It is not the purpose of this paper to explore in depth of complexities of Kolb's (1984); theory: it is sufficient to evidence that Kolb's theory is at the very least much more than the simplistic simple cycle it is often characterised as being. However it is important to look to the architect of experiential learning, John Dewey, for clarification not least because he is credited by Kolb (1984), as a major influence on his theory.

The inner dimension of Kolb's structure of experiential learning is a direct descendant of Dewey's theory (1916; 1938). For Dewey experience is always a dynamic two-way process. He referred to this process as a 'transaction': 'An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between the individual and, what at the time, constitutes the environment' (Dewey, 1938: 43). As acknowledged by Garforth, this connection with the environment '...is not unilateral but, as Dewey would say, transactional, for the experient is modified by his environment and the environment by the experient in a constant reciprocal relationship' (Garforth, 1966: 13). Dewey elaborates on this two-way process, suggesting that experience involves both 'trying' and 'undergoing' (Dewey, 1916: 104).

'Trying' refers to the outward expression of intention or action. It is the purposeful engagement of the individual with the environment or in Dewey's words, 'doing becomes trying; an experiment with the world to find out what it is like' (ibid). Through action an attempt is made to have an impact on the world. 'Undergoing', the other aspect of the 'transaction' in experience, refers to the consequences of experience on the individual. In turn, in attempting to have an impact, the experience also impacts on us. 'Undergoing' refers to the consequences of the experience for us.

> *We may choose to clear litter from a local beauty spot, and in so doing the area is visibly improved (a consequence of 'trying') and at the same time we feel good about the deed that has been carried out (a consequence of 'undergoing'). For Dewey experience necessarily contains these two distinct aspects.* (Ord, 2009: 498).

Thus, as Dewey suggests:

> *When we experience something we act upon it, we do something; then we suffer or undergo the consequences. We do something to the thing and then it does something to us in return: such is the peculiar combination. The connection of these two phases of experience measures the fruitfulness of experience. Mere activity does not constitute experience.*
> (Dewey, 1916: 104).

Dewey is articulating a particular notion of experience which Garforth again makes clear:

> *He [Dewey] does not mean by this [experience] the stored up product of the past; nor does he mean simply the immediacy of the experienced present; nor the mere acceptance of environmental impact by a passive recipient; nor does he contrast experience with thought or reason. Experience is continuous from past through present to future; it is not static but dynamic, moving, in process.* (Garforth, 1966: 13).

Experience for Dewey is our 'lived' experience. The experience at the heart of experiential learning therefore is not something separate or additional but something which embraces the lives of individuals.

Youth work theorists such as Jeffs and Smith do at times acknowledge this; for example when they describe informal education, and it is assumed youth work, to involve 'learning in life as it is lived' (Jeffs and Smith, 2005:4). Jeffs and Smith's interpretation of experiential learning is however potentially problematic as they seem to equate experiences exclusively with 'exploratory activity', for example when they contrast it with 'giving information' or when 'individuals or groups may only need or want knowledge or advice – not exploration' (Jeffs and Smith, 2005: 67). Dewey would be wary of a distinction between experiential learning as specific 'exploratory' activities and formal learning as the transmission of useful and relevant information. Any relevant knowledge or information is 'in some sense' experiential as it relates directly to the lived experience of the individuals concerned (Dewey, 1910; 1916;1938). This confusion about what is meant by 'experience' and 'experiential learning' in Jeffs' and Smith's exploration is further exemplified by their explicit contrast between ideas and experience, and between thoughts and action. They maintain that:

[T]o build theories about an experience we need to draw on a repertoire of ideas and images… Book-learning and teaching can give us access to a range of theories and ways of making sense. In other words we need to recognise that a 'starting point' for a lot of our efforts may not be concrete experience. (Jeffs and Smith, 2005: 67).

Dewey would have disregarded such dualistic notions as are implicit in Jeffs' and Smith's separation of 'concrete experience' from 'theories and ideas'. Dewey's 'instrumentalism' (1897; 1910; 1916; 1938) would insist that theories and ideas can only make sense in relation to the lived experience of individuals and communities and as such they necessarily inform and enlarge experience[4]. Thereby thoughts and ideas must be experiential if they are to be meaningful.

For Dewey experience is at the heart of the educational process, indeed education is defined exclusively in terms of the extent to which it develops and reconstructs experience:

The concept of education is a constant reorganising or reconstructing of experience. It has all the time an immediate end, and so far as activity is educative. It reaches that end – the direct transformation of the quality of experience… We thus reach a technical definition of education: It is that reconstruction or reorganisation of experience which adds to the meaning of experience and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience (Dewey, 1916: 59).

Dialectics and 'Meaning' of Experience

As we have seen, an important aspect of this 'reconstruction' of experience and therefore an important basis of experiential learning is an explicit incorporation of Dewey's notions of 'trying' and 'undergoing'. Interestingly a fuller appreciation of Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning also reveals a commitment to this dual aspect of experience and it is this which makes up the inner dimension of his model. Kolb refers to this as a 'dialectic' relationship. Kolb's theory draws on Lewin, Dewey and Piaget and claims that: ' ... all three models of experiential learning describe conflicts between opposing ways of dealing with the world suggesting that learning results from resolution of these conflicts' (Kolb 1984: 29). According to Kolb, Lewin's model emphasises the basic conflict between concrete experience and abstract concepts and the conflict between observation and action. Kolb suggests that for Dewey, the major dialectic is between the individual's 'moving force', or their desire for action, and on the other hand the need for reflection and adaptation. Piaget's (1951) framework refers specifically to the dual processes, of 'accommodation' of ideas from the external world and 'assimilation' of experience into existing conceptual structures, as the moving forces of cognitive development (Kolb, 1984:29).

Whilst Kolb acknowledges that not all learning results from a resolution of dialectic tensions, he

argues strongly that examples of the most creative and significant aspects of learning are often the direct result of such resolutions. He claims that Freire's (1974) notion of praxis is a similar process:

> [I]n Paolo Freire's work the dialectic nature of learning and adaptation is encompassed in this concept of praxis, which he defines as 'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it'(1974:36). Central to the concept of praxis is the process of 'naming the world', which is both active – in the sense that naming something transforms it-and reflective-in that our choice of words gives meaning to the world around us. (Kolb, 1984:29).[5]

It is argued that this dialectic process is of direct importance to the process of youth work, and central to understanding experiential learning in its fullest sense:

> The dialectics of experience is important in theorizing experiential learning as it places a different emphasis on how we conceive of experiential learning. An example of an application of this dialectical tension of experience in youth work could be illustrated with reference to the experience of young women. Their experience can be seen as a tension between the demand to 'accommodate' themselves to the stereotypical expectations of their gender and femininity, in contrast to the extent to which they conceptualise or 'assimilate' the world as an oppressive environment which restricts their own authentic development irrespective of the environmental demands. Similarly the dialectical tension in peer groups could be characterised by the extent to which young people adapt their behaviour to meet the demands of the group, or free themselves through a process of assimilation of information about the experience of peer groups and peer group pressure. They realise that their desires, beliefs or values run contrary to the expectations of the group; discovering that they actually have a choice to conform or not and that this does not necessarily undermine their relationships with their peers. (Ord, 2007: 71).

Dewey's philosophy of education is often criticised for being too practical; that is, it focuses exclusively on 'the enquiry method' (Dewey, 1900), in which students are concerned with problem-solving (Bantock, 1963: 31). Bantock specifically criticises the pragmatic basis of Dewey's epistemology, claiming that formulating knowledge exclusively within man's (sic) practical engagement with his (sic) immediate environment, both overemphasises the importance of 'problems' in the search for knowledge as well as misrepresenting knowledge itself. However given an appreciation of the dialectics of experience, Dewey's formulation of educative experience, can be seen to be as much about how we understand the world, as it is with acting in it. It is as much about 'meaning making' as it is about a concern with the discovering solutions to 'practical' problems.[6]

Pring (2007) outlines Dewey's (1938) argument in 'Experience and Education':

> [T]here is an 'organic connection between education and experience' (1938:25), Education is part of that search for meaning – that trying to make sense… Hence, inquiry is an attempt 'to make sense' but in the light of what other people have concluded in similar circumstances. (Pring, 2007: 65).

Or as Dewey himself puts it: 'his activity shall have meaning to himself' (Dewey, 1900: 23).

Implications for the theory and practice of youth work

An in-depth appreciation of John Dewey's philosophy of experiential education provides a theoretical grounding for youth work that has both credibility and longevity. Youth work would no longer be seen as an educational practice in isolation, creating its own theory, but as an example of an educational practice almost entirely removed from formal education; one that arguably would ultimately be more effective (Pring, 2007; Fairfield, 2011).

A commitment to Dewey provides a theoretical basis for youth work's long held assertion about the importance of the relationship between a youth worker and the young person (Deer Richardson and Wolfe, 2001; Young, 2006; Harrison and Wise, 2005; Davies, 2005; Ord, 2007). Within Dewey's theory one needs to 'get to know' the young people; education is not something that takes place outside their immediate sphere of understanding but must be relevant to it. Education is not separate from the young people's homes and communities (Dewey, 1900), but connections must be made to them. As such the educators would need to get to know and build relationships with the pupils in order to understand their experiences of the world and to work with them on problems they encounter.

Integral to this process for Dewey (1938; 1916; 1900) is the notion of 'interests'. As Pring points out: 'It takes an experienced teacher, therefore, and one who knows the child well, to identify what the interest really is – indeed, to help the young person to recognise the nature of the interest, which is only dimly perceived' (Pring, 2007: 82).[7] A direct parallel can be drawn between an educational practice which is grounded in both young people's experience and their interests and the long held youth work commitment expressed succinctly in Davies' Manifesto to: 'start where young people are at' (Davies, 2005). No doubt Dewey would concur with this concept. The idea of beginning an educational encounter with an appreciation of what is important, pertinent or relevant to the young people 'there and then' or in the ' here and now' is directly consistent with an attempt to understand and explore their experience. Another of Davies' (2005) principles relates to Dewey's exploration and investigation of experience, asking: 'Is practice concerned with how young people feel and with what they know they can do?' (2005:11). Here again youth work engages directly with the experiential lives of young people.

