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Understanding the English 'riots' of 2011:
'mindless criminality' or youth 'Mekin Histri' in austerity Britain?

Reluctant Criminologists:
Criminology, Ideology and the Violent Youth Gang

'First Step: Dress Cool ...'
Young people's representations of locality

Youth Work and State Education:
Should Youth Workers Apply to Set Up a Free School?

Why Youth Participation? Some Justifications and Critiques of
Youth Participation Using New Labour's Youth Policies as a Case
Study

Models of youth work: a framework for positive sceptical reflection

THINKING SPACE: Reflective Practice Meets Youth Work
Supervision

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Youth & Policy Journal was founded in 1982 to offer a critical space for the discussion of youth policy and youth work theory and practice.

The editorial group have subsequently expanded activities to include the organisation of related conferences, research and book publication. Regular activities include the bi-annual 'History of Community and Youth Work' and the 'Thinking Seriously' conferences.

The *Youth & Policy* editorial group works in partnership with a range of local and national voluntary and statutory organisations who have complementary purposes. These have included UK Youth, YMCA, Muslim Youth Council and Durham University.

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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Understanding the English ‘riots’ of 2011: ‘mindless criminality’ or youth ‘Mekin Histri’ in austerity Britain?

Charlie Cooper

Abstract:

The mainstream view permeating media and political discourses following the 2011 ‘riots’ in England is that the disturbances are evidence of a moral decline and mindless criminality, implying that the nation’s more settled traditions have been corroded. As a consequence, the policy response emerging in the aftermath of the troubles prioritises punitive welfare and criminal justice sanctions aimed at restoring ‘decent’ traditional values and ways of behaving. This article argues that these mainstream responses are not only based on a flawed understanding of England’s past traditions but that they also fail to acknowledge the deteriorating socio-cultural context of life in post-industrial, austerity Britain, particularly as it affects young people marginalised by ‘race’ and class. Thus the policies currently pursued are unlikely to address the deep-rooted underlying structural causes of the widespread discontent and outrage expressed, however inchoately, during the disorder.

Key words: Neoliberalism, austerity, young people, ‘race’, class.

THE KEY RESPONSE from the political elite to four nights of disturbances in various parts of England in August 2011 was that the events were apolitical and represented ‘mindless criminality’ (‘pure and simple’) – a view consistent with neoliberal realist explanations of the urban unrest of the last three decades (Hasan, 2000). It is a reaction that fails to engage meaningfully with the causes of the disorder – in particular, the reasons for the anger that fuelled the violence that ensued. Moreover, the policy responses introduced by the Conservative-led coalition government will consequently fail to solve the ‘long-standing areas of social difficulty that are deeply ingrained in the social landscape’ (Pearson and Sinclair, 2011: 4). The aim of this paper is to offer an alternative reading of the events of August 2011, one that particularly focuses on the sense of disenfranchisement felt by many of those demonstrating their anger and correspondingly, on the political nature of the events.

The key incident that sparked the unrest is indisputable – false accounting by the police, and acceptance of this by the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), of the fatal shooting of Mark Duggan on 4th August 2011 by a police officer during an attempt to arrest him near Tottenham Hale station, north London. The IPCC investigating the killing admitted misleading

the media – both the *Evening Standard* and *Daily Mirror* cited an IPCC spokesperson stating that a police officer was shot first, then Duggan (Lewis and Laville 2011). This was untrue. On 6th August, at a meeting called by police, local community leaders warned that there could be serious disturbances if local concerns regarding Duggan's death were not addressed. That evening, a peaceful protest march set off from Broadwater Farm to Tottenham police station where, on arrival, the marchers requested to speak with a senior officer.

When something bad occurs affecting the fragile relationship between the police and the black community in Tottenham – a controversial arrest, a death in custody – people march to the police station (Muir, 2011: 8).

David Gilbertson, chief superintendent in Tottenham in the 1990s, describes the traditional response to such a campaign:

We often had marches to the police station. ... You get the most senior person you can out on the street to speak to the organisers. You say 'come into my office and talk'. That always defuses the situation (Gilbertson, cited in Muir, 2011: 8).

On this occasion, for whatever reason, the police failed to find a senior officer to meet with the protestors. In addition to the initial misrepresentation of Duggan's killing, a long history of 'stop-and-search' against young black men in the area, the memory of those who had died as a consequence of police operations in 1985 (Cynthia Jarrett), 1993 (Joy Gardner) and 1999 (Roger Sylvester), and anxieties caused by public spending cutbacks and rising unemployment (Muir 2011) were enough to ignite the disturbances.

The alleged failure by the IPCC to provide Duggan's family and the local community with reliable information in the aftermath of his death was part of the reason the relatives protested outside the police station The peaceful demonstration later descended into rioting and looting that, within days, had inspired 'copycat' disorder across England (Lewis and Laville, 2011: 5).

This article begins with an analysis of mainstream readings of the disturbances in media and political discourse, interpretations which reveal a new fascination with the cultural deficit of the 'underclass' (a 'mob' of 'yobs' and alien cultures; immoral, disrespectful, criminal, undisciplined, materialistic and hedonistic), and the inefficiencies of public sector organisations, particularly the police and schools. It argues that these explanations offer limited understanding, rooted as they are in positivist/realist insights that de-contextualise the nature of the problem whilst serving to legitimise reactionary societal responses (moral panics) and policy solutions (punitive welfare and criminal justice sanctions). What is absent from these overly-deterministic readings is attention

to the changing socio-cultural context in post-industrial England, particularly as it affects young people marginalised by 'race' and class. In order to address this lacuna, an alternative perspective of the disturbances is offered, illuminated by the wider socio-cultural context shaping these events. The focus chosen explores the consequences of three decades of neoliberal restructuring and the effects this has had on the social, economic and political context shaping the life chances and experiences of marginalised young people. Analysing the troubles in this way allows us to glimpse the deeper structural causes of the widespread discontent and outrage expressed and thereby to generate more meaningful strategies to address these.

The August 2011 disorder – mainstream readings in media and political discourse

The August 2011 disorder in England has led to a renewed fascination in mainstream media and political discourse with the cultural 'deficit' of disadvantaged 'communities', predominantly related to age, 'race' and the 'underclass'. On August 9th, following three-days of disturbances, the British press ran with the headlines: 'Rule of the mob' (*Daily Telegraph*), 'Anarchy' (*Sun*), 'Flaming Morons' (*Daily Express*), 'The Anarchy Spreads' (*Daily Mail*), 'Anarchy in the UK' (*Daily Star*), 'Mob Rule' (*Independent*) and 'Yob Rule' (*Daily Mirror*). In terms of television news coverage, the troubles turned into an immediate media event with 24-hour rolling coverage of burning buildings and vehicles, hooded youth and a carnival of hedonistic looting. Such reportage contributes little understanding of the nature of the disorder or how to address it. As Tony Jefferson argues, when such representations are rolled out uncritically via 24-hour news bulletins, tabloid newspapers and social media sites, the opportunity arises for what Stan Cohen (2004) identified as 'deviancy amplification' (encouragement to join it), and the production of 'folk devils' (defined as a threat to societal values) and 'moral panics' (public clamour for more punitive criminal justice sanctions) (CURB, 2011).

Commentators adopting an extreme right perspective have attempted to racialise the disturbances. On BBC's *Newsnight*, David Starkey qualified Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech in arguing that 'chavs ... have become black. The whites have become black. A particular sort of violent, destructive, nihilistic gangster culture has become the fashion' (O'Carroll, 2011: 7). The influence of 'black' consumerist icons also came under the media spotlight: the 'gangster-chic' fashions of Adidas Originals, K-Swiss and Fred Perry were criticised by Mark Borkowski, a so-called 'branding expert', for 'aligning themselves with gang and criminal culture for decades' (Neate et al, 2011: 11); meanwhile, in the *Daily Mirror*, Paul Routledge condemned rap music for its 'pernicious culture of hatred', glorification of 'violence and loathing of authority (especially the police but including parents)' and exaltation of 'trashy materialism and ... drugs' (cited in Hancox, 2011: 12). Racialising the disturbances in these ways potentially threatens community cohesion by pathologising elements of 'black' culture.

The Conservative-led coalition government's discourse on the troubles emphasised immorality and criminality. Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, characterised the 'rioters' as 'a vicious, lawless and immoral minority' (cited in Slovo, 2011: 45). Prime Minister David Cameron argued that the troubles were a symptom of a 'slow-motion moral collapse' in Britain's 'broken society' (cited in Travis, 2011a: 5). Cameron's suggestion is that the British traditionally held clear moral boundaries, a proposition Geoffrey Pearson's (1983) study of respectable fears clearly repudiates.¹ In Cameron's mind, society has become broken in relation to:

... schools, welfare, families, parenting, addiction, communities; on the cultural, legal, bureaucratic problems in our society too; from the twisting and misrepresenting of human rights that has undermined personal responsibility, to the obsession with health and safety that has eroded people's willingness to act according to common sense

(David Cameron, cited in Stratton, 2011: 4).

Restoring personal responsibility and, thereby, moral boundaries would require the erosion of human rights – particularly in relation to due process and social welfare. In the aftermath of the troubles, Cameron announced a two-pronged approach he termed 'social fightback'/'security fightback'. The former would aim to inculcate in parents the idea of rights with responsibility: 'keep your benefits, your children and your home and in return be a responsible mother, father and neighbour' (cited in Ramesh and Wainwright, 2011: 4).² The latter would embrace plans to widen police powers, including authority to impose immediate curfews and encouragement for greater use of baton rounds, rubber bullets and water cannons (Travis, 2011a).

Thus far, liberal commentators in the media, such as the Guardian/London School of Economics Reading the Riots project, have emphasised discriminatory policing as a key cause of the disturbances (*Guardian/LSE*, 2011). The Reading the Riots methodology was modelled on a survey conducted in the aftermath of rioting in Detroit in 1967 – *The People Beyond 12th Street: A Survey of Attitudes of Detroit Negroes After the Riot of 1967* – which also concluded that a key cause of the riots was grievances about police brutality (Younge, 2011). Similarly, Waddington and King's comparative study of riots in France and Britain since the 1980s suggests that long periods of deteriorating relations between police and young people was a major contributory factor in both countries (Waddington and King, 2009). This was also revealed in the first citizens' inquiry into the riots held in Tottenham where a key source of the troubles was identified as 'toxic relations with local police' (Lewis, 2012a: 1). This focus on the conflictual relationship between a discriminatory racist police system and (largely black) marginalised communities discounts wider structural factors and substantive questions, paving the way for managerialist adjustments to policing practices aimed at assuaging 'public concerns'.

Whilst the coalition government refused to establish an official inquiry into the disturbances, in

September 2011, Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg launched the Riots Communities and Victims Panel (RCVP). Its concern focused on the views of communities and victims about the causes of the troubles and what can be done to prevent them from reoccurring. Its interim report highlighted 'much distress and anger in communities about the police response. It is crucial that the police rebuild trust' (RCVP, 2011: 3). Building trust here is explained as 'ensuring plans are in place to deal with the risk of future disturbances, pursuing people who committed the crimes during the riots and supporting communities as they rebuild. We are aware that as a consequence of these riots, the police have begun a review of their tactics on how to handle future riots' (RCVP, 2011: 3). By early 2012, the coalition government was planning policing reforms aimed at addressing grievances in relation to stop-and-search and more particularly, the public's clamour for more 'effective' policing of future unrest (Lewis, 2012a). The report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, commissioned by Home Secretary Theresa May, recommended a shift in police tactics in preparation for future riots – including the use of plastic bullets and water canons (Travis, 2011b). In the foreword to the RCVP's final report (2012), Darra Singh, the chair of the panel, reiterates its two main concerns: what can be done to build the social and economic resilience of people in areas affected by the riots, and how better to organise public services and hold them to account. Schools in particular were singled out as needing to do more to build character (RCVP, 2012). Latterly, news coverage increasingly focused on the question of police tactics, and whether or not the police had sufficient resources to deal with the disorder (Sandvoss, 2011). These explanations of the 'problem' remain culturally-deficient communities and failing public services.

Other post-riot reports have emphasised a materialistic/hedonistic side to the disturbances. The Children's Society (2011) report claimed that the main motive behind young people participating in the riots was 'to get goods and possessions they could not afford to buy' (Children's Society, 2011: 2). This view is shared by the British Youth Council's (2011) online survey which emphasised the chance to get free stuff in addition to poor parenting, lack of respect for right and wrong, and lack of jobs and opportunities (British Youth Council, 2011). The exaltation of materialism was central to David Lammy's explanation of the troubles. In 'Out of the Ashes: Britain After the Riots', Lammy, MP for Tottenham, described the events as 'an explosion of hedonism and nihilism' (cited in Matthews, 2011: 7) – added to which, 'a continual lack of education, ineffective parental guidance, poor role models, ill-discipline, unemployment and a host of social and developmental ills created the ideal conditions for a riot' (Matthews, 2011: 7). The focus again is cultural deficit, moral collapse and the need for people to become more resilient.