Dewey's rationale is not one which puts the educator (teacher or youth worker) at the centre of the process, but one that places the child at the centre. Dewey described this as: 'a change or revolution not unlike that introduced by Copernicus' (Dewey, 1900: 34). This is a direct shift from a situation where the focus is on 'the teacher, the textbook, anywhere and everywhere you please except in the immediate instincts and activities of the child himself' (ibid). Dewey argued that the 'centre of gravity' needs to shift whereby 'he [the learner] is at the centre' (ibid). Dewey is often therefore referred to as a child-centred educationalist (Bantock, 1963; Garforth, 1966; Entwhistle, 1970; Woods and Barrow, 2006; Darling, 1994; Pring, 2007); and at times it is easy to see why this conclusion is arrived at. Dewey himself suggested that the starting point should be, in his terms, the 'internal conditions': 'The child's own instincts and powers furnish the material and give the starting point for all education' (Dewey, 1897: 4). However whilst it is clearly the case that Dewey was child centred, in the sense that he requires the educator to take due regard of the desires, interests and inclinations of the learner, this can be overstated. Education, for Dewey, was not 'laissez faire' and at the whim of the individual, or an unregulated permissiveness (Fairfield, 2011). For example he was critical of the erroneous implementation of some of his ideas in the early progressive schools being aghast that, 'Some teachers seem to be afraid even to make suggestions to the members of the group as to what they should do' (Dewey, 1938: 71).

Another important caveat that should be applied to Dewey's 'person centred curriculum' is that he is not denying the 'expert' role of the teacher in the importance of externally provided stimuli by the teacher through a dynamic curriculum, which is relevant, or made relevant, to the lives of the young people. What underpins Dewey's version of the child centred curriculum is however a detailed knowledge and understanding of the young people who are being taught: 'their interests' (Dewey, 1938: 54; 1916: 64). Neither does the person centred curriculum of Dewey deny the importance of what he refers to as the 'objective conditions' (Dewey, 1938: 42-45), which in no small part relate to the external bodies of knowledge.

An understanding of Dewey's conceptualisation of experiential learning (1897; 1900; 1910; 1916; 1938) also raises questions about the separateness of reflection in experiential learning; and therefore its location in a sequential cycle of learning. Dewey (1897; 1916; 1938) was concerned with the adaptation of human beings to the environment, as well as the importance of problem-solving within this adaptation. For Dewey (1910) reflection was fundamental to this process, and at times he did suggest a specific sequence, for example:

> *Upon examination, each instance reveals, more or less clearly, five logically distinct steps: (i) a felt difficulty; (ii) its location and definition; (iii) suggesting a possible solution; (iv) development by reasoning of the bearings of the suggestion; (v) further observation and experiment leading to its acceptance or rejection; that is, the conclusion of belief or disbelief.* (1910:72).

At other times Dewey made more explicit the role of reflection within problem-solving; for example when utilising the 'forked road analogy',[8] where someone is given 'two alternatives: he must either blindly or arbitrarily take his course trusting to luck' (Dewey, 1910:10). Dewey described specifically how reflecting on the two possibilities enables the correct choice to be made: '... he wants something in the nature of a signboard or a map, and his reflection is aimed at the discovery of facts that will serve this purpose' (ibid).

However Dewey often referred to reflection more widely as being synonymous with 'thinking'. For example:

> [R]eflection is turning a topic over in various aspects and in various lights so that nothing significant about it shall be overlooked ... thoughtfulness means, practically, the same thing ... in speaking of reflection we naturally use the words weigh, ponder, deliberate ... closely related names are scrutiny, examination, consideration, inspection – ... even reason itself. (Dewey, 1910:57).

At times it is possible to conceive of the role of reflection in experiential learning in a sequential fashion, either following the discovery of a problem, or in Dewey's words when we are in 'a state of perplexity, hesitation or doubt ' (Dewey, 1910:8). It could be easy therefore to interpret Dewey as advocating the conceptualisation of experiential learning which emphasises 'reflection on action'. However, one should be wary of such a formulation. Whilst at times reflection on action is clearly necessary, as in the example of the forked road analogy where one waits and ponders, Dewey's instrumentalism (1896; 1916; 1917; 1920; 1929) would be critical of a separation of thought and action. He regarded the two as unified by experience, and utilised simultaneously. In this respect Dewey can also be seen as the architect of Schön's (1983) later work on 'reflection in action'. Furthermore it is one thing to suggest that reflection can, and sometimes does, occur after a pause or upon completion of an activity, and another to formulate a model which necessitates reflection occurring in this manner. Such a formulation, as we have seen in what is referred to as Kolb's learning cycle, is a misrepresentation and impoverishment of the holistic nature of experiential education.

Reflective thinking for Dewey was also concerned, as previously indicated, with his emphasis on the importance of 're-conceptualisation of experience', the importance of beliefs. For example, reflective thinking was described by Dewey as an 'investigation directed toward bringing to light further facts which serve to corroborate or to nullify the suggested belief' (Dewey, 1910: 9). Pring (2007) argues that Dewey is often incorrectly interpreted as being overly concerned with the solving of practical problems. Rather he suggests Dewey should be more widely understood as being concerned with the 'problems of living' more generally:

Inquiry is the process that takes place when the person faces a problem. That problem can be of many kinds. Often it is a sense of puzzlement, and the person concerned struggles to make sense. The internal organisation of experience is upset as it were…Education is concerned with providing the experiential capacity to make sense and to overcome the problem or puzzlement. (Pring, 2007: 64-65).

Finally another important commonality between Dewey's formulation of experiential education and the theory of youth work is the role of conversation and dialogue. As Fairfield points out, central to Dewey's theory of experiential education is that 'the spirit of open ended conversation ought to prevail' (Fairfield, 2011: 121). Conversation is also central to youth work, perhaps as best articulated by Jeffs and Smith (2005). Clear parallels exist between Dewey's 'dialogical education [which] recognises the value of uncertainty' (Fairfield, 2011:253) and Jeffs' and Smith's notion of 'going with the flow' (Jeffs and Smith, 2005: 33-34). Its importance is at least implicit however in most, if not all, major accounts of the practice of youth work, whether that be in terms of informal, non-formal or social education (Deer Richardson and Wolfe, 2001; Young, 2006; Harrison and Wise, 2005; Davies, 2005; Ord, 2007). It should also perhaps come as no surprise that the most nuanced account of Dewey from Smith (1994) places a particular emphasis on dialogue and in his formulation of local education, he confirms 'conversation is a fundamental activity' (Smith, 1994: 32).

Of course this is an educational process which predates both Jeffs and Smith as well as Dewey, as Fairfield argues:

The model for this art remains Socrates engaged in conversation with the citizens of Athens, the informal and undogmatic mode of enquiry in which all participants and no one, including the educator is above the fray of dialogue. From the educator this art requires skilful guidance of enquiry from a given set of interests towards a broader horizon, the guidance that draws upon a variety of methods. (Farifield, 2011:46).

A cautionary note

A criticism is often levied at Dewey for his lack of appreciation of power and politics in social life and that he articulated the process of experiential learning without reference to the political context and inequality. Perhaps most notable of these critics is C. Wright Mills who argues:

…it is in politics that intellectual solidarity and effort must be centred. If the thinker does not relate himself to the value of truth in political struggle, he cannot responsibly cope with the whole of life experience (Wright Mills, 1974: 299).

Wright Mills is highly critical of Dewey and the 'pragmatists' who he describes as the '... sons of the middle-class rising within these strata into rather comfortable academic professions' (Wright Mills, 1974: 167). He argues that 'pragmatism has been the ideology of the Liberal professional man, however much he may have thought about the disadvantaged' and concludes that their 'assumptions ... mask the character and shape of political power' (ibid).

Dewey was undeniably a man of his time, writing at the turn of the previous century in liberal America. Perhaps his philosophy does encapsulate America's opportunist spirit believing anything to be possible for an individual. Whilst it is arguably the case that Dewey was in part a product of 'white, middle-class, male America', Wright Mills fails to appreciate that in many ways Dewey was also ahead of his time. It should be noted in this context that Dewey was a founder member of the 'National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People' (NAACP):

> *Founded Feb. 12., 1909, the NAACP is the nation's oldest, largest and most widely recognized grassroots-based civil rights organization. Its more than half-million members and supporters throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities, campaigning for equal opportunity.* (NAACP, 2010).

This clearly demonstrates that whilst issues of oppression, power and politics are not explicit within his philosophy of experiential learning, he himself was very aware of such issues, and was prepared to act in ways which attempt to address them.

Whilst it is ostensibly the case that power and politics are not 'writ large' within Dewey's formulation of experiential learning, neither is it the case that assumptions about power are inconsistent with Dewey's notion of experiential learning, for the notion of starting from and appreciating the uniqueness of an individual's experience necessarily, at least implicitly, acknowledges both the diversity of that experience, as well as issues of power which both cut across and in part define that experience. No doubt Dewey would not disagree with Wright Mills' assumption that '... values creep in' (Wright Mills, 1974: 467). But it is a cautionary note that must be sounded in relation to Dewey's formulations of experiential learning, that such issues of power and oppression must be more explicitly acknowledged.

Concluding remarks

To conclude I would argue it is clearly apparent that the dominant perspective of experiential learning as a simplistic four stage cycle, attributed to Kolb, 1984 is insufficient as an account of such a process. An appreciation of Dewey's original ideas about the role of educative experience provides us with a stark contrast. Firstly experience is not something 'discreet' or separate, the 'doing' of an activity or the provision of an 'experience' (or as Kolb, 1984 refers to it: 'concrete experience'). Dewey

provides us with a richer, less impoverished notion of experience. According to Dewey (1938; 1916) it is always 'transactional', that is, our experience is part of what it means to 'be in the world', necessarily connecting us with our past, through the present and into the future.[9] Experience is what it means to live. Allied to this notion is an appreciation by Dewey of the 'meaning' of experience. For experience to be educative it must be meaningful, and the educator must have made deliberate attempts to understand the meaning of the experiences of those he is attempting to educate.

Experiential learning, often when it is at its most significant, is also dialectical. Whether this be described in Dewey's (1916; 1938) terms of 'trying' and ' undergoing' or in Kolb's (1984) terms of 'assimilation' and 'accommodation', learning by experience is a two-way process of engaging with the world. This may be physically or conceptually, trying to change the way things are or how they are perceived to be, and at the same time to 'suffer or undergo' the consequences and therefore be changed by the experience. Notwithstanding the fact that experience is always couched in the context of existing power relations, Dewey's theory of experiential learning would be improved with more explicit acknowledgement of inequality and oppression.

An appreciation of Dewey's conceptualisation of experiential learning raises important questions about the role and a place of reflection within learning. There is no reason to suspect that reflection is always 'on action', it is equally likely to be relevant before or during a particular experience. Even within traditional notions of experiential learning such as taking a youth group abseiling it would be as relevant to reflect on what it means for the participants before undertaking an activity as it would be after the event in order to maximise the learning from that experience. For example the experience of abseiling could be terrifying and counter-productive, be an appropriate level of challenge or be so familiar as to cause indifference. It is time to question the usefulness of the simplistic cycle. Some may argue it has its uses, but it seems to preclude an appreciation of the depth of 'experience' itself and therefore experiential learning.

Finally and perhaps most importantly an appreciation of John Dewey's theory of experiential education gives much needed support to many of the fundamental tenets of youth work, such as the importance of relationships, the role of conversation and why it is essential to 'start where they are at' (Davies, 2005).

Notes

1. Lewin (1951) did not depict the learning in this form, this cycle was drawn by Kolb to attempt to illustrate what he thought Lewin was trying to communicate, (Kolb, 1984, p.21).
2. They however admit it is not without its problems, not least that learning is not necessarily sequential, claiming: 'we should not rely too heavily on the mechanical sequence' (Jeffs and Smith, 2005: 66).

3. Smith (1994) also offers some critical comments about the use of learning cycles.
4. For Dewey thoughts were never abstracted from experience. They always served some function in relation to the lived experience of the individual. Instrumentalism refers to the role or function which thoughts, ideas or feelings have in relation to experience.
5. This point is also emphasized by Smith (1994).
6. Jeffs and Smith (2005) acknowledge this with their reference to ' exploring and expanding experience', however this is to some extent undermined by their commitment to the simplistic learning cycle.
7. Smith (1994:29) also acknowledges the importance of interests suggesting that: ' the concern of the workers I talk to is to move with the questions and interests of the learners'.
8. Blacker (2001) makes reference to this aspect of Dewey's work, when exploring the role of reflection in youth work practice.
9. This notion of 'being in the world' was elaborated later by Heidegger (1927) with his concept of *Dasain* and the development of phenomenology. See Fairfield (2011) for an interesting examination of some of the parallels.

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Home Alone? Practitioners' Reflections on the Implications of Young People Living Alone

Kayleigh Garthwaite

Abstract

The rise in solo living has been one of the most significant demographic shifts of recent decades, with particularly rapid growth amongst younger age groups, yet remains relatively absent from social policy literature. This article argues that practitioners believe young people aged 16-24 living alone in social housing are at greater risk of difficulties in their housing journeys, particularly those who experience cumulative disadvantage. Despite this, those under 25 are rarely recognised as a priority category in policy terms. Drawing on interviews with housing practitioners, this article examines practitioners' responses to the multiple obstacles young people living alone in social housing can face, using a case study of living alone in a semi-rural area of North East England. Findings indicate that practitioners consider young people living alone as facing a multitude of barriers in their solo living transitions that are not being addressed by current policy frameworks.

Key words: Solo living, young people, social housing, shared living, single homelessness

THE RISE of solo living is one of the most significant demographic trends of recent decades, with a growing body of literature covering various categories of people living alone, for example: elderly women (Evandrou et al., 2001), adults of working age (Wasoff and Jamieson, 2005), people in particular geographic locations (Hall and Ogden, 2003), and more recently the experience of widows and widowers (van den Hoonaard, 2009). Although living alone is not new, the scale on which people live alone and make transitions into solo living at all stages of the adult lifecourse is a phenomenon whose growth has been particularly marked over the last 30 years (Chandler et al, 2004, Gordon 1994, Hall and Ogden, 1997, 1999, 2003; Heath and Cleaver, 2003).

As Palmer (2006:1) explains, 'living alone' is not the same as 'being single', and it is important to make this distinction as only half of single people actually live alone, while those living alone may be in 'living-apart-together' relationships (Haskey, 2005). 'Living-apart-together' (LAT) is being in an intimate relationship with a partner who lives somewhere else and is increasingly recognised and accepted as a specific way of being in a couple (Duncan and Phillips, 2010). Lone parents are also single but live with dependent children. Meanwhile 'concealed households' are where individuals neither own nor rent the property that they are living in. Most people in concealed

households do not have dependent children, and this category may include adults living with their parents or parents living with their older children (The Poverty Site, 2011). Solo living is thus a living arrangement rather than a marital status, and can include people who are single, married or formerly cohabiting but separated, divorced, widowed or those with partners who are not co-resident. Although debates remain around how to define solo living, for the purposes of this research solo living refers to an individual living alone in a household without a cohabiting partner, dependent child or other adults. Much previous solo living literature on those living alone at working age focuses on people in the age group 25-44. Although this group has seen the fastest growth in solo living across recent decades, the implications of solo living for young people aged 16-24 and their housing transitions has been somewhat overlooked.

This article draws on fieldwork undertaken for a research study investigating solo living in a semi-rural area of North East England. Initially, the research did not specifically focus upon young people living alone; however, as the fieldwork progressed, it became evident that this was a clear concern for the majority of practitioners interviewed. Therefore, the study became more focused upon the difficulties young people living alone in social rented accommodation can face in their housing transitions, from the perspective of housing practitioners. The discussion was then framed by a consideration of policy implications for young people aged 16-24. Heath (2008) notes that social class plays a key role in determining young people's housing transitions, with the young middle classes enjoying 'privileged pathways' into independent living, whilst those from working class backgrounds experience more challenging transitions. The transitions of less privileged young people living alone and how existing policies respond, or fail to respond, to their needs is a central concern of this article. However, it must be noted that this paper is not suggesting that all people living alone or indeed all young people living alone are isolated and excluded; rather, it is highlighting that for some young people, particularly those living in social housing, solo living can represent a multi-faceted experience, encompassing barriers and issues that should be considered when discussing solo living and young people.

Solo Living and Young People: What's The Problem?

Whilst solo living is not a radical new development, recent decades have seen a huge growth in the number of one person households, leading to a relatively recent heterogeneous category of people (Chandler et al, 2004; Gordon, 1994; Hall and Ogden, 1997; 1999; 2003; Heath and Cleaver, 2003; Molgat and Vezina, 2008; Wasoff and Jamieson, 2005). Despite a growing literature on solo living, what is absent from these accounts is a specific focus on how policy impacts upon young people living alone, and practitioners' responses to these issues. Only a minority of studies explicitly address the housing experiences of young people living alone (Heath 2008; Jones, 1995; Molgat and Vezina, 2008) with relatively little attention being paid to this issue from a policy perspective within the literature. The literature on the recent rise in solo-living amongst working

age adults situates this in recent demographic and cultural changes across Europe and elsewhere. Much of the solo living literature has focused on young professionals choosing to live alone as a privileged lifestyle choice; in other words, 'elective' lone living. In the USA, White (1994) suggests that there is a strong cultural preference for privacy and independence, and if individuals have sufficient resources one of the ways they can fulfil such values is by living alone, whilst Beck-Gernsheim (2002) makes a similar argument about the impact of individualisation on family life in Germany. Indeed, as Chandler et al (2004:2.12) observe, the rise of solo living is frequently seen as an indicator of 'individualisation' both in the UK and elsewhere. Debates surrounding individualisation are further summarised by Jamieson et al (2009) and more recently in relation to youth housing transitions by Nico (2010).

The decision in this research to focus upon young people aged 16-24 in social accommodation was threefold. Firstly, in terms of the scholarly literature surrounding solo living and youth transitions, a 'prolonging of youth' is apparent with the term 'youth' often being used to refer to those into their mid-thirties (Molgat and Vezina, 2008). Indeed, Joseph Rowntree Foundation's 'Young People' programme focused upon young people aged 16-25 (Jones, 2002) and national bodies often define the lower age band as the statutory minimum school leaving age in their country, with the British Office for National Statistics defining 'young adults' as aged between 16 and 24 years of age (Office for National Statistics, 2004). Secondly, a number of public policies, such as the National Minimum Wage and unemployment benefit Jobseeker's Allowance, have age restrictions which mean differing implications for those aged 25 and under. Finally, research has suggested that young people's experiences in their transitions into adulthood can have lasting consequences as they progress throughout the life course (Thompson et al, 2002); hence, the housing journeys of young people living alone are of key importance within sociological and social policy debates.

Within the youth literature, there has been much discussion on youth transitions, including transitions into education, work, relationships, housing and crime (for example, see MacDonald and Marsh 2005; Webster et al, 2004; Ford et al, 2002; Furlong et al, 2003). This paper does not endeavour to unpack these discussions any further. However, they do not focus upon research relating to young people and solo living. Youth researchers have pointed to a distinction between 'standardised' biographies on the one hand and 'choice' biographies on the other, whilst solo living literature has discussed 'elective' and 'forced' solo living. This paper attempts to combine these perspectives in order to draw attention to young people living alone who can find themselves on the receiving end of cumulative disadvantage, and argues for current policy frameworks to recognise that young people living alone can face a multitude of barriers in their complex journeys into adulthood. In an economic climate where youth unemployment is rising and housing markets are becoming increasingly fragmented, alongside the rising number of one person households, young people living alone can be at particular risk of facing relative poverty and social exclusion when making the transition to independent living.