In general, these mainstream readings are largely embedded in positivist/realist understandings highlighting the threat of flawed 'alien cultures', the immorality and criminality of the 'underclass', dysfunctional places and inefficient public sector bodies. They are readings that find support from within academia – see, for example, Simon Winlow on 'grab-what-you-can' hedonism; Nicholas Preece on 'localities of perpetual riot' which leak into 'the surrounding civilisation';

Steven Hirschler on threats to society from 'an intruding foreign element'; Sheldon Thomas on 'gang mentalities' whose angst is drawn from moral breakdown; David Hill on the impact of engaging online on our moral inhibitions; and Simon Harding on the 'mindful' violence generated by existing urban street gangs (CURB, 2011: 2-5). The policy responses legitimated by these explanations of the disorder include punitive welfare and criminal justice sanctions, managerial adjustments to the workings of public sector bodies and calls for improvements in situational crime control. What is missing is any acknowledgement of the changing socio-cultural context for living in post-industrial England, particularly for marginalised young people.

In the next section, we explore possibilities for developing a more considered understanding of the disturbances, one that is sensitive to the wider socio-cultural context within which the events occurred. As Loïc Wacquant argues, explaining such events in terms of mere criminality or cultural deficit is unhelpful. Instead, there is need for:

... more complex and differentiated pictures of the 'wretched of the city' if we wish accurately to capture their social predicament and elucidate their collective fate in different national contexts (Wacquant, 2008: 2).

The focus offered here is upon three decades of neoliberal social restructuring and the effects of the hollowing out of the welfare state and widening social inequality on well-being in British society. In analysing the troubles in this way, we offer a lens through which to glimpse the deeper structural causes of the disorder and, as a corollary, more meaningful insights into potential solutions. Drawing largely upon the work of Henry Giroux, the spotlight is the contemporary plight of young people in England, particularly those pushed to the margins of society by virtue of their 'race' and class, and who are increasingly denied 'opportunities for self-definition and political interaction, ... [and] representational status as active citizens' (Giroux, 2012: xiv). This focus reveals the way large numbers of young people are routinely deprived of the social protections necessary for living healthy lives in the present and for envisioning a sustainable existence in the future. As Stuart Hall has argued, not only acknowledging young people's social and economic marginalisation, but also their political powerlessness, is central to understanding the nature of the events of August 2011:

The riots bothered me a great deal ... [N]othing really has changed. Some kids at the bottom of the ladder are deeply alienated, they've taken the message of Thatcherism and Blairism and the coalition: what you have to do is hustle. Because nobody's going to help you. And they've got no organised political voice, no organised black voice and no sympathetic voice on the left (Cited in Williams, 2012: 4).

Hall's position is shared by Sandvoss who, whilst acknowledging the protestor's lack of clear political demands, argues:

What has largely been missed in the broadcast and print media coverage of the riots is that the disenfranchisement of those demonstrating their anger from wider political processes and a sense of public sphere and democratic space, does not mean that such anger lacks causes that are both ideological and political ranging from wider questions of social inequality, injustice and poverty to the narrowly political such as the austerity drive and dramatic reductions in public spending. ... When anger can no longer find a constructive trajectory, it translates into the indiscriminate, random and futile postmodern violence that becomes an aim in and for itself – and to which there hence can be no remedy, no meaningful political answer: because it cannot even formulate the challenge it poses (Sandvoss, 2011: 1).

Martin Luther King once defined rioting as the language of the unheard – an option for those who feel a deep sense of unease but lack political voice. This was a view expressed by a youth worker shortly after the 2011 disturbances in Tottenham:

[Young] people don't have a voice and it has been like that for such a long time. I have spoken to some and they didn't regret it. To them they made a point in the only way they could (Sabrina, cited in Muir, 2011: 9).

The lack of a coherent programme of demands or collective voice through which to express this is crucial to an understanding of why so many young people participated. As Slavoj Žižek observes:

The fact that the rioters have no programme is ... itself a fact to be interpreted: it tells us a great deal about our ideological-political predicament and about the kind of society we inhabit, a society which celebrates choice but in which the only available alternative to enforced democratic consensus is a blind acting out. Opposition to the system can no longer articulate itself in the form of a realistic alternative, or even as a utopian project, but can only take the shape of a meaningless outburst (Žižek, 2011: 2).

Žižek points to a fatal weakness of the disturbances – ‘they express an authentic rage which is not able to transform itself into a positive programme of sociopolitical change’ (Žižek, 2011: 5) – yet finds significance in this for developing understanding. It points to the need to analyse and evaluate the wider socio-cultural context for growing up in England, especially that for marginalised young people.

The wider socio-cultural context of the August 2011 disorder

The following analysis locates the events of August 2011 within their broader socio-cultural context – a context that mainstream representations thus far have failed to acknowledge. Three

decades of neoliberal social restructuring in Britain has hollowed out the social protections, educational opportunities, job prospects, and spaces for political engagement that previous generations could access. The ideological shift from Keynesian welfarism to neoliberalism at the heart of mainstream politics started in the late 1970s, has generated a socio-cultural context consumed by commercialism, individualism and the imperatives of an unfettered free-market economy. In parallel, social solidarities and support for collective solutions to societal problems have evaporated, and any notion that the social state should support young people to realise their hopes and ambitions is now derided. The institutional support networks available to young people for much of the post-war period – comprehensive health care, affordable council housing, opportunities to enter higher education or paid employment, social security, and well-resourced youth centres – have been eroded, leading to increasingly fractured youth transitions (Yates et al, 2010). As a corollary, widening social inequality – a fundamental cause of community tensions and violence in developed societies (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009) – and unacceptable levels of child poverty – 30% of children in the UK, around 4 million, live in poverty in what is one of the world's most developed economies (Topping, 2012) – have been sustained. The well-being of young people in particular has declined in Britain over the past two decades (Cooper, 2010). Contemporary social problems that appear visible to the public – such as living on the street or the need to survive by begging – are increasingly responded to with punitive criminal justice sanctions rather than solidaristic welfare solutions. Even traditional youth leisure activities, such as hanging around public spaces with friends, now risk criminalisation. In public places, black young people in particular are likely to be treated with suspicion and contempt, and subjected to disproportionate policing. There has been little serious attempt to redress racism in the police service despite the Macpherson inquiry (Kwesi Johnson, 2012). As recently as March 2012, it was reported that the Crown Prosecution Service decided that no charges should be brought against police officers from Newham who had subjected a young black man, arrested during the August 2011 unrest, to a torrent of racist abuse including “‘The problem with you is you will always be a nigger” ... [and being strangled by a police officer] because he was “a cunt”” (Lewis, 2012b: 1). Estelle du Boulay, director of the Newham Monitoring Project, stated that the treatment of ‘this young man at the hands of police officers – both the physical brutality ... and the racial abuse ... – are by no means unusual; it compares to other reports we have received’ (cited in Lewis, 2012b: 2).

Wacquant's comparative study of post-industrialisation in Europe and the US – contrasting the ‘slow *decomposition* of the working-class territories’ (Wacquant, 2008: 9 – emphasis in original) of the banlieue in France with the ‘*implosion* of the black ghetto’ (Wacquant, 2008: 259 – emphasis in original) in the US – illustrates the socio-cultural effects of advanced marginalisation under neoliberal capitalism. Whilst the processes of marginality by ‘race’ and class are different, the outcome is the same: persistent poverty, social isolation and alienation (Wacquant, 2008). Moreover, in both Europe and the US, Wacquant identifies the emergence of a ‘criminology of intolerance’ (Young, 1999, cited in Wacquant, 2008: 262) with governments increasingly adopting punitive criminal justice sanctions to deal with social problems – a process he describes as the criminalisation of misery

... via the punitive containment of the poor in the increasingly isolated and stigmatized neighbourhoods in which they are confined, on the one hand, and in jails and prisons which operate as their spillway, on the other (Wacquant, 2008: 277 – emphasis in original).

The policing and incarceration of the poor in these ways enable the state elite to legitimate itself by 'responding to the demands of the "people" while at the same time exculpating its own historic responsibility in the making of the urban outcasts of the new century' (Wacquant, 2008: 12). The failure of governments

... converted to neoliberalism to check the social and spatial accumulation of economic hardship, social dissolution and cultural dishonour in the deteriorating working-class and/or ethnoracial enclaves of the dualizing metropolis promises to engender abiding civil alienation and chronic unrest which pose a daunting challenge to the institution of citizenship (Wacquant, 2008: 7).

Social cohesion around citizenship is threatened both by the exacerbation of social exclusion and the criminalisation of the social problems resulting from this. In Britain, this is evidenced by the increasing threats to citizenship rights announced by Cameron following the August 2011 troubles (alluded to earlier). These have resulted, for instance, in Conservative-controlled Wandsworth council, south London, commencing eviction procedures against a woman whose son appeared in court charged with rioting in Clapham Junction. Even though the woman had not been involved in the riots and her son had not been convicted, Cameron backed the action: 'I think for too long we have taken too soft an attitude to people who loot and pillage their own community. If you do that you should lose your right to housing at a subsidised rate' (Cameron, cited in Topping and Wintour, 2011:1). Such policy sanctions – including cutting the benefits of 'rioters' – were described by Imran Hussain, head of policy at the Child Poverty Action Group, as 'a recipe for exclusion and social division' (cited in Jones and Bowcott, 2011: 5). At the same time, those convicted of 'rioting' have been subject to disproportionate sentencing. Magistrates were advised by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to disregard normal sentencing guidelines when dealing with those convicted – resulting in cases that would normally be dealt with in the magistrates courts 'being referred to the crown court for more severe punishment' (Bowcott and Bates, 2011: 7). In the House of Commons, Cameron called for those convicted of violent disorder to be imprisoned. Wilson Unses Gracia was jailed for six months for receiving two tennis racquets worth £340 looted from a sports shop in south London. The court was informed that 'Gracia, who pleaded guilty, had not participated in looting, did not agree with the rioting and had accepted the racquets from a man ... as payment of a £20 debt' (Bowcott and Bates, 2011: 7). A student who took £3.50 worth of bottled water from a supermarket was jailed for six months (Travis and Stratton, 2011). Perry Sutcliffe-Keenan and Jordan Blackshaw – two men who had used Facebook to advocate rioting in their home towns, Warrington and Northwich respectively – were both sentenced to four years'

imprisonment. Nobody had turned up at the appointed meeting points and no rioting had broken out as a result of these postings. Moreover, when Sutcliffe-Keenan woke up the following morning with a hangover, he removed the site he had created and replaced it with an apology (Bowcott et al, 2011).

In Britain, democracy itself is under siege, and the political establishment increasingly manipulated by powerful media and financial corporations. Under neoliberalism, all forms of public life, including education, are subjected to the dictates of the market whilst democracy itself loses 'any vestige of ethical, political, and social considerations' (Giroux, 2011: 77). There is little encouragement under neoliberalism for young people to develop politically – as active, socially responsible, democratic citizens – or for a 'public discourse that envisions a future in which human suffering is diminished while the general welfare of society is increased' (Giroux, 2012: xiv). Under neoliberalism, non-commodified societal values and public spaces 'that keep alive issues of justice, ethics, public opportunities, civic courage, and critical citizenship' (Giroux, 2012: xvii) are being closed off. Increasingly, the ability of young people to actively engage in political protest is restrained. The policing of student protests in late 2010 saw the deployment of 'kettling' where thousands were held for hours without access to food, water or toilets (Lewis, 2012c). Kettling 'has become increasingly common since it was used to contain anti-capitalist demonstrators in 2001' (Lewis, 2012c: 20). It is a clear breach of the rights of peaceful protestors amounting to a form of mass detention (if not unlawful imprisonment) ordinarily reserved for keeping rival football supporters apart (a similarly questionable action). Yet it is a strategy that has 'been used – to varying degrees – at almost every large-scale demonstration in the past three years [2009-2012]' (Lewis, 2012c: 20). Perhaps one of the most callous examples during this period was the containment of young 'schoolchildren late into the night in freezing conditions' (Lewis, 2012c: 20) at the 2010 student demonstration. Such oppressive policing of political protest has been sanctioned by the European Court of Human Rights, depriving us of the right to voice dissent (El-Enany, 2012).

Higher education institutions, where one might expect unfettered criticality to flourish, are also deploying authoritarian tactics to silence dissent. For example, the University of Cambridge suspended a PhD student, Owen Holland, for seven terms for his role in a protest against David Willetts, higher education minister. During a speech by the minister, Holland read out a poem that included the lines: 'You are a man who believes in the market and in the power of competition to drive up quality. But look to the world around you: your gods have failed' (cited in Vasagar, 2012:10). Such sanctions go against Giroux's notion of the need for education systems to provide 'students with a public space where they can learn, debate, and engage critical traditions in order to imagine otherwise and develop discourses that are crucial for defending vital social institutions as a public good' (Giroux, 2011: 81). The education system under neoliberalism is failing young people by leaving them uneducated, jobless and without hope – a factor Boris Johnson, Conservative London mayor, believed was responsible for the "'nihilism" and exclusion revealed by the riots' (Wintour

and Mulholland, 2012: 1). In a survey of 512 teachers by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), more than a third admitted they were under pressure to improve their student grades by cheating – for instance, by rewriting student work to manipulate results. A secondary school teacher reported that maintaining the school's status in league tables 'took precedence over developing the abilities of pupils' (cited in Shepherd, 2012a: 11). Such forms of instrumental rationality, working to principles of standardisation and measurable utility, merely 'serve the interests of a closed and authoritarian social order' (Giroux, 2012: 57). In such a context, possibilities for offering the kind of critical pedagogy needed for generating an open democratic society remain remote. There is a clear need here to broaden the nature of the debate from neoliberalism's material injustices to its harmful effects on democratic public spheres – that is, upon those:

... institutional and cultural spaces in which people are presented with the time and opportunity to understand and influence the larger educational forces and politics that shape their lives. Such public spheres are crucial features of a civil society that supports the bonds of sociality and reciprocity in addition to individual self-determination. Educational and other public spheres are spaces of politics, power, and authority that require constant questioning in order to enable people to imagine changing the world around them so as to expand and deepen its democratic possibilities (Giroux, 2012: 55).