Methodology

For the purposes of the research, housing practitioners were identified as respondents for both substantive and practical reasons; housing practitioners would be able to provide an insight into how young people experience living alone in social housing accommodation whilst being able to reflect on possible policy suggestions and solutions. The sampling strategy allowed for housing practitioners who engaged with young people living alone to participate in the research. In total, twenty four semi-structured face-to-face qualitative interviews were undertaken with housing professionals from County Durham in the North East of England, UK. Ages ranged from 20 up to 59, with 11 of the sample being female and 13 male. All of the participants had at least one year's experience of working in housing. Following completion of the fieldwork, interviews were analysed thematically through the use of NVivo qualitative data analysis software, and the key themes are discussed in the findings section.

Of course, when looking at any case study of a particular locality, it is important to stress that issues of generalisation and external validity need to be considered (a context to the research locale is provided below). Therefore, this article does not suggest that housing practitioners in other areas would report similar issues facing young people. Instead, the article is intended to bring attention to the importance of the housing transitions of young people living alone. Further information about the research locale further strengthens the decision to focus upon young people living alone from a housing practitioner perspective. The North East has a reasonably high level of one person households at 33 per cent when compared to other regions in Britain, which tend to hover around 30 per cent. This number of one person households in the North East is expected to rise to forty percent in 2021 (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister [ODPM], 2006); therefore, solo living is a particularly topical issue for housing professionals in this geographical area. Wear Valley in County Durham is a mixture of rural and urban areas with a population of 62,300. Over 60% of the population live in settlements of less than 10,000 people. Despite its attractive setting, many of the County's settlements suffer from high levels of deprivation, coupled with severe difficulties in accessing jobs, learning and services. Unemployment in the County is highest in Wear Valley, with numbers of Jobseekers Allowance customers concentrated here.

County Durham itself has one of the highest levels of Incapacity Benefit recipients in England, (35,200) accounting for approximately 12% of the workforce. The county has a tradition of deep coal mining; all of the mines have now closed, and despite financial investment, pockets of high unemployment and social deprivation remain. Of the dwelling stock in the area, social housing accounts for 14.2%, higher than the North East average of 12% (ONS, 2008). As the housing practitioners in the locality largely engaged with people living in social housing accommodation, it was decided that interviewing those who work within a housing arena would allow for an exploration of their views on possible barriers and policy implications that can affect young people living alone in this semi-rural area of North East England.

Findings: 'What Happens When Someone Turns 25 anyway?'

The shift towards solo living for young people was seen as a continuing process by practitioners, taking complex twists and turns. Often, young people churned between different housing situations, including social housing, parental homes, private renting, hostels and staying with friends in relation to other transitions, such as employment and partnership status. These transitions, combined with a problematisation of young people, can result in even greater fractured episodes for young people. The following section outlines the key issues raised by the housing practitioners.

Social Exclusion and Living Alone

An overarching finding was a problematisation of young people living alone. The majority of practitioners agreed that young people seeking a tenancy alone can be seen as more of a 'risk' than, for example, a couple in their early thirties. Assumptions that young people living alone would find it difficult to maintain a tenancy and would be generally unequipped to live independently were often present:

> *A lot of them, they don't even know how to turn the washing machine on let alone sort themselves out and keep themselves out of debt…it's just parties and loud music all the time. They don't think, 'Well this is my house I need to behave in a certain way'.*
> (Tenancy support officer, housing association).

Essentially, although respondents were eager to stress that clear discrimination was not present, an underlying prejudice towards young people living alone could be found amongst interview responses. This problematisation is symptomatic of a wider discourse whereby young people are portrayed as troublesome and undeserving (France, 2008). The research found that for some young people, these perceptions can be a reality as a result of multiple barriers to living alone. For example, for young people who either received benefits or were earning a low income, access to housing can be hugely challenging. Meanwhile, a young single man may not be considered a priority for housing associations or local authorities in relation to a family with dependent children, and it may be suggested he should return to his family home (Jones, 2002). Yet for some young people, returning home is not an option if their route into solo living is an outcome of problems which caused them to leave the family home. As one respondent stated:

> *Young people living on their own are seen as less of a priority when it comes to finding a suitable tenure for them…yet if you're got dependent children you get more points for that, so a young single mother with dependent children has more chance of getting housed than a young male single person looking for a house.* (Deputy Director, local council).

The situation can become more problematic if the young person living alone is unemployed or in a

low paid job. This was illustrated by practitioners in this study who identified unemployment as a significant problem for young people living alone that can exacerbate other issues:

> *Obviously I'm not saying it's like clear discrimination but if you see a young lad who's wanting a house on his own, he might be out of work, and then on the other hand you have a family with kids and they're working the safest bet would be with the family. I'm not saying that's how it works but it's just prejudices I suppose.*
> (Tenancy Support Officer, local housing association).

For example, young people in one person households who are unemployed may be at risk of finding themselves more cut off and isolated than those who are unemployed and living with someone else, as one practitioner states below:

> *Not only do they miss out on the social side of work, sometimes they haven't got anyone at home to talk to either…it would drive me mad being that cut off, especially in some of the little villages round here.* (Tenancy Enforcement Officer, local housing association).

Leyshon and DiGiovanna (2005) affirm that the housing transitions of young people in rural areas are affected by two key challenges: a decline in housing options and availability, and increased housing costs. Rural areas have higher levels of owner-occupation and private rented housing in comparison with urban areas, and limited availability of social housing (Ford et al, 1997). Owner-occupation is beyond the means of most working-class young people, especially in rural areas, while the declining availability of social housing reduces their housing options further (Heath, 2008). This highlights the need for supported housing schemes in rural areas for young people living alone.

The often considerable negative financial impact of living alone may be ignored or overlooked in such debates. As Lewis (2005:7) puts it, 'despite stereotypes about lofts and lattes, there is considerable poverty among people living alone'. For young people living alone, the risk of poverty is increased, not only for those on low incomes, but for any young person living alone during the first year (Iacovou and Aassve, 2007), as one tenancy support officer confirmed:

> *The thing is when you have young people who have had a difficult upbringing, sometimes they've care leavers and y'know they are living on their own, often they don't know where to go for help or what help is out there, and it's my job to help them figure it out but it's tough to see.* (Director of Housing, local council).

Facing relative poverty can cause young people's solo housing transitions to become increasingly fractured and challenging. This sentiment was echoed by one housing practitioner who observed

that young people living alone can struggle to cope with often multiple disadvantages. For example, low income when living alone means negotiating mounting levels of debt, missing bill payments and the risk of social exclusion. As one housing officer from a local council stated:

> *I know some of the young people we deal with have such a hard time, they're forced into living on their own cos they have nowhere else to go to but they can't really afford it, so they're missing out on paying this bill or that bill and then they get into debt here and there and it all mounts up.* (Housing Officer, local housing association).

Indeed, statistics indicate that young people living in the social housing sector report the highest levels of arrears (Survey of English Housing, 2009). They also experience higher levels of difficulty in comparison with other age groups in the same tenure. In the housing association sector, 13 per cent and 17 per cent respectively of households headed by either 16–24 year olds or 25–34 year olds had experienced rent arrears in the previous year (compared with 9 per cent of all housing association renters). The failure of many local authorities to provide social housing to under-18 year olds can lead many young people living alone towards the private rented sector instead, as the quotation below supports:

> *The thing is there aren't enough houses anyway, let alone for say a 16 year old wanting a house on their own, so if that's the case and they desperately need to move out for whatever reason say they've got no choice in the matter then private renting can be the only available option which comes with its own problems anyhow.* (Housing Officer, local council).

Many under-25 year olds already face considerable challenges in relation to their housing transitions. For those in receipt of Housing Benefit, those challenges can be multiplied. The Single Room Rent (SRR) regulations can often result in a shortfall between rent and Housing Benefit payments, and has also created a situation where landlords are reluctant to let properties to some young people living alone. The following section explores issues for young people under 25 in terms of the welfare state and living alone.

Young People and Policy: The Importance of Age

When asked about other possible barriers for young people living alone, age discrimination within the welfare state was frequently cited. Those aged 18-24 year who are living alone are not recognised in any of the priority groupings (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007), for example, in relation to Jobseeker's Allowance, the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and the exclusion of young people under 25 from claiming Working Tax Credits, unless they have dependent children. The NMW was initially only available to young people over the age of 18, but in 2004 under 18s were included on a 'development rate' that was linked to commitment to being involved in training.

Essentially, the age banding gives different income protection for different groups. For example, from October 2009 the 16 – and 17-year old NMW rate was set at £3.57 per hour, whilst for those aged between18–21 it is £4.83 and the adult rate (those aged 22 and above) is £5.80. Although the government has promised to extend the adult minimum wage rate to 21-year-olds from October 2010, those aged 16-21 will remain disadvantaged. The justification for this decision was based upon the assumption that a higher NMW may have acted as a deterrent to young people staying in education, although, in reality, little evidence supports such a position (France, 2008:500). It may also in part be due to the notion that those aged 16-21 tend to live in their parental home. Such a notion ignores the experiences of young adults leaving care and those forced to leave the parental home through adverse circumstances. Problems with this approach are recognised by the Low Pay Commission, who argue that the rationale behind paying 21-year olds a lower rate than 22-year olds does not always seem logical, is unclear and should be abandoned (Low Pay Commission, 2007). However, the new Age Discrimination Act (Employment Equality (Age) Regulations, 2006), while offering added protection to young workers in the workplace, does not cover the NMW.

Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) also discriminates against those aged 16-24. Young people in this age bracket receive a reduced rate of £50.95 per week, which compared to the over 25s rate of £64.30 is £13.35 less per week, or £53.50 less each month. France (2008) notes the discrepancy in age banding between the JSA (full rate entitlement at 25) and the NMW (full rate entitlement at 22), and that such age variations in benefits receipt means that some of the most vulnerable have 'an insecure safety net that may not guarantee protection at a time of high need' (France, 2008:500). In an era of economic recession, with mass youth unemployment on the increase, the logic and rationale of this policy leaves young people, and particularly those living alone, at greater risk of vulnerability in their progression into adulthood. The following section suggests some possible policy solutions that could address barriers to solo living for young people.

Advice and Support

Solo living for some young people is not a choice, with returning 'home' often not an option. Respondents stated that frequently young people living alone turn to housing practitioners for advice on budgeting and managing their tenancy. It was suggested by one tenancy support officer that workshops offering guidance on budgeting and successful tenancy management could be implemented, which would allow young people living alone to become aware of how they can negotiate their progression into independent living:

> One of the main things I get asked about is budgeting…people living on their own can find it hard to manage everything, I'm always drawing up budget plans and making sure that they know what financial help they can get, stuff like that so if we had specific workshops that could be really useful. (Tenancy Support Officer, housing association).

What's more, steps to reduce the immediate impacts of living alone upon the most vulnerable, such as ensuring that everyone living alone has access to information about water metering and council tax discounts, can help, a point that was suggested by one homelessness officer:

> *It's really important that young people who start living on their own know exactly what help there is on offer because too often we see people getting into a mess with finances because they don't know how to cope living on their own*. (Homelessness Officer, local council).

Indeed, as Heath (2008:4) confirms, young people living in social housing report the highest levels of difficulty in meeting their housing costs. The findings therefore suggest that young people living alone can require greater advice and guidance in their housing development.

Shared Living Arrangements, Supported Housing and Homelessness

Heath (2008) notes that the evidence presented in her review of youth housing transitions suggests that the proposed measures relating to home ownership following the Housing Green Paper in 2009 are largely peripheral to the most pressing concerns of the majority young people. These are: gaining access to affordable and decent quality housing which meets their specific needs as they make the transition to adulthood; having access to support and guidance throughout this process; and being treated fairly in relation to the Housing Benefit system. Housing practitioners indicated that steps are being taken to provide shared living arrangements for those without dependent children who find themselves homeless or in need of assistance with their housing needs. One practitioner spoke of plans for an old block of flats in which it is difficult to sustain a tenancy, being converted into a form of shared living accommodation for those aged over 18 who are either homeless or had experienced problems maintaining a tenancy. The scheme is designed to 'encourage people to make a go of living on their own, to find out how to look after themselves when they first live on their own and to be able to deal with a tenancy' (Housing Officer, housing association). It is hoped that the scheme will also tackle issues relating to social exclusion and isolation, as the shared living arrangement would allow for those living there to access support and help from each other in order to maintain their tenancy successfully. These forms of supported accommodation all share a commitment to providing protected spaces in which young people are able to learn to live independently and to acquire a range of key 'life skills'. However, these schemes are not new: how much can they really contribute to ensuring young people's housing transitions are successful?

Young homeless people who do not fall into any of the priority categories are in jeopardy of being overlooked by current policy frameworks. At present, homeless legislation in England and Wales offers help to either those under 18, those over 60 or those with dependent children. The Homelessness Act (2002) extended the definition of those in priority need, broadening the categories to include 16 and 17 year olds, those leaving care aged between 16 and 20 years, and those under the threat of violence. Quilgars et al (2008) remark that this measure has resulted in

greater levels of support for under-18 year olds, and that youth homelessness rates are now in decline. Young people whose needs are prioritised under the 2002 Homelessness Act are offered access to supported accommodation provided by local authorities, housing associations and other third sector organisations, or are able to gain support from a floating support worker. Other groups, such as care leavers and disabled young people, also benefit from specialist provision, which has been well documented in available literature (for example, see Stein 2009; Wade and Dixon 2006; Dixon and Stein 2005; Biehal and Wade 1999).

Provision of targeted support is variable for young people living alone, not least because of a lack of appropriate accommodation within the direct control of local authorities. Yet, as respondents highlighted, this may leave young people living alone aged 18-24 struggling to become re-homed if they break up with a partner or have a dispute with family or friends:

> *Young people who are homeless can find it even harder living alone than others, y'know sometimes they're care leavers or are recovering from mental health problems and things like that, and on top of that they've got to deal with trying to find a home and sort themselves out...it's a nightmare really.* (Homelessness Officer, local council).

As Kenway and Palmer (2003) estimate, a large number of single people experience homelessness, somewhere in the range of 310,000 to 380,000 a year. Harding and Willett (2008) point out contradictions in social policies that underpin single homelessness, placing further pressure on the supply of emergency accommodation and therefore increasing the chances of a young person living alone becoming, and remaining, socially excluded.

Discussion: Negotiating Barriers into Solo Living for Young People

In order to avoid and move beyond negative connotations of young people living alone, firstly it is important that housing practitioners and others are aware of the hurdles young people can face in their housing journeys and consider possible solutions that may make solo living an easier route for young people who either choose to live alone or need to live alone. A greater focus upon addressing the problems faced by young people living alone would be useful, highlighting the need for a multi-dimensional approach that involves not only greater focus upon housing and related social policies, but also social and cultural issues that exist in conjunction with this. Again, young people living alone who lacked support from others can find it difficult to achieve a successful housing experience. Such accommodation could include access to sports and leisure facilities in addition to welfare services. Of course, as with other forms of supported housing, the availability of affordable 'move-on' accommodation remains a critical issue.

Secondly, there are no obvious housing options for young people living alone on a low income if

their existing housing is no longer adequate; often, they cannot afford to buy and can experience difficulty in accessing social housing. In an era of increased solo living, shared housing may be considered a viable option for certain young people. Similarly, in an examination of housing practitioners' and young people's views towards youth housing (ECOTEC, 2008) practitioners provided examples of new initiatives across the UK with shared living arrangements, citing one organisation that developed an intermediary shared living arrangement where young people could benefit from peer support as well as support from practitioners to address a perceived gap between 24-hour supported accommodation and independent living.

Thirdly, the extent to which young people are forced to live in shared housing against their will remains a crucial concern. Kemp and Rugg's studies of young people (1998, 2001) found that most respondents recognised the advantages of shared living, including sharing living costs, mutual support and the benefit of company. The prospect of sharing with strangers was nevertheless a source of considerable anxiety. A more recent evaluation (Harvey and Houston, 2005) similarly finds that many claimants shy away from shared accommodation and thus face a higher shortfall in terms of housing benefit. The prospect of having to share with older people was noted to be particularly daunting, especially for female claimants. This reinforces the argument that it is the prospect of living with strangers which is at issue here rather than sharing per se. The expectation of sharing is also particularly problematic for care leavers, who may have had negative experiences of shared living in the past (while care leavers aged 21 and under are exempt from the SRR, those aged 22 to 24 are not). Of course, concerns regarding shared living are not exclusive to young people as Jamieson et al (2009) found in their study of older people living alone. However, the cumulative disadvantage outlined in this paper suggests that the housing journeys of young people living alone should be considered further in policy arenas.

Finally, in relation to youth homelessness, recent legislation perhaps offers some cause for optimism. On 1 April 2010 the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) published revised statutory guidance for children's services authorities and local housing authorities about their respective duties under the Children Act 1989 and the Housing Act 1996 to secure or provide accommodation for homeless 16 and 17 year old young people. Young homeless people living alone need to be assured of priority access to supported housing if they require it, alongside access to appropriate move-on accommodation.

Conclusions

With solo living projected to rise and become an increasingly permanent demographic feature in coming decades, together with fragmented housing markets and further predicted youth marginality, a clear and comprehensive approach to youth housing is required. The research has highlighted the need for a greater focus upon the needs of young people living alone in social

housing. Housing practitioners indicated that young people can face multiple barriers in their housing transitions, ranging from social exclusion as a result of relative poverty, unemployment, a shortage of accommodation for young people living alone in rural areas together with a lack of tailored advice and support. Possible solutions of shared living and supported accommodation must be considered in relation to the complex needs of young people who in some circumstances make the transition into living alone against their wishes. Whilst shared living may be a viable option for some young people living alone, for those who are particularly vulnerable, such as care leavers and single homeless young people, shared living may prove to be a further obstruction in the search for a successful housing outcome.

Above all, the research suggests that at a time of increasingly fractured transitions for young people, together with growing numbers of one person households, the issue of young people living alone is of increased importance to social policy. This study shows that research into solo living from the perspective of those living alone aged 16-25 is crucial in order to fully understand the transitions faced by the growing number of young people living alone. Despite this, the case study from practitioners' perspectives allows us to reaffirm the importance of articulation between youth studies and youth policy-making. The need for a greater focus upon ensuring young people living alone are given access to clear support and guidance throughout the process of solo living is crucial. In equipping young people living alone with greater support and providing guidance in their housing journeys, it is hoped this will help distance young people living alone in social housing from negative perceptions of them as inherently 'risky' or intrinsically problematic.

Acknowledgements

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THINKING SPACE

An Institute for Youth Work?

Tom Wylie

IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE that there should be pressure to regulate youth work more effectively. After all, a licence is required to operate wheel-clamping or to be a bouncer at a night club. So why not license youth workers whose roles are a good deal more significant in the lives of the young? Moreover, since the youth sector is completely unregulated and therefore those who work in it have no protected title, this has led some dubious individuals to be able to present themselves as 'youth workers' including a few who might have gone on to groom terrorist bombers. It is in part from a concern to safeguard the young that proposals have emerged to establish some form of 'institute' for youth work modelled possibly on the long-standing institute for social work or the more recent one that aims to cover further education lecturers.

The skills of youth workers

I am broadly in favour of the concept of an Institute but a top-down and rather narrow approach risks coming at the issue from the wrong angle. Given that the personality and skill of the youth worker rather than capital investment or technology is at the heart of the youth work approach, we should ask ourselves what youth workers need to be able to adapt their skills and insights for changing times so that they can be more effective in all the roles and settings in which they operate. There have been too few attempts to articulate clearly what youth workers actually do; recent examples include *Good Youth Work: what youth workers do, why and how* by Bryan Merton in 2007 and *This is Youth Work: stories from practice* produced by Unite and the In Defence of Youth Work Campaign in 2011. How are the skills and values which are identified in these short texts formed and assessed in training and sustained thereafter via continuing professional development? Youth workers need a blend of academic knowledge (eg. of adolescence and community development), a core set of practical skills (eg. in curriculum development and in working with individuals and groups), and a well-grounded ethical base. These skills and associated values are currently expressed in national occupational standards and assessed in initial training through formal examination and

the scrutiny of practice. There is a reasonably robust method for the external validation of initial training courses for professionals, though not for volunteers.