This comes close to Badiou's argument in his discussion with Žižek on the purpose of philosophy for contemporary times:

Today's great question is not the critique of capitalism, on which more or less the whole world is in agreement with regard to the appalling material injustices The real question is that of an affirmative proposition regarding democracy, as something other than the consensus on the parliamentary form of politics.... [T]he truly risky philosophical imperative, the one that really poses problems for thought, is the critique of the democratic form as we know it (Badiou, cited in Badiou and Žižek, 2009: 89-90).

The banality of western democracy is captured in Žižek's account of Bush's 2000 election 'victory'. Despite the controversy of the manipulated return in Florida, there was little or no protest from Democrats because

... there were rules that had to be upheld no matter what. And therefore democracy means today in the first place, even in the case of vulgar injustice, 'injustice rather than disorder', as Goethe is supposed to have said (Žižek, cited in Badiou and Žižek, 2009: 94).

A similarly banal account is that of the recent high court ruling in England on a petition made by two teenagers that the Coalition government's trebling of tuition fees breached their human rights

and equality legislation. While the judges accepted that some students would be discouraged from applying to university, and that the government's analysis of equality issues failed to comply with public sector equality duties, Lord Justice Elias stated that:

... he did not consider it would be a 'proportionate' response to quash the decision to raise fees to up to £9,000 a year and argued such a move would trigger 'administrative chaos'. However, he said Vince Cable, the business secretary, 'failed fully to carry out his public sector equality duties. ... [T]he secretary of state did not give the rigorous attention required to the package of measures overall, and to that extent the breach is not simply technical ...' (Shepherd, 2012b: 6).

Despite this breach, Lord Justice Elias added:

[A]ll the parties affected by these decisions – government, universities and students – have been making plans on the assumption that the fees would be charged. It would cause administrative chaos, and would inevitably have significant economic implications, if the regulations were now to be quashed (Cited in Shepherd, 2012b: 6).

Social injustice is judged preferable to administrative chaos.

Increasingly under neoliberalism, notions of citizenship, welfare rights, social justice and democracy have been undermined, closing off opportunities for the many, particularly the many young people disadvantaged by virtue of 'race' and class, to hold any responsible political influence in the public sphere. It is a socio-cultural context that increasingly serves the interests and imperatives of an elite social class whilst maintaining the marginalisation and disempowerment of the many. It is this socio-cultural context that lies at the heart of the events of August 2011. In the final section, we explore possibilities for generating a different context for life in England, one better able to counteract the disabling effects revealed by the riots of three decades of neoliberal restructuring.

Countering the nihilism and social exclusion revealed by the riots

The contemporary plight of many young people in England is one of disenchantment due to an absence of the economic, social, political and educational conditions that make the present liveable and the future sustainable. In such a socio-cultural context, 'a riot was just waiting to happen' (Kwesi Johnson, 2012: 34). Despite strong empirical evidence that 'riots' are motivated in the context of profound social grievances, Theresa May rejected such assertions, arguing instead that these were 'excuses'. Referring to the Guardian/LSE (2011) study, May argued:

What the LSE/Guardian report tells me more than anything is that the rioters still have not

accepted responsibility for their actions. ... The riots weren't about protests, unemployment, cuts The riots were not about the future, about tomorrow. They were about today. They were about now. They were about instant gratification (Cited in Ball and Taylor, 2011: 12).

Despite such states of denial, this is not borne out by the discontent expressed by many who participated in the troubles. For example, Joe, who was involved in violence at Salford's central shopping precinct, sees himself as part of a generation losing all hope:

People are sayin' 'how are people going to get a job round here tell me now? ... They [employers and the older generation] look at us, yeah and they say 'fuck it, youths mate' that's all they think. People ... that have got a good qualification and shit like that, they're not getting jobs because of what they look like. It's not on. ... It's like I say, all the upper generation are judging the lower generation because they think they're fuckin' bastards. ... I'm at the job centre most days of the week ... I'm trying my hardest. I've got CVs and everything bro, I still try, I still do all this shit, I still don't get nothing. I don't get nowhere because of what we look like. You get what I'm sayin' At the end of the day, they think we're youths and the youth generation today goes mental. [But] we don't go mental, we don't want no trouble. We just want a job. I'm happy to do hard work, decent work (Cited in Malik, 2011: 6).

A recent survey of 1,500 16-24 year olds, conducted under Professor Tony Chapman at the University of Teesside, reflected Joe's concern about age discrimination. 57% of respondents believed that employers were discriminating against them because of their age and that around 25% were depressed about their future. In contrast to the hedonistic consumerist lifestyles some commentators assume young people aspire to today (see, for example, Hall et al, 2008), Chapman argues:

All the academic research seems to demonstrate that [young people] want a secure living environment, they want to have a good relationship, and if they want to have children, they want the best possible opportunities for their kids and they want secure jobs (Cited in Malik, 2011: 6).

There is a growing realisation among English youth in particular that such social stability is unlikely to be realised – particularly since the hiking of student fees, the abolition of the education maintenance allowance and rising youth unemployment (Malik, 2011). Trisha, a 27-year old child psychology graduate from Middlesex University who looted a supermarket in Hackney, argues that:

Not even people that's got an education can get a job, much less people that ain't got

education. I went to university and I still ain't got a job. ... I'm still paying my student loan. That's why I looted all I could. ... Cameron [is] doing nothing but talking shit in parliament. They do not know what it is like for us young British people. They don't live in our shoes. They have no idea what it's like. Telling us we're milking benefits off the system. What kind of bullshit is that [for] someone who is on 50 grand per annum?²³ ... I just want a decent job to pay my rent and not have to worry about claiming benefits. I don't want to be on fucking benefits (Cited in Malik, 2011: 6).

Hesketh Benoit, a youth worker, also highlighted the discontent felt by many who participated in the troubles:

Youngsters are being stopped and searched; 75% cuts in youth provision; youth not listened to. EMA has been cut. Youths feel they get qualified and there are no jobs. This was the last straw. After the riots they feel they have been listened to. Even if they go to prison, they feel they have been listened to. It took the riots (Cited in Muir, 2011: 9).

The prominence of young people amongst the participants in the riots reflects their profound unhappiness with the contemporary order of things. It is this unhappiness that should be the focus of analysis and evidence for systematic change rather than reform. As Giroux argues:

At this moment in history, it is more necessary than ever to register youth as a central theoretical, moral, and political concern. ... Youth provide a powerful referent for a discussion about the long-term consequences of neo-liberal policies, while also gesturing towards the need for putting into place those economic, political, and cultural institutions that make a democratic future possible. ... Clearly, the issue at stake here is not a one-off bailout or temporary fix, but real, structural reforms (2012: 7).

If we are serious about addressing the significant gaps in understanding about the events of August 2011, we need to examine the effects of the collapse of the post-war Keynesian-welfare 'settlement' from the 1970s on the socio-economic and political architecture in Britain (Hall, 2011), and on the wellbeing of young people, their families and communities. This requires some acceptance of the disturbances' deep political significance.

Countering the nihilism and social exclusion revealed by the riots will require the reconstruction of the democratic public spheres of civil society 'where democratic ideals, visions, and social relations can be nurtured and developed as part of a genuinely meaningful education and politics' (Giroux, 2012: 8). Central to such a project is the need to reclaim education as a public good 'committed to teaching young people about how to govern rather than merely be governed' (Giroux, 2012: 7). We need to imagine education systems that not only provide young people with the knowledge

and skills necessary for the world of work, but also those that enable engagement in the public sphere as critical, responsible and active citizens – conditions necessary for restoring social cohesion, wellbeing and democracy, values that have been eroded by three decades of neoliberal social restructuring. Such an image is consistent with Aristotle's vision of the good society and the importance of education for enabling citizens to attain human fulfilment. Aristotle believed that democracy and democratic education systems were crucial for enabling:

... people to join together and set up clubs, associations, networks, communities of friends, which can practise philosophy and reason their way to the common good. And the solutions they come up with will be better than in the tyranny where only a handful of minds are engaged. In a democratic society, everyone is thinking, everyone is engaged (Evans, 2012: 215).

In England, the roots of such imaginings appeared within the University and College Union's (UCU's) campaign for a manifesto in defence of public education. Summing up the launch of this campaign in March 2012, Tom Hickey, Chair of UCU Recruitment, Organisation and Campaigning Committee, spoke of the need to 'name' (in Freirean terms) the relationship between education and society, and the centrality of education not only for the economy, but also critical citizenship, democracy, social wellbeing and cohesion (Hickey, 2012). Because of its importance for healthy democratic societies, education, as with health care, needs to be universal, free at the point of delivery at whatever level. Privatised systems – as promoted in the US and England – work against these principles (Giroux, 2012).

Arguably in England, throughout much of the post-war period, a key source of support for young people's social wellbeing and inclusion has come from progressive developments in the field of youth work. Youth work is one of the few areas of welfare organising that carries a specifically democratic mission, involving 'a social responsibility to include young people, a concern to empower them and enable them to participate' (Unite, undated: 25). This is not far short of Aristotle's philosophical position on the importance of group work and the need for us to work together, collectively, in pursuit of the common good (Evans, 2012). However, despite the clear benefits youth work brings to the lives of many young people, youth work practice has come under assault from the Conservative-led coalition. As a consequence of the government's austerity cuts, many youth projects across England have closed down. According to research conducted by the Confederation of Heads of Young People's Services, some councils were cutting up to 100% of its youth service and 3,000 youth work jobs have been lost in 2011/12 (Williams, 2011). The detrimental effects of such actions have not been lost on young people themselves. 18-year old Chavez Campbell, from Wood Green, north London, had been interviewed by the Guardian a week before the 'riots' about the likely impact of cuts to youth services. Campbell predicted 'There'll be riots' (cited in Topping, 2011: 7).

I did see the riots coming and the government should have seen it coming, too. Jobs are hard to get and, when they do become available, youth don't get the jobs. There is nothing to do, they are closing youth clubs so the streets are just crazy. They are full of people who have no ambitions, or have ambitions but can't fulfil them (Campbell, cited in Topping, 2011: 7).

The recent closure of youth centres has been seen by some as a contributory factor behind the riots. London's inner-city estates have been particularly hit. In Haringey, youth project funding has been cut by 75% and eight of the borough's 13 youth clubs shut. As Symeon Brown, founder of community group Hype – Haringey Young People Empowered – states:

Normally the summer university would be running; most of those rioting on the streets would last year have been attending courses. ... Youth clubs provide safe spaces and it does become political for kids when they see them closed down. It's a message to them that no one cares, the politicians don't value them enough to provide a service. Young people see politicians cheating, rich people not paying taxes, police not serving and protecting but shooting or beating people in custody, so they think why consent to a system that is not legitimate? (Cited in McVeigh, 2011: 19)

Joe Ejiofor, a local ward councillor and chair of the community forum, adds:

People are angry. Even if you agree with the narrative that says cuts in youth services had nothing to do with causing the riots, surely it is essential that we put more money into youth services and job creation now (Cited in Muir, 2011: 9).

The approach to education practised by many youth workers has served the interests and wellbeing of many young people for many decades, a factor acknowledged at Ministerial level – 'youth work is a highly effective approach for supporting personal and social development' (DfE, 2011: 1). What makes youth work's approach so effective is its focus on the holistic development of young people, including working 'to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential' (DfE, 2011: 1). Central to the approach is encouragement for young people to shape the activities they engage in – ensuring that these activities start from 'where young people are' (DfE, 2011: 3). Not only should the coalition government reverse its assault on the youth service; it should commission research into the transferable benefits of its style of pedagogy for mainstream schooling.⁴

If we are to effectively address the social exclusion and political disempowerment of young people in England, particularly those marginalised by 'race' and class, there is urgent need to reconstruct a socio-cultural environment supportive of their immediate desires and future aspirations. Achieving this will require substantive structural change, and the reconstruction and protection of a public sphere supportive of social and material wellbeing, and dialectical democratic engagement.

Conclusion

Situating the disorder of August 2011 alongside other expressions of mass protest by young people in England helps to illuminate the ravaged socio-cultural context driving such events – a context that governments wedded to neoliberalism have been complicit in generating for three decades. One thing the ‘riots’ did – alongside the student protests emerging from 2010 and the activities of the Occupy movement – is send out a message to the British establishment that many young people are no longer prepared to simply accept the authority of a morally bankrupt, irresponsible and repressive regime that has failed them.⁵ In this respect, such disturbances represent, as Linton Kwesi Johnson’s poem written from the perspective of the 1981 Brixton ‘riots’ explained, young people ‘Mekin Histri’ (Kwesi Johnson, 2012: 34) through their expression of rage, however unconstructive and inchoate the trajectory of this expression appeared. Thus far, mainstream politics has similarly failed to engage constructively and meaningfully with the socio-cultural causes and political significance of this rage – responding, instead, in ways that merely legitimate the advancement of the ideological imperatives of neoliberal Conservatism through welfare retrenchment and tighter criminal justice sanctions. These measures may contain the symptoms of the disturbances short term, but the socio-cultural context driving the events of August 2011 remains with distinct possibilities that history will soon repeat itself.