Developing reflective practitioners

At the centre of any new approach should be a concern to develop reflective practitioners better able to shape their own learning during their careers and to apply it in new settings. The starting place for this philosophy has to be the initial training bodies, whether external as in the various institutions of higher education, or internal where a voluntary sector organisation takes on the responsibility for training its own personnel, especially if they are volunteers. A strong Institute could draw together all of these strands and encourage their adoption across the whole sector and by all those who work in it, whether full-time or as volunteers. After initial training, the continuing development of staff has been grossly neglected and an Institute could play a role in filling this gap by offering seminars, publications, and on-line learning opportunities.

Such materials need to be based on the evaluation of practice and the analysis of significant research. This would point to any Institute having strong links to universities and other research bodies both in this country and abroad, insularity being a particular blight on British youth work. What constitutes 'evidence' is disputed within the youth sector but the failure to identify and articulate it by combining 'stories' and metrics has been to the sector's detriment both in developing practice and in influencing policy at local and national level. (A rare exception was the publication *The Benefits of Youth Work* by Viv Mckee et al in 2010). Furthermore, an Institute could undertake specific developmental activity in the field to test, analyse, report and disseminate innovative practice. It would thus aim not just to replicate the burgeoning number of general 'think tanks', such as Demos or IPPR (Institute for Public Policy Research), but to be a 'think and do tank' focused on youth work. From such a base of evidence-based theory and practice, it would be well placed to influence policy.

Not just a register

This brief summary of possible functions for an Institute would take it well beyond the narrow task of maintaining a register of qualified youth workers – a task, incidentally, which was carried out by the then Ministry of Education in the 1960s and 1970s until it foolishly let it lapse. In any case, the field is divided about the desirability of having a scheme of registration. The reasons for disliking it, particularly in the voluntary sector, include a fear of its cost for seemingly limited benefits, an unwillingness to have informal educators corralled by an over-mighty state (not very likely given the do-nothing approach of the current government), or a belief within individual organisations that they alone possess a piece of the true cross in their methodology and do not want to lose this uniqueness. It is possible, however, to envisage a straightforward scheme whereby each

organisation, whether local authority or voluntary body would define for itself what constitutes a 'fit and proper person' to carry out different roles (eg. as scout leader, detached worker, centre – based worker) and a separate, though probably over-lapping, set of national occupational standards which would set the requirements for the title of 'qualified youth worker' protected in statute. As with the medical profession, a commitment to continuing professional development would be a condition for remaining on the register and would drive responsiveness to new social needs in the young and to the application of fresh evidence and research on effective interventions.

By what authority?

For such an Institute to operate effectively it needs authority and those playing a leading role in its establishment need to be trusted. It is not likely that the existing government will legislate in the immediate future so instead the sector should work together to establish its own consensus. Youth work is a notably disputatious field and, as a result, governments of every colour have been able to divide and rule. Hence, there would need to be a willingness of the existing national bodies in England, including the National Youth Agency, the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services, the Training Agencies Group, relevant trade unions and other representative bodies, to come together to share their sovereignty, to pool resources, and to re-configure their systems, including those concerned with validating initial training. Actually, it might be a good idea if some of them merged, thus building a body more fitted for these times and more useful to youth workers.

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Reviews

Fin Cullen

THE BESTSELLER education research methods text, *Research Methods in Education*, is now in its 7th incarnation. The structure of the 2011 edition is split into four parts with a whopping 38 chapters. The sections include work on epistemology and the context of social research, styles and approaches to education research, methods of data collection, and forms of data analysis. This updated edition includes a range of material on virtual and visual methods. The opening chapter explores the context of educational research, the range of research methodologies in social research, and the need for 'different research paradigms for different research purposes' (p1). The next 37 chapters then move on to explore a range of methodological issues and research methods including experimental designs, statistics, visual and virtual methods, ethnography and interviews amongst many more.

This is an extensive, if not exhaustive, collection which could appear at first glance to be overwhelming in scope and breadth for the casual reader. At one level the collection offers much in the way of a 'recipe book' to dip in and out of. It moves, however, to a considered exploration of debates in the field, and signposts readers to other key authors and materials. Initially the sheer size of this volume is striking, but its content and rigour is complementary to other texts and will sit alongside the growing range of material on research design for students and practitioner-researchers.

As a lecturer on youth work courses, I note students' common apprehension when first approaching empirical research. Students often tell me that they find the initial research design and later analysis of empirical work to be the most daunting aspects of their first research project. This collection will prove helpful as it provides relevant source material on developing and operationalising research questions. In relation to data analysis, there are a number of chapters exploring many of the most common qualitative analytical approaches including discourse analysis and grounded theory. Quantitative researchers are also well served with chapters on descriptive and inferential statistics, multi-dimensional measurement and factor analysis.

The chapters each take the form of an overview of the topic area, and then a series of bullet points

raising issues and approaches in the area. A chapter I found of particular interest was Carmel O'Sullivan's on using role play as a research method. As an educator, youth worker and trainer, role play has been a familiar tool for learning within my education practice. O'Sullivan drawing on psycho-drama and Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach, explores the relevance and benefits of role play in drawing out the points of view of research participants via improvisation and the role of self-spectator. This melds with participatory action research approach with an emphasis on co-production of knowledge and analysis. Such reflections point to the emancipatory potential of theatre as highlighted by key figures such as Augustus Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed. O'Sullivan takes care to note the potential ethical dilemmas of role play and the importance of safety for participants, reflecting on the infamous 1970s Stamford Prison Experiment into the psychology of imprisonment and the eventual ceasing of the experiment part way through after participants became distressed.

Research Methods in Education showcases the growing range of approaches in social research. However, within the policy and practice realm evaluations and research methods as kinds of 'evidence' remain influenced by a largely quantitative, positivist paradigm. In contrast, research within the academy is shaped by a range of epistemological and methodological approaches, embracing a range of paradigms as demonstrated so well by this text. Thus visual, virtual and arts-based research approaches also have their worth within applied settings in producing and building theory, policy and practice within education and youth research. More might have been said on these wider debates about 'what counts' as research and for whom, in relation to the increasing influence of 'what works' approaches building on medical based models of evidence–based practice within the welfare, education and youth sectors. Further details about dissemination, particularly how to communicate with policymakers and audiences about evidence produced by innovative methods, would be highly relevant.

Overall this is a helpful introduction to some key areas for 'rookie' and established social researchers, in addition to postgraduate students and youth and education practitioners. The companion website provides another useful resource of powerpoint slides and additional materials to supplement the material within the book. This might have been aided by a more interactive and innovative design – I am thinking here of the video interviews with researchers on other publishers' websites. Such interactive web-based materials might be an arena for the publisher to develop when they produce the inevitable expanded future 8th edition of this long running text.

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Nathan Hall, John Grieve and Stephen P. Savage (eds.)
Policing and the Legacy of Lawrence
Willan Publishing, 2009
ISBN: 978-1-84392-505-7
£22.99 (pbk)
pp.320

Michael Whelan

FOR READERS unfamiliar with the name of Stephen Lawrence, or the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (SLI), it is worth starting with a brief quote from the introductory chapter of this book which provides a very succinct introduction to its background:

> *At approximately 22:30 on the evening of the 22 April 1993, 18-year-old Stephen and his friend Duwayne Brooks were subjected to an unprovoked racist attack by white youths in Well Hall Road, Eltham, south-east London. Stephen Lawrence was stabbed during the attack and died shortly afterwards. His killers were never convicted and serious questions concerning the police investigation remained unanswered* (p. 2).[1]

The SLI, conducted by Sir William Macpherson, was intended to examine the circumstances surrounding Stephen's death and, more particularly, the subsequent failings of the Metropolitan Police Force in investigating his murder. Although the SLI made a wide range of recommendations in relation to policing in Britain, it has perhaps gained most notoriety for its labelling of the Metropolitan Police Force as institutionally racist. In exploring 'the legacy of Lawrence' this book focuses primarily on the impact that the 70 recommendations made by the SLI have had on policing in Britain. Chapters are divided into three core sections: 'Lawrence in Context', 'Lawrence and Operational Policing' and 'Lawrence – Widening the Agenda'.

Section one starts by asking what it was that made the death of Stephen Lawrence 'the' case. That is, what was it about the Stephen Lawrence case that resulted in it having such a high profile and, arguably, such an impact on British Policing. In answering this question Savage et al (chapter 1) highlight the persistence and determination shown by Stephen's parents, Neville and Doreen, and the significance of the political and media backing for their campaign. Having identified the importance of the political influence of Jack Straw and the press coverage offered by the *Daily Mail*, the absence of a more in-depth discussion of these influences leaves this first section feeling somewhat incomplete. Brathwaite (chapter 3) does, however, provide a revealing insight into the internal politics of the police through his discussion of what he describes as the 'power, influence and the jockeying for advantage' (p. 65) which preoccupied the early activities of the Metropolitan Police's Independent Advisory Group (IAG). This chapter provides a valuable insight into the challenges faced both by the Metropolitan Police in learning to listen openly to 'critical friends', in

the form of IAGs, and by IAGs in retaining sufficient distance in their relationship with the police to enable them to remain 'critical' friends.

Section 2 focuses on changes to operational policing brought about as a result of the SLI, with chapters covering a range of topics including changes to family liaison practices, critical incident management, the introduction of IAGs and intelligence gathering practices. Grieve's (chapter 6) discussion of police intelligence-gathering practices provides an interesting insight into the tensions experienced by police officers in balancing the need to gain useful intelligence from community members, whilst also needing to build trust and maintain good relations within the community. This chapter is likely to be of interest to the many professionals who, in their efforts to act as advocates for young people, can find themselves inadvertently performing an intelligence gathering role for the police. In addition to identifying changes to operational policing as a result of the SLI, section 2 also highlights significant challenges in relation to the implementation of the SLI's recommendations. Grieve (chapter 4), for example, notes that many police officers unsurprisingly resented the institutionally racist label applied to them by the SLI, and saw the failings within the Lawrence investigation as more attributable to incompetence than to racism.

Section 3 of this book fails to live up to its promise of 'Widening the Agenda'. An exploration of the previously discussed political and media influence in bringing about the SLI and shaping its subsequent impact on policing in Britain would have been a welcome addition to these final chapters. Equally, given that the police force does not operate in a vacuum, a discussion of wider racial tensions within British society would have provided a useful backdrop to issues of racism within the country's police forces.