Notes

- 1 Pearson’s thesis is that violent social disorder in Britain is never new and represents a long-standing social difficulty. He traces this back from the social concern about Teddy Boys in the 1950s to the alarm about ‘juvenile delinquency’ pre-World War Two, ‘hooligans’ in the late 1890s, ‘garrotters’ in the 1860s, ‘juvenile depravity’ in the 1840s and 1850s, and unruly apprentices in pre-industrial society (Pearson, 1983; Pearson and Sinclair, 2011).
- 2 The ideological thinking behind this ‘says welfare benefits are a privilege and not a right, and those who choose to break the law should be treated as outlaws and forced to live outside the law and, for that matter, society’ (Travis, 2011a: 5).
- 3 When Trisha hears that Cameron earns well in excess of that ‘she can’t believe it’ (Malik, 2011: 6).
- 4 One benefit of the youth work approach was revealed in the second Guardian/LSE report on *Reading the Riots*, released in July 2012, which included a suggestion for why rioting did not occur in all areas of social deprivation. Focusing on the case of Chapeltown, Leeds, where the killing in August 2011 of an African-Caribbean, Gavin Clarke, by an Asian, Afzal Arif, generated two nights of skirmishes, the report evidences how community and

youth work interventions – in contrast to a police response – were successful in dissuading potential rioters and containing the situation (Clifton, 2012). Similar preventative action was successfully taken by social entrepreneurs, working with community leaders, in other parts of the country including Bolton (Unltd, 2011). This presents an ominous warning to a government embarking on severe cuts to community and youth work funding.

- 5 In effect, in Weberian terms, the 'riots' arguably represent a legitimisation crisis for a Conservative-led coalition government already lacking a popular mandate to rule – only 36.1% of those who turned out to vote in the 2010 election (a turnout of 65.1%) voted Conservative (effectively, just over 2 out of 10 people eligible to vote supported the Conservatives).

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Reluctant Criminologists: Criminology, Ideology and the Violent Youth Gang

John Pitts

Abstract:

In the light of governmental concerns, and increased government investment, in strategies to deal with youth gangs, one might have expected criminology to have been at the forefront. In fact criminologists in both the mainstream and on the 'left' have not only been reluctant to engage with the 'gang problem' but have, in some cases, effectively denied the existence of gangs and the 'gang problem'. This article explores why this might be and how this denial is serving to deflect attention from the changing nature of the 'gang' and the threat this poses to young people and families in gang-affected neighbourhoods.

Key words: Youth Gangs, Left Idealism, Gang Proliferation, Criminology.

IN MAY 2012, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), using the following definition reported that they had identified 259 violent gangs and 4,800 'gang nominals' in 19 gang-affected boroughs in London. The national figure is thought to be several times this number. These gangs, the MPS suggests, range from organised criminal networks involved in Class A drug dealing and firearms supply, to street gangs perpetrating violence and robbery. These 259 gangs are thought to be responsible for 22% of the serious violence in the capital, 17% of the robberies, 50% of the shootings and 14% of rapes:

A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who (1) see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group, (2) engage in a range of criminal activities and violence, (3) identify with or lay claim over territory, (4) have some form of identifying structural feature, and (5) are in conflict with other, similar, gangs.

(Pitts, 2008; Centre for Social Justice, 2009)

Assuming that the Metropolitan Police are not 'making this up' (of which more later), one might have thought that the 'violent gang' would have attracted a great deal of academic attention. But not so. Indeed, a hallmark of the contemporary debate about youth gangs in both mainstream and left-liberal criminology in the UK is its apparent scepticism about the very existence of such an entity. Thus, discussion veers between speculative characterisations of gang-involved young people's families, largely futile squabbles over definitions (cf Youth Justice Board, 2007), the

debunking of ‘gang mythologies’ (cf Aldridge et al, 2011) or clichéd representations of the gang as a product of the fevered imaginings of a malevolent state (Hallsworth, 2011). However, this reticence is prompted not so much by doubts about whether gangs exist or not but by the belief that ‘gangs’, as an object of criminological analysis or political intervention, either cannot or should not exist.

Individualisation

Most mainstream criminologists remain insouciant about the gang question because they have already answered it. For them, the gang as an object of serious criminological enquiry is, at best, a subsidiary concern because, ultimately, crime of any sort, and crime rates, are explicable in terms of the moral character, proclivities or deficiencies of criminal individuals and the situational strategies and social interventions put in place by the authorities to contain them. This view finds expression in the ‘risk factor’ paradigm’ (Pitts, 2008) and the logic of its perspective dictates that the gang can be no more than an incidental repository for the aggregation of the risk factors besetting its affiliates.

However, dissatisfaction with this simplistic approach, which arises in large part from the failure of the proponents of the risk factor paradigm to consider the historical conditions that have fostered the emergence of youth gangs and the economic, social and cultural circumstances that have sustained them, has led some criminologists to investigate the processes or developmental pathways that intervene between risk factors and outcomes ... in order to ... bridge the gap between risk factor research and more complex explanatory theories (Boeck et al, 2006). This revised project is rooted in an acknowledgement that the impetus towards crime and violence may have multiple causes; that subtle differences in initial conditions may, over time, produce remarkably different outcomes (Byrne, 1988), meaning that children initially deemed to be ‘at risk’ in similar ways embark upon different criminal pathways while some ‘high risk’ children do not go on to offend at all (Farrington, 2000).

But, none of this high-falutin’ thinking has percolated down to the Department for Communities’ Troubled Families Team, brought into being in the wake of the August 2011 riots, and headed by erstwhile Anti-Social Behaviour Tsar, Louise Casey. The Team is charged with identifying and intervening with the 120,000 troubled families whose children are most likely to become rioters and gangsters. But how shall we know them? We shall know them, it seems, because ‘scientific evidence’ derived from New Labour’s Family Intervention Projects (FIPs), over which Louise Casey also presided, is said to indicate that they will be beset by five or more of the following risk factors:

1. A low income,
2. No-one in the family is in work,
3. Living in poor housing,
4. Parents have no qualifications,
5. Mother has a mental health problem,
6. One parent has a long-standing illness or disability
7. The family is unable to afford basics, including food and clothes.

Leaving to one side the disputed veracity of the findings of the FIP research (cf Gregg, 2010) and the fact that at least six of these risk factors are indicators of poverty rather than criminality, the evidence that they are the characteristics of the families of gang affiliates is vanishingly slight. Nonetheless, the Troubled Families Team has a budget of £448,000,000; 44 times greater than the Home Office, Ending Gang and Youth Violence initiative. Worries about the dubious theoretical logic of the intervention will doubtless be compounded by the fact that in several local authority areas the contract to 'turn' these troubled families 'around' has been awarded to G4S.

We Blame the Parents

But why this focus upon 'troubled families'? Because, in the wake of the 2011 riots, David Cameron, in thrall to Iain Duncan Smith's re-working of Charles Murray's 'underclass thesis' (1984), had pledged that by the end of his first term he would 'turn around' the 120,000 troubled families in Britain who were at the root of the nation's social problems. As Duncan Smith had earlier observed in his Broken Britain manifesto:

Most significantly however, a catalyst and consequence of these pathways to poverty, is the breakdown of the family. Marriage, far more stable than cohabitation, has rapidly declined in recent decades; 15 per cent of babies in Britain are now born without a resident biological father; and we have the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Europe. Without strong families violent and lawless street gangs, whose leaders are often school age, offer a deadly alternative.

(Centre for Social Justice, 2008)

This assault upon the poor and unpartnered suggests that poverty is a by-product of an overweening welfare state that rewards fecklessness, undermines individual responsibility and discourages parental propriety, producing a culture of dependency and entitlement wherein sexual profligacy and criminality become the norm. Thus, the 'broken' (risk-factor rich) 'family' becomes the progenitor of the 'broken society'. However, far from generating their own poverty through fecklessness, most single parents are working.

There are, today, around 2,000,000 single parents in England and Wales (26% of households with children). Only 3% of these families are headed by a teenager. Over 50% of single parents with children under 12, and 71% with children over 12, are in work (a higher proportion than for 'couple' families).

As to the link between single parenthood and gang involvement, we have already noted that the Metropolitan Police (2012) have identified 259 violent youth gangs with 4,800 'gang nominals'. There are approximately 700,000 children and young people aged between 12 and 25 living in single parent families in Greater London. If we assume that around two thirds of MPS 'gang nominals' come from single parent families, it means that Greater London's single parent families contribute fewer than 0.005% of 'gang nominals'.

This suggests that single parenthood per se, does not have an 'independent effect' upon the involvement of children and young people in violent youth gangs and that, therefore, something more complex must be at work. Whether this will cause mainstream criminology to abandon its quest for the cure for Louise Casey's 120,000 troubled families remains to be seen.

Sympathy for the Devil

In his book *Power, Conflict and Criminalisation*, Philip Scruton (2007) contends that 'adult power':

... was reinforced and reproduced through dominant ideologies that ascribed behavioural norms to the developing child. The social, political and cultural construction of the 'normal child' resulted in techniques of normalisation while targeting those who transgressed its boundaries as 'abnormal', 'deviant' and 'criminal'. This included policing children's individual and collective resistance to interpersonal, familial and institutional exertion of power by significant adults in their lives.

Yet, as Terry Eagleton (2003) has argued:

It is a mistake to believe that norms are always restrictive. In fact it is a crass romantic delusion. It is normative in our kind of society ... that child murderers are punished, that working men and women may withdraw their labour, and that ambulances speeding to a traffic accident should not be impeded just for the hell of it. Anyone who feels oppressed by all this must be seriously oversensitive. Only an intellectual who has overdosed on abstraction could be dim enough to imagine that whatever bends a norm is politically radical.

Nonetheless Scraton insists that the imposition of norms has led inevitably to the ‘demonization’ of the young; a process in which:

... individuals, groups or communities are ascribed a public, negative reputation associated with pathological malevolence often popularly represented as ‘evil’. While ideological in construction and transmission, demonisation has tangible consequences in social and societal reactions.

This undifferentiated assault upon ‘adult power’, also known as ‘social control’, may contain a kernel of truth but, as the revered criminologist Stanley Cohen (1985) has observed:

The term ‘social control’ has lately become a Mickey Mouse concept, used to include all social processes ranging from infant socialisation to public execution, all social policies whether called health, education or welfare.

‘Right-on’ but Irrelevant

This preoccupation with the corrosive impact of ‘social control’ means that crime, and the harm it generates, particularly for those at the bottom of the social structure, is at least minimised and at worst wholly ignored (Lea and Young, 1984; Young and Matthews, 1992; Matthews and Young, 1992). As Elliott Currie (1986) observes:

This minimisation of the impact of crime and an unwillingness to make the link between poverty and crime finds its corollary in an idealisation of the criminal as a kind of proto-revolutionary.

Moreover, he argues, such unreflective partisanship renders these social scientists politically irrelevant by perpetuating ‘... an image of progressives as being both fuzzy-minded and, much worse, unconcerned about the realities of life’.

These telling criticisms notwithstanding, the type of criminology practised by Scraton and other ‘Left Idealists’ (see Lea and Young, 1984) permeates the contemporary debate about youth gangs. They do have a point of course. There are historical continuities between youth subcultures past and present and the, sometimes misplaced, social anxieties they engender (Pearson, 1983). There are also many adolescent groups in the UK characterised by fluid membership and porous boundaries, engaged in relatively innocuous adolescent misbehaviour that are wrongly identified as ‘gangs’ (Klein, 2008). It is also true that the term ‘gang’ is used indiscriminately in popular discourse, the media and the criminal justice system and that, all too often, its use is stigmatising and racist (cf

Alexander, 2008). Moreover, from the late 1970s, successive UK governments have exploited the fear of crime for electoral advantage (Pitts, 2003).

But violent youth gangs do exist and their existence poses a serious threat to the safety, well-being, and in some cases the lives, of the children, young people and adults who live in gang-affected neighbourhoods (Bullock and Tilley, 2002; Youth Justice Board, 2007; Palmer and Pitts, 2006; Pitts, 2008; Matthews and Pitts 2007; Palmer, 2009; Centre for Social Justice, 2009; Balasunderam, 2009; Pitts, 2011).

Unlike the people condemned to live in gang-affected neighbourhoods and those who work there, these crime-averse criminologists effectively ‘wash their hands’ of the sometimes lethal gang-related crime and violence that occurs in them. They are however vehemently opposed to what they regard as the oppressive ‘social reaction’ to this ‘alleged’ behaviour, an opposition which is regularly rehearsed to audiences of like-minded ‘progressives’ at international conferences and seminars. Thus an endorsement on the back cover of a recent academic tome ostensibly concerned with ‘gangs, territoriality and violence’ (Goldson, 2011) reads:

Goldson’s collection is the first in the UK to systematically and critically expose the ‘crisis discourses’, amnesia and minimal knowledge that routinely surround the burgeoning ‘gang control industry’. (Muncie, 2011)

Comrade Lenin, Loquacious Left Bankers and Labelling Theory

These criminological critiques of social reaction draw their intellectual sustenance from a variety of, not necessarily compatible, sources. At the heavy end are those who continue to carry the torch for, or at least wear a badge depicting, Vladimir Illich Lenin (1905), the Marxist revolutionary who regarded theorising as a political intervention that would help to achieve ideological unanimity. Hence Lenin’s somewhat idiosyncratic approach to the frank and open exchange of conflicting viewpoints:

The principle of democratic centralism and autonomy for local Party organisations implies universal and full freedom to criticise, so long as this does not disturb the unity of a definite action; it rules out all criticism which disrupts or makes difficult the unity of an action decided on by the Party.