In summary, this book is primarily an insider view of the impact the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry had on policing in Britain. The majority of contributors are individuals who have spent many years working either within, or very closely with, various police forces around the country. While this makes for some very insightful perspectives drawn from the first hand experiences of authors, the closeness of many of the authors to policing in Britain also limits the critical perspectives offered throughout.

Note

1.   This review was written before the recent convictions for Stephen's murder.

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Michael Little and Barbara Maughan
Effective Interventions for Children in Need
Ashgate, 2010
ISBN: 978-0-7546-2825-5
£120 (hbk)
pp.384

Keith Cranwell

THE BOOK IS a collection of journal articles published between 1998 and 2007 which have been drawn from a wide range of American and British sources. The work is divided into five parts that look at the effectiveness of children's services, the relationship between needs and services, the effectiveness of public health and universal programmes services, the effectiveness of targeted programmes, and a final section of two articles that look at the long term prognosis of psychopathological assessment between children and adults and an evaluation of the cost of anti-social behaviour in later life. The book is part of a six volume series on Children's Welfare and Development published by Ashgate under the editorial direction of Michael Little.

The articles cited describe case studies that have been written up in medical, psychiatric, child and adolescent development journals. The objective for bringing such an extensive array of academic research is to increase awareness of the role diverse disciplines might have on policy and practice in children's services. In the light of the recent review of the place of early intervention in improving children's services that was undertaken by Graham Allen MP and the rolling out by the government of early intervention strategies, this volume and the series are highlighting the value of different types and styles of research that might contribute to this debate.

The editors have selected articles that critically examine the debate about evidence-based research and its implications for practice and the challenges this has to the use of experiments and accepted 'gold standard' research techniques. In youth and community work there are strong reservations and scepticism regarding psychological research into youth and the distortions these scientific approaches might have on achieving the long term goals of youth work.

There is only one article in the volume that considers the issues of evaluating youth work. Roth et al (chapter 20) analyse 15 American examples of youth transition programmes that seek to help young people move from adolescence to adulthood without engaging in unhealthy and risky behaviour. The article sets out a framework based on research that investigated which events cause adolescents to follow risky behaviour. The programmes that were investigated were largely community and not school based and focussed on the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development goals. The approach appeared prescriptive but the evaluations did underline how project outcomes were often ill-defined. However the research gave evidence that supported a generic youth work approach, the

central role of the youth worker-young person relationship and the importance of long term contact.

Youth workers engaged in youth offending might find that McAra and McVie's research on Scottish youth justice challenges the evidence-base of the 'what works' early intervention initiatives. In a quite detailed analysis of the stages of the youth justice system, McAra and McVie identify that labelling processes forced some categories of children and young people deeper into the juvenile justice system when more serious offenders were overlooked. The implication for reducing offending lay in 'minimum intervention and maximum diversion'. (p.65).

For community workers dealing with Sure Start, community mothers, parenting, the relationship between poverty and education or work with families there are case studies that are rigorously examined which can be used to make arguments to support provision. For example, chapter 16 reviews an evaluation of a Community Mothers project in Ireland using a randomised controlled trial from the 1990s. Seven years later, the researchers re-interviewed a sample of the original project and found that there were sustained beneficial effects on participants' parenting skills.

For practitioners engaged in work where they are asked to provide evidence for claims for different areas of their work this book provides some insights into some of the questions that need to be raised about evidence-based research and the role of research to support early intervention work. The type of research showcased in this book is not easy for a non-specialist in psychological work to follow but many of the articles were worth the extra effort needed to grapple with statistical formulas such as chi-square and F tests. The emphasis on research in health indices and evaluations based on random standardised testing does set a challenge for the field of youth work to look beyond the more accessible qualitative research that is undertaken.

This is essentially a book to dip into rather than attempt to read in one sitting. The layout of parallel paragraphs on the same page meant that font sizes were smaller and this made reading dense pages of text tiring, but illustrated how the editors were keen to pack as much high quality research into a single volume. Overall, this book provided gems of ideas to be found from sources that are not part of the mainstream reading in youth work and children's and young people's services courses and make this a useful addition to a university library.

Dr Keith Cranwell, University of Greenwich

In Defence of Youth Work
This Is Youth Work: Stories From Practice
In Defence of Youth Work 2011
Available from www.indefenceofyouthwork.org.uk (e-publication/pbk)
pp.51

<div align="right">Jon Ord</div>

THIS IS UNDOUBTEDLY an important and valuable booklet and DVD which will be roundly welcomed by the youth work field. Born out of the In Defence of Youth Work campaign, funded and supported by UNITE and Unison, it is explicitly produced in the context of the unprecedented threat to youth work. The booklet sets out to tell twelve youth work stories, nine ' as seen by the youth worker' and three 'as seen by young people'. These narrative accounts attempt to communicate what have often been regarded as the intangible aspects of the process of youth work. Not intangible (I hasten to add) in terms of being impossible to characterise and clarify, but intangible in the sense that they do not fit the 'technocratic' performance management model of education that has increasingly come to dominate perspectives of education (whether formal, non formal or informal) over the last three decades.

Thus the booklet begins by setting the scene and establishing this context for the stories, in which it is argued that as a result of attempts to quantify youth work and insist on the establishment of definable outcomes 'youth work has been pushed ever nearer to being no more than agency of behavioural modification or the mere provider of predetermined positive activity' (p.6).

The stories themselves are interesting and thought provoking and characterise the commitment of the workers to see the world from the young people's point of view, and they describe a fluid and creative practice which starts from the young people's experience of the world but attempts to respond creatively to what is pertinent to them. Whether that be enabling a group of black young people to voice their concerns of harassment to the police or how a group of 'chaotic' young women developed into young advocates within a youth forum.

What emerges is a responsiveness of practice which characterises the subtle yet powerful influence youth workers have on young people, such as whether a young person chooses to continue to carry a knife or the fraught but ultimately successful attempts to engage the most hard to reach and disengaged young people in educational workshops. The stories are also a powerful reminder that outcomes emerge out of a process of engagement based on the establishment of trusting relationships, and there is certainly no quick fix. The process is both fluid and more importantly takes time.

The question remains 'Who is the booklet for? It is clearly produced in the context of the current assault on youth services and therefore aimed at influencing local politicians and policy makers to stem the flow of cuts. Indeed, a considerable number have been distributed accordingly. How

successful this will be, and whether this booklet is the best way of doing this, are difficult questions to answer. Whether local or national politicians would either read through the booklet or watch the DVD is perhaps questionable. Lobbyists do not utilise such strategies as far as I am aware, although if they did watch the DVD or read the stories they would certainly have a better understanding of the essence of youth work.

My view is the booklet is as useful, perhaps even more useful, as an educational tool for trainee youth workers. It should not be assumed that youth workers themselves are familiar with the process of youth work. For example at a recent session on evaluation I ran as part of a management model, I found the non-youth workers were much more critical of a linear planning and evaluation framework (NAOMIE) than youth workers themselves, some evidence perhaps that contemporary youth workers have been heavily influenced by the need to plan for outcomes. It is hoped therefore that the booklet and DVD will become widely available.

This booklet alerts us to the lack of evidence of youth work practice and we should all hold our hands up to this failing, but perhaps be spurred on to bring to life more young people's 'youth work narratives'. I would have liked to have seen a balance of stories in favour of the voices of young people: nine to three seems to place greater weight on the voice of the worker. Given the neoliberal assault on professionalism I fear the voice of the youth worker has much less clout than that of the young person. I heard a very moving speech by a young person at a Choose Youth rally which characterised the influence of his youth worker in reframing his view of himself from that provided by teachers of a 'troublesome and awkward individual ' to that of a 'passionate and committed young person' who went on to chair the local youth forum. He described how his youth worker had enabled this transformation.

I have already found the DVD to be very valuable as an educational tool. However there are also some minor problems with it. For example the images of houses filmed from a moving vehicle, which are at times out of focus, are puzzling and do little to enhance the narrative. The more static images of the stairwell and graffiti for me work much better. Also I can see the benefits of anonymity that a voice-over enables but perhaps there could have been a greater variety of voices? But it still remains a very useful tool.

The optimists will no doubt herald the arrival of this booklet as an important marker of authentic youth work and see it as a way of communicating essential aspects of an often misunderstood practice, as well as going some way to convincing politicians and policy makers of its worth. The pessimists by contrast are likely to see this attempt as 'too little too late'… The truth no doubt is somewhere in the middle and if the booklet goes some small way in making the case for youth work and stemming the tide, as well as becoming a useful educational tool, it will have done its job.

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E.G Levine and S.K. Levine (eds)
Art in Action – Expressive Arts Therapy and Social Change
London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
ISBN: 978-1849058209
£24.99 (pbk)
pp.240

Rajesh Patel

THIS BOOK SETS out to examine how expressive arts can aid the process of social change therapeutically. It has a wide selection of authors from around the world, with an eclectic mix of artistic projects. The book is split into three sections: principles, issues and projects.

The book has a moral charge to it, beginning with a discussion of how a bus trip in Belfast acted as a force to engage a set of diplomats more closely to help set out the stall for the peace process in Palestine. Why this is art is not explained and the displacement that art can create is not capitalised on to show how it can underpin social change processes. The foreword is a little too gushing for my personal preference: rather than extol the virtues of art and the authors, it needs to instil more searching questions about why expressive arts are important.

McNiff draws on psychotherapy and art to examine how the arts create therapeutic moments and processes, allowing the reader to examine more clearly how they can be synthesised in their own setting. Where extreme trauma has taken place the development of alternative methods of communication and expression is a recognised facet of art in therapy. Knill's chapter is particularly strong in this respect and provides a detailed illustration of how 'decentering' through art allows discovery and challenge, and how the process of communal engagement also acts as a crucible for this to be tested out. He points out how games are limited in this area; this is a reminder that communication through the arts allows voice to arise in more complex and collaborative ways.