(Lenin, 1905)

For the dwindling band of latter-day criminological Leninists in Anglo-America and the European mainland, the party line dictates that the ‘gang’ is a fabrication of, what the, subsequently

incarcerated, Marxist-Leninist philosopher Louis Althusser (1969) termed, the ‘ideological state apparatus’; the purpose of which is to deflect attention from the real contradictions of capitalism towards allegedly problematic ‘outgroups’. This strategy, by setting one section of the working class against another is, Leninists agree, also designed to undermine class solidarity.

Lenin’s original deliberations were subsequently augmented by two French psychiatrists, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1972) who had fallen under the spell of post-modernism. They argued that because the ideological state apparatus generated Arborescent forms of knowledge, spinning simplistic ‘totalisations’, like the idea of ‘the gang’, from diverse and contradictory social phenomena; radicals should embrace a, non-totalising, Rhizomatic epistemology in which any phenomenon might be linked with any other, irrespective of its species. They explain this strategy thus:

The ... rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states. The rhizome is reducible to neither the One or the multiple. It is not the One that becomes Two or even directly three, four, five etc. It is not a multiple derived from the one, or to which one is added (n+1). It is comprised not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overflows.

This elucidation could be unfathomably brilliant, a dire warning against theorising whilst stoned, or a salutary instance of Frederick Nietzsche’s observation that those who know they are profound strive for clarity (while) those who would like to seem profound strive for obscurity (Dyer, 1999). Unsurprisingly, Deleuze and Guattari have attracted criticism (see for example, Sokal and Briemont, 1998, *Fashionable Nonsense*, and Dyer, 1999, *Artificial Stupidity*). Writing in 1999, Geoff Dyer observes:

Nowadays it would bestow about the same intellectual gravitas as a dunce’s cap. And the whole idiom of discourse has ossified to the extent that it is now actually insight-resistant: it is impossible to formulate interesting – let alone original – thought in these terms.

This is largely because the logic of rhizomatic thinking, with its insistence that the ‘true’ nature of social phenomena is unknowable and that any attempt to organise these phenomena into categories or causal chains is necessarily oppressive, actually negates the possibility of human thought, let alone human communication, altogether. Human communication is predicated upon a shared understanding of the meanings of words, or of the words we use to dispute their meaning, and a shared perception of the basic characteristics of the world we inhabit. (eg Norwich is in Norfolk /My bank is in the High Street – this said; although post-modernists might dispute the example

of Norwich, they all seem to know the way to the bank), and a belief that, by and large, the person with whom we are talking is endeavouring to speak the truth. Without this, communication becomes impossible. As Jurgen Habermas (1981) observes:

Postmodernists ignore what is absolutely central to any sociological analysis, namely, everyday life and its practices.

The derision to which the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari have been subjected notwithstanding, Hallsworth and Young (2011) appear to believe that this is the perspective from which we should view the violent youth gang, namely as a fantastic social construction, existing only in the schizoid imaginings of an oppressive 'state'.

Disabled by a Label

C. Wright Mills (1957) argues that if we are to understand social phenomena, we must develop an appreciation of their history and the subtle interplay of the social and economic structures, the cultures and the biographies which shape them. However, for the romantically inclined left-liberal criminologist, labelling theory, which eschews every one of these considerations, is the theoretical perspective of choice (Taylor et al, 1973), albeit one which is infrequently acknowledged. While the antipathy towards the state is slightly less evident in labelling theory than in the (vulgar) Marxist-Leninist account described above, it too weaves a tale of how, ultimately, 'gangs' are spoken into being by the state.

Kitsuse (1962), one of the original 'labelling theorists' makes the astute, if tautological, observation that:

Deviance is not a property inherent in certain forms of behaviour; it is a property conferred upon these forms by the audiences which directly or indirectly witness them.

But Lemert (1967) 'ups the stakes' considerably in arguing that:

This is a large turn away from an older sociology which tended to rely heavily upon the idea that deviance leads to social control. I have come to believe that the reverse idea, ie, that social control leads to deviance, is equally tenable and the potentially richer premise for studying deviance in modern society.

And, of course, the groups upon which the labels are conferred, Liazov's 'Nuts, Sluts and Perverts' (1972) are, almost always, the poor or the oppressed, while those conferring the labels are, almost always, the well-to-do and the powerful. As Howard Becker in his groundbreaking essay 'Whose

Side Are We On?' (1963) observes:

In any system of ranked groups, participants take it as given that members of the highest group have the right to define the way things really are.

If, he argues, this 'hierarchy of credibility', is a universal feature of the social world, then social scientists have a moral obligation to 'tell it like it is' from the perspective of the powerless and the oppressed who are the subjects of labelling.

Ignoring the well worn criticisms that labelling theory fails to account for primary deviance, ie why they do it in the first place and that, from the outset, it focussed mainly upon 'crimes without victims', left-liberal criminology sets out to challenge what it perceives to be the 'demonization' of lower class youth by powerful labellers. However, this romanticisation of, or identification with, the 'labelled' subject tends to work best in the abstract and so too does its corollary; an unreflective antipathy towards the 'zoo keepers of deviance' (Taylor et al, 1973), the psychiatric nurses, the social workers, the teachers, and the alleged labellers: 'the police', 'the professionals', 'the press', 'the government' and, of course, 'public opinion'.

But the real world seldom throws up such simple binary choices between the good guys and the bad, the labelled and the labellers. If we are on the side of young men labelled as 'gangsters', who will be on the side of the young men they have shot and killed, and their families? Probably not left-liberal criminologists, because to be on their side would mean acknowledging that the idea of the violent youth gang might have some substance.

The sting in the tail of labelling theory for those who use it as a stick with which to beat suspected labellers is its contention that if the label is conferred publicly and dramatically by those who have the power to impose their 'definition of the situation' upon the subject, this will spoil their identity and the deviant role ('thief', 'junkie' 'gangster'), once imposed, will then become their master role which they will re-enact in perpetuity. Cultural Criminology, a contemporary reincarnation of labelling theory but, importantly, one which takes cognisance of the subtle interplay between real crime and its representation, points to the mirroring role of the media in this process.

Deviants look at the media representation of a lifestyle and think that is how they need to act and behave. Cultural criminology strives to place this interplay deep within the vast proliferation of media images of crime and deviance, where every facet of offending is reflected in a vast hall of mirrors.

(Ferrell et al, 2008)

But if Labelling Theory and Cultural Criminology are even half right about the process of ‘becoming deviant’ (Matza, 1969), violent youth gangs exist; the dogged denials of left-liberal criminology notwithstanding (Aldridge et al, 2008, 2011).

The Changing Gang Form

Left-liberal criminology’s de facto denial of gangs means that it cannot countenance the possibility that the gangs, in which it does not believe, are changing. However, many people; police officers, youth and social workers, health care professionals and others working with gang-affiliated young people, as well as the families who live in gang-affected neighbourhoods, believe that they are.

The 28s emerged in Lambeth in 1988. It was composed of 28 British born black and mixed heritage young men who had attended the same school. In the mid-1980s, Brixton had become home to drug dealing posses from Kingston, Jamaica. Although they were originally involved only in street crime the 28s soon graduated to drug dealing. But this latter activity brought them into conflict with the Jamaican posses, involving them in violent ‘turf’ disputes resulting in the deaths of several gang members.

By the mid-1990s, a new generation of 28s re-branded as the PDC (Peel Dem Crew/Poverty Driven Children) had emerged. The PDC consisted of a hardcore of young men, Elders, in their late teens and early twenties, attended by crews, small groups of younger boys known variously as ‘Youngers’, ‘Run-arounds’, ‘Soldiers’ or ‘Sabos’ (derived from ‘saboteurs’), aged around 14 and 15, who acted as ‘foot soldiers’ for the gang, and younger children Tinys who ran errands for them. Elders tended to make their ‘Ps’ (money) from drug dealing (largely Skunk, Crack Cocaine and Heroin) or ‘taxing’ ‘shotters’ who dealt drugs in their area. The PDC also has several legitimate businesses, including a barbershop on the Angell Town estate called Prestige Designer Cuts, and a record label, Public Demand Cartel.

The younger crews, like the MZ, the SW2 Boys and the Stockwell Park Crew, normally consisted of young people who lived on the same estates or attended the same schools.

Gang Youngers sometimes dealt ‘soft’ drugs on a small scale but one of their main roles was to collect the proceeds from hard drug sales for the Elders, some of whom were connected into the upper echelons of the drugs business. The Youngers were left to make what money they could from low-level ‘soft’ drug dealing and street crime. By the middle of the first decade of the 21st century, the PDC was considered to be the biggest gang in London. They were certainly one of the most highly publicised and one of the most violent. However from 2007, a series of drug – and respect-related murders of senior PDC figures, the arrest and imprisonment of five others on firearms charges, and agitation from below, meant that the PDC began to fragment into a plethora of new, younger, gangs.

In the late 1980s there was only one 'gang' in Manchester's Moss Side; the Pepperhill Crew, so called because they met at the Pepperhill public house. In 1990 a shebeen, an illegal drinking den, was set up near Gooch Close and some of the Pepperhill Crew from that side of the Alexandra Park estate started to congregate there. Because most of the remaining members of the Pepperhill Crew lived on or close to Doddington Close, they rebranded themselves the Doddington Close Gang. There were now two gangs, the Doddington Close Gang on the eastern side of the estate and the Gooch Close Gang on the western side. Both groups were dealing narcotics, but they co-existed peacefully enough. However, this all changed when a member of the Doddington left an expensive leather jacket at his girlfriend's house on the western side of the estate. The following day a member of the Gooch was seen wearing it. The Doddington took this to be a token of extreme disrespect and in March 1991 a member of the Gooch was shot in a 'drive-by' shooting on Gooch Close. This incident was the catalyst for over 20 tit-for-tat murders during the next decade. In 1995, Raymond Pitt was killed by members of the Doddington (his own gang) and his assassins and their associates founded a new gang, the Pitt Bull Crew, under the leadership of Raymond's brother Tommy. The Pitt Bull Crew then entered an uneasy alliance with the Gooch Close Gang, but the killing continued unabated. In 1996, the murder of 17 year old Orville Bell by the Young Gooch was the catalyst for the formation of the Longsight Crew by Orville's brother Julian. A series of tit-for-tat shootings ensued and, as a result, in June 1997, five members of the Young Gooch were sentenced to 43 years in prison for firearms related offences. Nonetheless the violent conflict between the Young Gooch, Doddington and Longsight gangs continued into the 21st century until, in late 2007, on the basis of evidence from 'gang members' and an elaborate 'wire tap', GMP's Operation VIOLA arrested 11 senior members of the Gooch Close Gang and, in April 2009, at Liverpool Crown Court, they were convicted of 154 shootings, including 5 murders, 5 attempted murders and 94 serious woundings.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, the groups that transmogrified, first into violent street gangs and then criminal business organisations would probably have remained what they were originally; 'posses' of disenfranchised young black men making a living from street robbery, burglary and 'steaming'. But in the 1980s and 1990s they rose to notoriety on the tidal wave of class A drugs flooding into Britain (Silverman, 1993) and a sudden over-supply of firearms. They became the local street presence for an international trade in Class A drugs facilitated by familial and fraternal connections to the Caribbean or the Indian sub-continent. In the 1990s cocaine trafficking constituted over 40% of Jamaica's GDP, (Silverman, 1993). But as this lucrative market grew, so too did the violence, and while some of those at the top were handsomely rewarded for their involvement in this fiercely competitive trade, many others were murdered, maimed or jailed. Some of the survivors were absorbed into the upper echelons of organized crime, a few went straight, while others became 'virtual gang experts' or members of police-community consultative committees. But their retirement has not marked the end of gang violence in these areas.

This period also saw the emergence of ‘Asian’ self-defence groups, endeavouring to protect their communities from violent ‘skinhead’ invasions. In London, groups of older Bangladeshi adolescents and young adults mounted a fierce and protracted ‘fight-back’ against the young men professing allegiance to the far-right British National Party or Column 88. These groups, the Brick Lane Mafia, the Docklands Light Posse and Shadwell Community Defence, claimed to be offering the protection that the police had failed to provide. This too was the impetus for the formation, in Birmingham, of The Lynx Gang and the Muslim Birmingham Panthers formed in response to the threat posed by both White, far-right, ‘skinheads’ and two predominantly Black African-Caribbean gangs the Johnsons and the Burger Bar Boys. However, the Asian vigilantes of the 1980s had, by the late 1990s, transmogrified into violent street gangs, some of which were heavily involved in Class A drug dealing. Indeed by the 1990s, several of the estates in Tower Hamlets had become major centres of the London heroin trade.

The Losangelisation of the English Street Gang

Although the jailing of Manchester’s Young Gooch in 2008/9 and the waning of the PDC as a result of imprisonment and murder marked the end of what were in effect criminal business organisations with a strong street presence, it did not signal the end of gang crime in these areas (Pitts, 2011). Instead, it presaged a proliferation of more, more chaotic, and younger gangs.