The final section on projects contained rich descriptions of a variety of work. These underlined how violence is never far away, whether from war zones, domestic violence or racist attacks, at present or in the past, requiring therapeutic work to overcome trauma. These illustrated a number of cultural differences such as how 'teaching' art results in pressures to judge the quality of artwork. However, these were often presented as unproblematic; I am loath to believe that the process was so smooth. If art offers solutions in a place where social change occurs it is unlikely that these will emerge whole and unscathed. Artistic processes are full of doubt, open to interpretation and in a therapeutic process subject to dialogical interaction. These descriptions demonstrated the scale of the problem but for me raised more questions than answers.

This is why the final chapter was one of the most powerful, as it described the plight of the Ethiopian

Jews who were displaced during the civil wars there but having entered Israel found themselves 'othered' yet again by more orthodox versions of Judaism and by racism. The creative work carried out with them respected and drew on the indigenous artistic traditions to establish a new dialogue. Speiser and Schwartz, the authors of this chapter, are cautious about making claims for their work but I found this resonant. In the experience of most people who work with the arts, the possibilities of reality often exceed that of the imagination. This grounding laid a more solid foundation than the esoteric claims of some of the other authors.

I was looking forward to reading this book but was frustrated that many of the artist/therapists are from the North and West but seem to be writing about examples from the South and East. An omission here is the nature of the power relationship between the artist and art forms. I was left wondering how local art forms in areas of social change might become incorporated, which may have been the case but is not explicitly mentioned in most of the writing. It is of course possible to see art, drama and music as transcendent but their cultural shaping of the dialogue and an examination of this might enable practitioners to evaluate how power relations between cultures and those of individuals offer opportunities for exploration. Given the central thesis, that the arts are a tool to bring about change, this is an important omission, as this raises the question of change for whom and what the parameters of this might be, otherwise this has possibilities of lapsing into colonisation.

In terms of the audience of this journal, the use of the arts is nothing new to youth and community workers and educators. Its transformative powers are self-evident but often needs explaining and validating for others. This book on the expressive arts and therapeutic approaches describes some examples of work in highly charged situations but needs greater reflexivity about the process of communal creation of work if it is to add significant weight to the debate.

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Paul Thomas
Youth, Multiculturalism and Community Cohesion
Palgrave Macmillan 2011
ISBN: 9780230251953
£58.00 (hbk)
pp.232

Mohamed Moustakim

THIS BOOK MAKES an important and much needed contribution to the debates about the malaise with multiculturalism in Britain, which gained momentum in the aftermath of the riots in Northern English cities and towns in 2001, namely Oldham, Burnley and Bradford. Paul Thomas

fills a conspicuous gap in the literature on multiculturalism by bringing into sharp focus recent Community Cohesion policies to generate incisive analyses of their impact on conceptions of cultural diversity and 'race relations' among young people and their communities. Of particular significance are the narrative accounts captured through dialogue with young people of different ethnic backgrounds in youth work settings, to elicit their perceptions and definitions of their own identities as well as those of others.

Drawing on local and national responses to the 2001 riots, captured in a raft of reports (Cantle, 2001; Home Office, 2001; Ritchie, 2001; Ouseley, 2001), the book starts with a critical depiction of the context within which the discourse of community cohesion began to dominate policy debates about the management of cultural diversity and 'race relations'. The main arguments for adopting Community Cohesion policies presented in these reports pointed to ethnic segregation as a clear pathway to 'parallel lives', for which past policies were blamed, along with the predominantly Muslim self-segregating communities. Paul Thomas problematises the contention that Britain is 'sleepwalking to segregation' (Phillips, 2005), on account that the reports which assert that ethnic segregation is not only significant but is getting worse (Cantle, 2001; Ritchie, 2001; Ouseley, 2001) relied exclusively on qualitative data captured through individuals' perceptions and feelings. It is argued that their findings are at odds with data obtained through the use of different statistical measures of segregation (Burgess et al., 2005).

Nevertheless, subsequent Community Cohesion policies (LGA, 2002; Home Office, 2003), particularly those introduced after the 7th July 2005 terror attacks in London, (Home Office, 2005; DCLG, 2007) called for unity under a set of core British values, while also emphasising the agentic individual and community responsibility for becoming ethnically segregated and culturally encapsulated. Allied to these discourses is the assertion that there are serious threats posed to both national security and the integrity of the British way of life as a result of the exposure of Muslim young men to extremist narratives in their communities.

Paul Thomas compares approaches to multiculturalism and 'race relations' in the Netherlands, France and in Britain and critically examines their similarities and differences. Some similarities were noted between the earlier British and Dutch integrationist models for managing immigration from former and non-former colonies alike. However, due to the political successes of overtly anti-Muslim politicians in the Netherlands and the post 2001 events in Britain described above, these countries' policies on multiculturalism and 'race relations' have taken different but equally uneasy directions. France, on the other hand, has refused to acknowledge that there are racial dimensions to social relations. As Paul Thomas rightly pointed out, de-racialising the discourse about immigration did not prevent the riots of 2005 in major French cities and towns and revealed hidden discontent with the stark social divisions along racial lines that continue to be skewed against the black, Arab and Asian French young people.

In problematising the assumptions upon which British Community Cohesion policies are predicated, Paul Thomas draws on potent critiques from a wide range of sources to argue against the contention that multiculturalism is the cause of ethnic segregation and the associated, potentially dangerous, alienation of segments of the British community. He contends that the Community Cohesion policies draw on assimilative discourse types to represent communities brought together through the 'bonding' rather than the 'bridging' of social capital (Putnam, 2000). While recognising that the criticisms levelled at post-1981 multiculturalism policies are partially justified, in so far as their exclusive focus on the individual cultural needs of separate ethnic groups, Paul Thomas contends that the anti-racist aspect of multiculturalism has much to contribute to a conception of community cohesion as a 'bridging' of links and networks between communities and providing opportunities for shared experiences. This would balance the need for developing a sense of shared values and greater integration between communities, with the right of individuals and groups to express their identities.

I would highly recommend *Youth, Multiculturalism and Community Cohesion* to anyone interested in developing a critical understanding of this contested territory, primarily in Britain, although contextualised policy comparisons are also drawn between the Netherlands, France and Britain. This is a highly accessible book that undergraduate and postgraduate Education Studies and Youth and Community Work students will find valuable for developing critical awareness of ideologies and policies that underpin educational and youth work practice in schools, youth organisations and within communities.

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Jane Westergaard
Effective Group Work with Young People
Open University Press, 2009
ISBN: 970 0 335 23418 9
£21.99 (pbk)
pp.175

Wayne Richards

THIS BOOK PROVIDES a clear, easy to read, and step by step guide to facilitating Personal Learning and Development (PLD) groups with young people in secondary schools and in Further Education. The PLD group is presented as a structured, time bounded process which is claimed by Jane Westergaard to draw on the traditions of informal education, underpinned by person centred perspectives. With its particular emphasis on supporting the needs of individuals in a group setting, the PLD appears on the one hand to aim to give guidance and on the other hand to engage young people in a quasi therapeutic encounter which promotes personal learning, without the depth of emotional engagement that would be expected in a counselling or therapeutic group.

Unfortunately, the book is based on a very limited definition of group work, which makes its title misleading. The primary focus on the individual in the group detracts from a group work imagination which would be expected to acknowledge the group as a site of struggle where issues of inclusion/exclusion, power and control are being contested. Instead, leadership is firmly invested in the group facilitator which in many ways strips group participants of agency. A vision of group work as an emergent process with unfolding narratives of interpersonal relationship is missing. The low significance given to group work is evident in the discussion on group dynamics not appearing until chapter eight. This is a very weak chapter, being essentially an uncritical and unsophisticated introduction of Tuckman's theoretical model of group development which presents passage through the Tuckman's stages of Forming, Norming, Storming, Performing and Mourning as a linear and progressive journey. Whilst Tuckman's alliterative stages are easily memorised they are often poorly applied as they are in this book. The rest of this chapter identifies and labels a variety of group roles but largely without context or discussion of their significance.

The initial chapter examines the role of youth support workers within the formal education environment. I was initially taken aback to see the youth worker included in the ranks of the para professionals who

offer youth support services alongside teaching assistants, learning mentors, personal advisors, careers advisors, sexual health workers, and pupil referral unit workers. This representation of the lowly status of workers in youth support services is perhaps representative of the perceptions and biases within the setting but it comes over as being very patronising. Rather than exploring the distinctive contributions of this diverse set of workers and analysing the range of group work methodologies they embrace, Jane Westergaard seems to be attempting to homogenise them by exploring how they can all be co-opted into the delivery of PLD sessions. In doing so she makes fulsome use of case studies to illustrate the process. The case studies, however, lack acknowledgement of the complexities and interpersonal processes involved in the work resulting in simplistic presentation and analysis which in turn result in workers being reduced to a one dimensional caricature.

This book promotes a strong and direct case for planned interventions in the lives of young people; however this is done without an ethical frame which examines the nature of interventions. Chapters three to seven lay out and elaborate on the FAAST model of Intervention through which workers are able to develop and establish focus on the nature of the group task and aims, to design appropriate activities and to structure and apply relevant techniques. The model as presented could be usefully applied in the development of curriculum within informal education but it can lead to a prescriptive and colonising approach (Belton, 2009) to working with young people which needs to be guarded against. The claims of person centred underpinnings to the PLD seem somewhat aspirational since workers are encouraged to establish aims and objectives as they work towards identified outcomes from the onset. At the same time, responsive and spontaneous processes are discouraged. I would imagine that this is where group work skills would most come to the fore. The trajectory of PLD is clearly set towards the social adjustment of young people. There is no exploration of how power informs the contexts and definitions of young people's personal and social problems or indeed how it identifies them as problems. Consequently there is no recognition of the use of group work to empower young people or to enable them to engage in collective action in relation to the problems they face.

Overall the book gives a good overview of structured group learning which undoubtedly might be readily accommodated within a formal educational establishment. It is perhaps ambitious in its scope which often results in superficial and simplistic discussion about issues which needs to be explored in greater depth. It is, however, a very accessible book which can be used to raise pertinent issues about structure and agency in practice, the ethics of planned interventions and the positioning of youth work and youth support services within professional hierarchies.

References

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