A survey conducted in Lambeth in 2007 identified over forty named ‘gangs’ in the borough (Ahmed and Pitts, 2007), the most notable being ABM (All Bout Money), TN-1 (Tell No-one) the Acre Lane Campaign, all of which identified themselves as Crips; and Murderzone, T-Block, Gipset, O31 Bloods (Otre), OC (Organised Crime) and the GAS Gang, who claimed affiliation to the Bloods. This proliferation of younger gangs was accompanied by a sharp escalation in gang violence.

In South Manchester, in 2007/8, following the arrests of the Young Gooch, there were a record 146 firearms discharges. In Lambeth in 2007 there were 23 gang-related murders.

What set these new gangs apart was not their involvement in violent conflict per se – this was a characteristic of the gangs they had superseded; it was that, as with the fighting gangs described by Cloward and Ohlin (1960), violence now became their *raison d’être* because involvement in gang violence was their primary, and in some cases only, source of status and respect. These new gangs maintained a strident presence on social networking sites and made no secret of their illicit activities. They were audacious, sometimes suicidally so, undertaking ‘invasions’ of territory ‘owned’ by armed adversaries, simply to enhance the ‘respect’ in which they were held.

The identification of the Gooch and the Doddington gangs with the Bloods and the Crips is said to stem from a failed attempt by former Los Angeles Crip Juan Longino to broker a truce between them in 1994. The new gangs that eventually coalesced around the Gooch and the Doddington

claimed a tripartite affiliation to the Gooch and the Doddington, the Crips and the Bloods and Blue Team and Red Team (Manchester City and Manchester United football clubs). These newcomers included the OTC (Old Trafford Crips), the Rusholme Crips, the Fallowfield Mandem/Mad Dogs, HGC (Home Grown Crew) and HCG (Holdgate Close Gang) who claimed affiliation to the Gooch/Crips, in the eastern part of South Manchester and the Longsight Crew, the Young Doddington Crew and the MSB (Moss Side Bloods) in the west, who operated under the banner of the Doddington/Bloods. The current ACPO gang survey has identified over 40 gangs in Greater Manchester.

In 2010, 26, primarily Bengali, gangs were identified in Tower Hamlets. Their members were younger and their activities more violent. They too claimed affiliation to the Crips or the Bloods. One of the original Brick Lane Mafia observed:

What these new boys across Bethnal Green and Poplar don't realise is that we had reason to 'make noise' back in the day, we were protecting ourselves for most of the time, our noise was used as a defence not as a weapon. Today, the up and comers are making noise purely to start beef. People today saying EI is not what it used to be, they forget Brick Lane had it all, it's our area that is keeping Bengali culture and religion alive, unlike those up there who follow cultures that ain't even theirs. They boast about being Bengali yet they talk with black influenced slang and praise Tupac.

The structure of these new groupings is similar to those in Los Angeles, in that the many smaller gangs and crews claim affiliation to either the Crips or the Bloods (Carter, 2012). This changed identification also marks a shift from a gang culture rooted in local economic, cultural and political realities and indigenous traditions, to one in which the key (sub-) cultural reference points are global not local; mediated via film, the internet (Peter and Valkenburg 2007), music (Weitzer and Kubrin 2009), and Playstation games, rather than experienced directly. In 'Learning to Become a Gangster', Tea Bengtsson (2012) demonstrates how three boys in a young offenders centre in Denmark teach a new boy to become a 'real gangster'. This involves learning the central elements of 'gangster style' as well as tips about how to manage oneself out on the streets, where the values of respect, loyalty and criminality are central to the successful discharge of the role.

Jean Baudrillard (1998) speaks of 'hyper-reality'; a state in which the subject, bombarded by the media, finds difficulty in distinguishing between what is real and what is fictional. As the two realms become blurred, Baudrillard argues, the human subject comes to seek fulfillment through simulation and imitation of transient simulacra of reality, rather than through an encounter with the 'real'.

One key aspect of a gang member's mediated reality lies in the palm of his hand; his Blackberry, which replays a version of events in which he was involved with an ever more elaborate commentary crafted by a growing band of 'significant others' who ascribe meaning, attribute responsibility and,

like a Greek Chorus, chronicle the ebb and flow of the protagonists' status. Simon Harding (2012), who undertook fieldwork in central Lambeth, writes:

The gang suffers further violation when images of the incursion are posted (marketed) widely on SNSs (Social Networking Sites). The violation is played out endlessly in cyber-space repeating the humiliation: each viewing diminishing the relevant Street Credit of the gang. This is addressed quickly via an impact statement and a challenge – a Retort, quickly posted to counteract the damage done. A verbalised 'impact statement' denies any current or lasting damage by the incursion, 'ain't no big deal', even suggesting it was permitted, 'we let you Bruv, so we could film you and know who you are'. A challenge is then made, inviting the visitants to repeat their win. Retaliation is promised in strong terms and the consequences for this violation made clear. By posting this Retort, the violated gang attempt to stem the damage done to their own Street Credit. As the drama now plays out in cyberspace, one negative advert is met with another. Those violated by the incursion now clamour to get 'face time' on screen in the posted Retort. Large numbers are corralled as evidence of support and the strength of the gang. Insults fly and individuals are singled out and targeted for 'dissing'.

Given their origins in the entertainment industry (Hagedorn, 2008) the styles and social practices that gang members absorb from globalised 'gangsta' culture tend to be preposterous caricatures of human behaviour. This means that affiliates are destined always to be 'wannabees', aspiring, and urged on by peers, to achieve ways of being which are unattainable. But, as Cristia Emini (2011) notes, 'wannabees' are the most dangerous kind of gang affiliates because they will do anything in their attempts to be accepted as the 'real thing'.

One particularly worrying aspect of this quest for authenticity in this hyper-real world is the apparent rise in group sexual assault (MPS, 2012) and gang-related sexual violence (Firmin, 2011); a product of a (mis)conception about how proper 'gangstas' conduct their sexual relationships, gleaned primarily from commercial media (Hagedorn, 2008). This misconception is compounded by a tidal wave of readily accessible pornography available on the Web (Flood, 2009) and the capacity of individuals to generate a home grown versions via 'sexting' (Ringrose et al. 2012). This 'sexualisation of culture' perpetuates the association between masculinity and predatory sexual prowess and, according to Coy (2009), justifies sexual violence.

The Proliferation of Gangs and Gang Culture

Early findings from the ACPO gang survey suggest that we are not only witnessing the proliferation of new, younger, gangs in established gang-affected areas, but also in previously unaffected neighborhoods and towns.

In 1975 the eminent gang researcher Walter B. Miller found that six of the twelve largest US cities had a 'major gang problem'. However, research undertaken with David Curry in the early 1990s (1993), revealed that the problem had now spread to ten of the twelve major cities. Moreover, Spergel and Curry found increases in gang activity in cities of all sizes, with a remarkable 63% increase in the far smaller 'new gang cities'. By the mid-1990s, chapters of what had originally been the Los Angeles-based Crips and Bloods could be found in 45 other US cities, mainly in the mid-west and the west. And in all of these cities it was 'minority' and migrant youth who were most heavily involved.

Some of the gang proliferation in England may amount to little more than the adoption of 'gangsta' style. Youth workers in North West England have observed that some relatively privileged young people in Cheshire's smarter towns and villages are adopting a 'gangsta' style that goes beyond dress codes and musical taste to influence their personal and sexual relationships. This phenomenon was also identified by Robert Gordon (2000) in his Canadian studies of gang culture in the 1990s. In Keighley, in West Yorkshire, a town with several established street gangs and criminal business organisations (Andel and Pitts, 2010), the 187 M-C-ing crew have recently burst upon the scene. Affiliates wear T-shirts bearing the legend 187, the US police code for drive-by shootings, they also have a strong web-presence, but no known criminal involvement or criminal connections.

Conversely, in 2004 in Derby, a city with no previous tradition of gang violence, two men were injured in a gang-related shoot-out and 14-year-old Danielle Beccan was killed in a drive-by shooting. In 2005, Simeon Grignon (26), was falsely accused of being a member of the Browning Circle Terrorists, said to be responsible for Danielle's death, and was stabbed to death by affiliates of the neighbouring A1 Crew. 2006 saw three more gang-related murders and in 2007, members of the A1 Crew, on their way to the Notting Hill Carnival, were stopped by the police and found to have a loaded firearm which, they claimed, was to protect them from a rival Derby gang. Between December 2007 and May 2008 there were 13 more gang-related incidents in which firearms were discharged, the most serious being the murder of 15 year old Kadeem Blackwood, said to belong to the Yunga Browning Circle Terrorists. However, by 2009, largely as a result of a major police operation, gang violence had dwindled significantly.

The proliferation of gangs and gang culture appears to be a product of both local innovation, as was the case in Cheshire, Keighley and Derby, and gang migration, either to create new drug dealing territories or to avoid the attentions of the police in the neighbourhood of origin.

In the recent period we have seen migrations of some of Southwark's Peckham Boys to Luton, the Custom House White Gang to East Anglia and the Church Road Soldiers/Crime Scene Boys from Harlesden to Bournemouth. These migrations often bring gang related violence in their wake:

The man killed in the Roumelia Lane (Bournemouth) shooting appeared in a music video with X Factor judge Tulisa Contostavlos. Police believe Reece G, or Stylee, was the victim of a 'pre-planned and targeted attack and the flat in which his body was discovered had been associated with Somali drug dealers in recent months. Reece, 21, has been linked to the Church Road Soldiers – a gang known to operate out of the Church End Estate in Harlesden. He had been filmed earlier this month alongside N-Dubz star Tulisa in a video for rapper Nines on the notorious estate.

(The Bournemouth Echo, 25th July 2012)

As in the USA, these various types of gang proliferation are most prevalent in times of economic recession and social and economic polarisation (Gordon, 2000; Hagedorn, 2008).

A Radical Response?

Between writing the subheading above on Tuesday 31st July 2012, and returning to the computer on Thursday 2nd August 2012, two teenage boys lost their lives in gang-related stabbings in London. If mainstream and 'radical' social scientists who continue to deny the significance, and understate the impact, of gang involvement want to ameliorate this tragic situation, they must abandon their stubborn insistence upon the primacy of social reaction and, following C. Wright Mills dictum (1959), that the role of social science is to transform private troubles into public issues by unravelling the complex relationship between history, social structure, culture and biography, help to figure out the implications of such an analysis for politics, policy and practice.

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‘First Step: Dress Cool ...’ Young people’s representations of locality

Colin Brent

Abstract:

In an increasingly globalised world, the importance of locality in the understanding that young people have of themselves and their place in the world would appear to be anachronistic. However, those working with them often find that ideas of neighbourhood remain important in young people’s narratives of their identities. This essay reviews two sides of the academic argument about the importance of place, ‘neighbourhood studies’ and ‘post-structuralism’, before analysing the role locality has in young people’s representations of themselves in a youth centre in Berlin. The author suggests that these young people appropriate global cultural trends for use in constructing images of locality. These images, untethered from spatial constraints, enable the young people to use representations of locality to situate themselves in the maelstrom of global cultural and social narratives. The article poses a number of questions for those working with young people to help understand the importance of locality to them.

Key words: young people’s identity, locality, neighbourhood studies, post-structuralism.

WHEN MOST young people have access to social networking sites, international media, and global trends, the importance of neighbourhood identities seems anachronistic. Surely in an age when young people can select from an ever increasing range of social and cultural resources to construct images of themselves, the streets around where they live would lose significance? My experience of working with young people, however, appears to contradict this. Locality as a source of individual and group identity seems as relevant as ever. Whether expressed in territorial ‘post-code’ gangs, or simply used by young people as one of several explanations for their lifestyle choices, locality has been a constant topic for the young people with whom I have worked. With reference to some of the academic arguments about the importance of place, this article will analyse the role of neighbourhood identities for a group of young people with whom I worked in Berlin in 2004.

Young people who hang out on street corners, drink in local parks or talk loudly on buses are often seen as problems that undermine local expressions of community and neighbourhood pride, as they intimidate ‘legitimate’ adult members of the community (see Brent, 1997:79). The youthful appropriation of space has been widely written about, as academics have explored the need for

young people to create places of their own (e.g., Loader, 1996 or Hall et al, 1999). This 're-mapping' of urban space is central to understanding the ways in which young people relate to the places they live in, and goes some way to informing youth work approaches (see Crawshaw, 2001). Here I look beyond these sporadic, 'effervescent' events (Maffesoli, 1996), to study how young people relate to, construct, and understand those localities whose communities they are accused of affecting so negatively. The key questions explored in this article are: What importance does locality have for young people in an increasingly globalised world? How are young people's lifestyles affected by their locality? To what extent are young people able to appropriate ideas of locality as they do street corners?

Although post-modern theorists point to the dissolution of structuralist criteria, the drawing of lines along class and ethnic boundaries, along with their spatial geographies, appears to be as present as ever to many of those working with young people in the UK. Is this a sign of the 'post-modern paradox', whereby 'when people find themselves unable to control the world, they simply shrink the world to the size of their community' (Castells in Gilroy, 1987:232), or is locality, along with class and race identifications, just another tin to be picked from the shelves of the 'supermarket of style' (Polhemus 1998)?

Neighbourhood vs. Post-structuralism

The study of people's relationship with their locality is nothing new – the studies of the Chicago School from the inter-war years onwards looked at how economic structures were reflected in class and ethnic divides, with Robert Park's 'zones of succession' (1967), which portrays a geography controlled by structure, still often applied to modern cities. Venkatesh, writing about early 20th century studies of the city, comments how

The city was described as a mosaic of 'little worlds', each a distinct settlement but all interrelated into the larger metropolis. In this view, each of the settlements was understood to be a physically, socially, and culturally coherent entity, what would later be called a simpler term, a "community". A community had territorial integrity, that is, it had identifiable borders and was separated from its neighbours by natural or manmade boundaries. A community had a cultural unity: people shared outlooks, customs, languages, and perhaps some physical features (2002:6).

This 'integrity' was also seen in youth cultures. Whilst these early approaches to urban youth cultures do not underestimate the role of young people's agency in constructing their identifications, this agency is the product of structural impositions – it is not a dialectic between structure and agency, but rather structural determinism. As debate about the importance of place has grown, it

has been possible to roughly divide it into two camps – 'neighbourhood studies' and the 'post-structuralists'.

The idea of neighbourhood mirroring socio-economic structure is central to understanding the role of neighbourhood studies in the second half of the 20th century and beyond. Whilst the 'zones of succession' have become ever more complicated as the fashions of urban dwelling have fluctuated, the concept of identifying areas with class or ethnic groups has remained intact both in popular representations and anthropological studies of urban space. Significantly, this approach has been most prolifically used in association with poor areas. If neighbourhood equates to structure, and structure produces agency, then what better way to understand the actions of the working classes than to study working class areas? Whilst the effects of global flows of capital and power become ever more evident in Britain's disadvantaged communities, this concentration on local cultural spheres has remained popular, whether with right wing commentators such as Charles Murray (1990) or their detractors. Indeed, the "lower" tier of city residents [...] is defined mostly by being cut off from that world-wide network of communication [...] "doomed to stay local" [...], it is inside the city they inhabit that the battle for survival and a decent place in the world is launched, waged, won and lost' (Bauman, 2003:17).

One of the effects of the collapse of the Fordist model of production and the rise of globalised economies has been the prevalence of the 'post-modern paradox'. Richard Sennett writes that 'as the shifting institutions of the economy diminish the experience of belonging somewhere special ... people's commitments increase to geographic places like nations, cities and localities' (in Bauman, 2002:110). With class identifications diminishing, but structural inequalities remaining, the neighbourhood has become a key factor in people's understanding of their place in the world. This has been particularly pertinent for young people, who (due to the collapse of the youth job market with industrial restructuring) often lack the means to pursue leisure activities away from their locality (see Loader, 1996). This is associated with the appropriation of public spaces by young people, but has also caused young people to create place-based narratives of community. Locality here becomes synonymous with identity. The 'willingness' for young people 'to be something determined' (Maffesoli, 1996:65) is realised through the construction of local identities, that adapt to local social relations. As Back comments, 'the nation is thus shrunk to the size of the neighbourhood, resulting in the emergence of a kind of "neighbourhood nationalism"' (1996:53). This use of neighbourhood nationalism may be seen as the expression of the need to belong to a locality, but the narratives of what the locality represents are constructed; the narratives mirror the social make-up of a neighbourhood and are still closely related to their socio-economic structure. The neighbourhood thus becomes as much a social as a spatial entity. Locality is used to represent community.

At the centre of this locality-based community is a need for what Maffesoli calls 'proxemics' (1996)

– the need to be together in close contact with other people. The effects this has on young people's – especially those without the means to leave their locality when they please – understanding of their place in the world should not be underestimated.

The increasingly complex and at times contradictory flow of information in the modern age has led to some academics, influenced by post-modernist thinkers such as Michel Maffesoli, to conclude that the importance of bounded identities has waned so as to become insignificant. In a new age of fluid, spontaneous 'identifications', therefore, the spatially bounded nature of locality can no longer be seen as crucial in youthful constructions of 'neo-tribes' – fleeting movements, that defy efforts to be pinned down, whose very nature is 'characterized by the pluralism of possibilities, the effervescence of situations, the multiplicity of experiences and values' (Maffesoli, 1996:65). Far from being reactions to structural inequalities, these groupings are 'not bothered by finality, utility, practicality, or what we may call "realities".' (ibid.:81) In a more critical tone, Furlong and Cartmel conclude that 'the lived and mediated experiences of young people in the fields of leisure and consumption is an important mechanism via which the epistemological fallacy of late modernity [the declining importance of class] is maintained and reproduced' (1997:23). In light of this new understanding of youth movements, Steven Miles has concluded that 'the territorial youth groups with which sociology has traditionally been fascinated are actually less significant than they were in the past (assuming they were indeed ever "significant")' (2000:67). This understanding of the construction of identity as being increasingly less influenced by modernist concepts of class and space is central to post-structuralist arguments.

New modes of communication, in particular the internet, have enabled young people to opt out of local discourses completely, and enter instead into global flows of fashion and communication. Albrow states that 'the whole concept of culture has been disembedded from its territorial base and re-embedded in a mass communications media frame' (in Miles, 2000:63). These young people are, therefore, 'unconcerned with the affairs of "their" city – just one locality among many, all of them small and insignificant from the vantage point of the cyberspace, their genuine, even if virtual, home' (Bauman, 2003:16). Modern communications mean that the need for 'proxemics' can be solved without the need for physical closeness, as 'one's "village" could span the globe' (Wellman and Gulia in Hodkinson, 2002:28).

Does this therefore mean that the role of locality in young people's lives is no longer relevant? Certainly for many young people the imagery of their neighbourhood is less important to their self-identification than the music they listen to or the clothes they wear. Maffesoli writes that 'In contrast to the 1970s [...] it is less a question of belonging to a gang, a family or a community than of switching from one group to another' (1996:76). This does not mean, however, that the idea of the neighbourhood gangs is therefore an anachronism. Rather, 'as old meanings are trashed, new, unexpected ones are created in a process of semiological terrorism' (Polhemus, 1998:132). Paul

Hoggett comments that “Place” now becomes reconceptualised as an identity one chooses as much as one which is accepted fact’ (1998:8).

What we are left with, then, is what appears to be a discrepancy between the ability of modern technology to make national and social boundaries insignificant, and the need for young people to continue to negotiate their everyday, localised lives. As Crawshaw points out, ‘it is important to recognise that although young people live within an increasingly timeless and globalised world, local places and spaces remain a crucial medium and mediator of lived risk experiences’ (2001:64). Lefebvre writes, ‘no space disappears in the course of growth and development: the world-wide does not abolish the local’ (1991:86). While the global and the local may seem to contradict each other, they are not incompatible.

The meeting of global and local forces has therefore become more evident (although it was present throughout the modern era). This has led to images of the local becoming less bounded, and whilst some young people have chosen to deconstruct traditional ideas of neighbourhood alliances, others have looked elsewhere for their identifications – the use of new technology making these more accessible. The breakdown of bounded identities has caused the creation of multiple, fleeting identifications, as young people have the ability to move from one cultural movement to another. In creating new movements out of the cultural tools available, young people use the media, international styles and local references to come up with mixes of the global and the local, the much vaunted ‘glocal’. This fusion enables them to forge understanding about the significance of the global in their locality, and the role of their locally situated selves in a globalised world.

The following discusses how this played out in the experiences of locality of young people in the Berlin neighbourhood of Kreuzberg. The discussion is based upon experiences and observations from a six month period working as a youth worker in 2004. It is not intended to provide a definitive answer to the question of young people’s relationship with their locality. Rather it will argue that the questions asked about the importance of locality are applicable for anyone working with young people, regardless of the answers they produce.

Kreuzberg

Kreuzberg is a large administrative area located to the south of central Berlin. Under the old post-coding system, Kreuzberg was split into two areas, SO61 in the west, and SO36 in the east. It is the latter that has become synonymous with the various images that Kreuzberg has accumulated, and it is this area on which this article will focus. Before Reunification, Kreuzberg, in West Berlin, was surrounded on three sides by the Berlin Wall. This lent it a peripheral status, and the cheap or empty housing and marginal position meant that from the Sixties onwards the area become

populated with Turkish *Gastarbeitern* and members of 'alternative' scenes, in particular punks and anarchists. It soon built up a reputation for being both the centre of radical left-wing movements, and a focus point for Turkish youth street gangs.

With the fall of the Wall and the reinstatement of Berlin as the capital of a reunited Germany, Kreuzberg moved from the margins of West German society to become an inner-city district in the new Germany. Despite the ensuing gentrification, Kreuzberg remains the area in Berlin with the highest Turkish population, in a city that claims to have the biggest concentration of Turks in Europe after Istanbul. My experience whilst working full-time for six months at the Naunynritze Cultural and Youth Centre, located in a network of around a dozen blocks, commonly referred to as the Turkish Quarter, forms the basis for this article.

On first appearances, Kreuzberg may seem the perfect example of the move from the modern era of bounded space and identities (the Berlin Wall being the archetype of this), to a post – or late-modern entity, criss-crossed by the flows of global influences. The replacement, in the nineties, of the old post-codes with new, smaller and less symbolised areas (Naunynritze is now in 10997, a code it is hard to appropriate), may have been the death-toll of the old east Kreuzberg identifications. However, on arrival in the area, it immediately becomes apparent to any visitor that the significance of the old imagery of Kreuzberg SO36 is still central to contemporary understandings of the area. I will argue that the construction of identifications based on discourses of locality by the young people could be seen as similar to the assembling of 'imagined communities' described by Benedict Anderson (1991). It is at the interface between the historical, cultural and ethnic discourses of the young people that their identifications with their locality are formed.

Karn writes that 'narratives include significant characters, dramatic episodes, a moral to the tale and, most importantly, use causal logics and shared cultural assumptions about the world to create meaningful accounts' (2007:42). By exploring the representation of these elements, it is therefore possible to come to a better understanding of the significance of narratives of belonging to a locality. For the young people with whom I worked in Kreuzberg, the combination of stories of past events in the area – replete with folk heroes and villains – and representations of present conditions to validate the continuing applicability of these narratives were used to construct 'meaningful accounts' of their own circumstances.

The value of historical images of Kreuzberg for young people was made clear by their continued use of the old post-code (SO36) to symbolise 'their' area. This ranged from the use of hand signals to represent the number, to the naming of music groups and other cultural entities after the code. This phenomenon was not restricted to the Turkish youth of the area. Local establishments include SO36 in their name, and t-shirts with the code emblazoned on them remain popular. The images of Kreuzberg from the eighties are thus both adopted and reinscribed by the young people and other

groups in Kreuzberg. The continued use of these symbols does not however imply that the images they represent necessarily coincide. As Abu-Lughod points out, there is 'no single "authorial" image of the neighbourhood' (1994:195). Thus the symbolism that the young people invested in the old post-code may be different to that of the bar or the tourist.

The continued use of the old code, rather than the newer ones that spatially mapped the 'Turkish Quarter' more accurately, tells us a lot about the nature of locality-based narratives of belonging. The continued use of SO36 by the young people in Kreuzberg, many of whom are too young to remember when the old post-code was in use, can be viewed as recognition of the social symbolism of this spatially liberated sign. De Certeau describes how place names 'become liberated spaces that can be occupied. A rich indetermination gives them, by means of a semantic rarefaction, the function of articulating a second, poetic geography on top of the geography of the literal, forbidden or permitted meaning' (1984:105). The code therefore has a dual function – both the continuation of its appropriation by previous generations and the capability of the young people to re-map the spatially invested narratives of locality along the social boundaries of their 'community' – an example of 'semiological terrorism' (Polhemus, 1998:132). In this paradoxical situation, then, the spatial entity of Kreuzberg, along with its structural and architectural specificities, at once locates the young people, but at the same time is socially and culturally re-mapped, located, by those young people. As David Harvey writes,

Social space, when it is contested within the orbit of a given social formation, can begin to take on new definitions and meanings. This occurs because the social constitution of spatio-temporality cannot be divorced from value creation or, for that matter, from discourses, power relations, memory, institutions, and the tangible forms of material practices through which human societies perpetuate themselves (1996:231).

The fact that this space is 'contested' is essential to our understanding of how the symbolism of the old post-code can change, both over time and from one group to another.

For those working with young people, it is therefore necessary to attempt to comprehend their conceptualisation of their locality, and to try to understand how these 'social spaces interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another' (Lefebvre, 1991:86). Youth workers' images of the area may be very different to that of local young people.

One of the key investments that the young people made of local space was one of ethnicity. Kreuzberg was represented by many of the young people as a Turkish area – despite the fact that the Turks were a minority group in the district. In this respect, I was told by one young person that 'Germans do not come to Kreuzberg, because if they do they get beaten up'. Whilst this statement seems to border on the ridiculous if one takes Kreuzberg to mean the spatially bounded space, an

understanding of Kreuzberg as a 'lived' place for this young man helps us to realise the significance of this opinion. The social networks of the young people I worked with were almost exclusively Turkish, and thus ethnicity became conflated with locality. As Solomos and Back explain, 'race is a privileged metaphor through which the confused text of the city is rendered comprehensible' (1995:41). The lived experiences of the young people validated this metaphor.

Narratives of race and ethnicity, however, also need to be contextualised as we recognise their role as social constructs. Whilst in Kreuzberg there are a number of members' clubs for Turkish immigrants from different regions of the country, for the younger generation the ethnic boundaries of their parents seem to have become more porous. One example of this is the apparent resolution amongst this second generation of some of the conflicts surrounding the national status of Turkey. The Alevi Muslims and Kurds, for example, were both included in this racial discourse without being distinguished – unlike in mainstream discourses of 'Turkishness'. This is not to say that all conflict was 'magically' resolved (see Cohen, 1980). Indeed, this could be seen as similar to Thornton's description of rave culture (1996), with class and ethnic divides being momentarily set aside over the youth centre's pool table. However, whilst these discourses fitted with the locality-based narratives of Kreuzberg as a marginalised, alternative sphere, in other narratives, for example those around belonging in the home-space or nation state, these momentary alliances would often revert back to their previous form. One example of how this affected young people was the turmoil one young man experienced. Of Turkish descent, his girlfriend was Kurdish. Whilst this was acceptable in the locality-based discourses of the young people (she fitted into that image of Kreuzberg and local representations of 'Turkishness'), his worries about how this may have been viewed by his family and how it fitted with his Turkish nationalism (in both cases she was constructed as the 'outsider') led to constant internal conflict. As in so many cases, narratives of community can here be identified as both inclusive excluded and exclusive (see Brent, 2009:166).

If we are to understand Kreuzberg as a social and cultural sphere as well as a spatial one, then we must ask ourselves what happens to those people outside the area who share the same culture, and those inside who do not. In this sense narratives of locality can be seen to mirror those of nationality. Whilst ostentatiously billed as spatial constructs, one's presence in a nation does not secure the acceptance of narratives of one's 'belonging' there. Likewise, those 'outside' can claim membership. Whilst making a film at the youth centre, one of the young people took the opportunity to enthusiastically proclaim his 'insider' status:

*Osman: Yo, yo, Kreuzberg 36, yeh, my name is Osman, yeh, I come from Kreuzberg, yeh, 36.
Voice in off: Hey, you come from Tempelhof [another residential area in south Berlin]
Osman (looking embarrassed): Ok, I come from Tempelhof.*

Although immediately corrected on the spatial discrepancy of his statement, Osman obviously believed himself (and was widely perceived to be) part of the cultural Kreuzberg community, even

if he was not actually from there. In the same film, I asked a young person what it meant to come from Kreuzberg. He proceeded to list the attributes necessary to fit in:

Mahdi: First step, dress cool; second step, come to Naunynritze; third step, don't wear any sad stuff.

Off camera, he continued to list a number of other factors – mostly based around misogynistic relationships with girls and knowledge of hip-hop styles. The assumption here was that if you shared the same moral basis discussed above and correctly negotiated the clothing and music styles adopted by this Kreuzberg community, you could become a member of this locality-based narrative, regardless of where you lived.

The same, however, could not be said of young people who lived in Kreuzberg, but did not possess the 'cultural capital' (see Thornton, 1996) necessary to 'belong' to these images of Kreuzberg. Regardless of the physical presence of other images of Kreuzberg within the centre (for example, rock gigs performed by local German young people), the viability of the exclusive narratives of the regulars' images of 'their' Kreuzberg beyond the confines of the community itself meant that the cultural spaces created by these narratives went largely unchallenged – most other young Kreuzbergers sadly avoided the centre and contact with the young people there. The exclusion of some young residents of Kreuzberg from the locality-based narratives of the young people I worked with at Naunynritze was therefore both active (the policing of cultural boundaries through fashion symbols, for example), and passive, with the co-option of the narratives of cultural boundaries by those 'outside' of the group. It is important to stress that this does not mean that those excluded from these narratives felt they did not 'belong' in Kreuzberg. Indeed, it is conceivable that their own discursive constructions of the area excluded the young people I worked with from alternative narratives of belonging.

Alongside the recognition of the ability of locality-based narratives to both include and exclude, it is useful also to briefly note that they can be oppressive for those 'inside' them. One ex-gang member who had left the area told me he had done so in order to escape the 'claustrophobic' nature of living in Kreuzberg. As an integral part of the historical construction of the identification of Kreuzberg, the only way to liberate himself from what he saw as the restrictive cultural assumptions within the area was to leave entirely. One can only hypothesise that some with less confidence or economic security are subsumed into narratives of belonging against their will (for an example of this, see Brent, 2001:11).

The conflating of images of Kreuzberg with brands and hip-hop was a key factor in the young people's understanding of the area. This may seem to be contradictory – the use of international styles to represent the local. It is here that the concept of the 'glocal' can help us to understand

this phenomenon. By adopting international styles the young people were able to utilise them to understand their own local experiences. Although Kreuzberg, with its bustling legal economy, ethnic and social mix and good transport links may seem far removed from the idea of the ghetto espoused in many of the tracks the young people listened to, the young people found affinity with the lyrics about social and economic exclusion and cultural adaptation to this. Yet again, we see here how the social representation is extrapolated from its spatial context. The cultural manifestations of 'ghetto culture' as represented in hip-hop lyrics were divorced from the spatially bounded nature of the ghetto by the young people, and transposed onto their own lived experiences. The ghetto thus becomes a series of cultural attributes and actions (such as gun-ownership), which can be adapted to local specificities. Therefore young people did not simply adopt American hip-hop styles; these styles were adapted, re-read, to represent the *local* circumstances.

Willis writes that:

People bring living identities to commerce and the consumption of cultural commodities as well as being formed there. They bring experiences, feelings, social position, and social memberships to the encounter with commerce. Hence they bring a necessary creative symbolic pressure, not only to make sense of cultural commodities, but partly through them also to make sense of contradiction and structure as they experience them in school, college, production, neighbourhood, and as members of certain genders, races, classes and ages (in Miles, 2000:118).

It is important to understand the complexity of this process. It is not simply a one-way exchange, whereby the young people adopt hip-hop imagery. This imagery itself can have multiple meanings, and has to be understood *through* the 'living identities' of the young people. I would argue that the cultural meanings of globalised commerce are not simply appropriated, with completely new meanings created, but that they are formed in a dialectical relationship. Young people construct an understanding of their lives by using hip-hop imagery, but at the same time this imagery is understood through the filter of their lived experiences.

By linking images of Kreuzberg with hip-hop, I believe that the young people are symbolising a new understanding of the nature of locality. Untethered from its purely structuralist, spatially-bounded roots, locality as a cultural sphere is able to represent both the lived experiences of the young people and their understanding of their place in a globalised world. For the young people with whom I worked, the choice of identities – either Turkish or German – offered them by mainstream society was too restrictive. These national identities remain imbued with sentiments of modernist, essentialist 'nation-building'. By constructing their own 'imagined community', that reflected the hybrid, globalised nature of their identifications, the young people were able to 'magically' solve this dilemma. Far from 'shrinking the world', the young people were in fact

using these locality-based identities to reconfigure spatio-cultural relations to situate their localised life experiences globally.

In this section I have demonstrated a variety of ways in which ideas surrounding locality affected the young people with whom I worked at Naunynritze. Such a short piece has not been able to do justice to some of the complexities involved in this relationship. Each young person brought with them their personal experiences and the experiences of those close to them to create individual, unique concepts of the role of Kreuzberg in their understanding of themselves. Nor should the trends I have identified here be seen as either directly transferable to other groups of young people or as being a definitive description of these young people's experiences of locality. As Karn tells us, 'claims about the nature of a place [do not] necessarily reflect a timeless, essentialist sense of identity. Identities of place are subject to change and contest' (2007:58). Nevertheless, it is possible to add the concepts I have developed here to those proposed above by the 'neighbourhood studies' and 'post-subculturalists'. These concepts can be represented as follows:

1. Locality is a socio-cultural construction based on social narratives and signifiers. The spatial boundaries of neighbourhoods are only one element in its significance. They can be superseded by historical, cultural and social narratives that reconstruct the notion of the locality as a cultural, rather than spatial, entity.
2. These signifiers are themselves based on local experiences. As in the case of ethnicity in Kreuzberg, these signifiers are constructed within the context of the locality. Kreuzberg can thus be viewed as a Turkish area by the young people, but what it means to be Turkish in Kreuzberg may be different from what it means to be Turkish in other contexts.
3. Identifications with locality can contradict other identifications. Young people's identities are multiple – those based on locality form only one part of their wider self-representation. This can lead to internal conflict as the cultural and social significance of their locality-based identifications clash with other conceptions of the self. These other identifications do not, however, necessarily cancel out the importance of locality.
4. Representations of locality can be inclusive, exclusive and controlling. Narratives of belonging to a locality can be used to include those who live outside of the area but are deemed as culturally 'assimilated'. They can also be used to exclude those from the area who express themselves differently, or oppress those who wish to do so but fear being marginalised by their peers.
5. Images of locality adopt and adapt global styles and identities. Whilst Massey concludes that 'this challenges the idea that "local cultures" are understood as locally produced

systems of social interaction and symbolic meaning' (1998:123), I would argue that it is precisely these global styles that enable young people to produce and understand these 'interactions' and 'meanings'. By appropriating the notion of the spatially bounded locality and situating it as a globalised cultural sphere, young people create a space that represents their globalised selves in opposition to structured and controlling narratives of the nation state.

The question that must arise from this approach is what role structural inequalities have to play in relation to this. In the description above, the young people appear to be largely in control of their relationship with Kreuzberg. Nevertheless, these young people are some of the most economically, socially and educationally excluded young people in Berlin, indeed in Kreuzberg. Maffesoli writes that 'an integral part of the collective imagination, the neighbourhood is nevertheless only constituted by the intersection of ordinary situation, moments, spaces and individuals' (1996:22). The young people's construction of their locality-based identity is heavily influenced by 'the grinding, relentless nature of oppression' (Pile and Thrift, 1995:371), the structural inequality they experience on a daily basis. By seeming to reverse the power to exclude and include, the power to assign meaning and symbolically locate power, they are seeking ways to situate themselves against their own exclusion. For those working with young people around issues of locality, it is essential not to forget that narratives of belonging do not translate into structural ownership.

Conclusion

Young people's experiences of locality are as complex and varied as young people themselves. Any attempt to disprove one 'conclusive' theory by introducing another can only lead to a confusion that does nothing to help those working alongside young people to negotiate their lived experiences. What I therefore propose is a series of questions (in themselves not definitive) for those working with young people to pose themselves.

Does the young person express an identification with their neighbourhood?

If not, is this because they are excluded from narratives of locality-based belonging, feel that these lack relevance to their lives, or see them to be unimportant or non-existent?

If they do express this identification, where do they get their images of their neighbourhood from? Are they positive or negative?

What social and cultural attributes do they associate with their neighbourhood? Do they feel that they possess them?

Do they use these attributes to exclude those who do not have them, or to control those who may wish to express themselves in a different way?

Does their notion of locality mean that they feel excluded from other neighbourhoods? Could it prevent them from confidently moving to another locality?

How does their locality-based identification relate to any other identifications they may have? If they clash, how do they resolve this?

How does their understanding of their locality help them to situate themselves in a globalised world?

It may not be possible to answer all of these questions. However, if we are to try to understand the way young people situate themselves in the world (whether socially, culturally, vocationally...) what better place to start looking than where most young people spend the majority of their time – in their neighbourhood? By approaching this subject matter with an open mind it is possible to advance one's understanding of the complexities that surround it. I suggest that this approach enables a more reflective style of youth work when dealing with issues of locality-based identifications. Whilst the conclusions may not be definitive, the process, I believe, is invaluable.

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Youth Work and State Education: Should Youth Workers Apply to Set Up a Free School?

Max Hope

Abstract:

The UK Coalition Government's new policy on Free Schools presents a dilemma for youth workers. Is there any possibility of establishing a 'youth worker – led Free School' based on the principles and values of youth work? Do the potential pitfalls make this too risky to even consider? This article outlines the policy on Free Schools, and assesses the potential for youth workers to run a radical and creative alternative to mainstream education. It includes a summary of the key issues to consider, and concludes with a suggestion about which types of Free Schools are most likely to be consistent with the values and principles of youth work.

Key words: Free schools, policy, state education, ethics, values.

BRITAIN IS IN ITS deepest recession since the 1930s and the Coalition Government has responded by, amongst other things, cutting funding to public services. Some argue that this is a purely pragmatic response to the debt crisis; others accuse the Conservatives of hiding behind the economy whilst fulfilling their political ambitions of rolling back the state (Sparrow, 2010). Whatever the reasons, the impact remains the same. Youth and community work is under threat. Youth centres are shutting down. Frontline services are being streamlined. Youth workers are being made redundant (Watson, 29 June 2010). Fewer young people are able to access youth work and youth workers.

Yet at the same time, the Coalition Government has announced new policies – the Big Society, the Localism bill, the Academies Act, to name but a few. Some of these involve 'new money' (or cynically, a redistribution of money taken from other services). Is there any possibility that these new policies offer opportunities to youth workers to benefit from 'new money'? Could youth workers apply to run Free Schools, for example, and still stay true to the ethical and professional principles of youth work?

This article outlines the policy on Free Schools (embedded in the Academies Act 2010) and explores the potential – and the contradictions – for extending youth work into this arena. It will be argued that the policy on Free Schools does provide an opportunity – albeit a risky one – for

youth workers to step into the state education system in a more formal way. It includes a series of recommendations about the key issues to consider, and concludes with a suggestion as to which types of Free Schools are most likely to be consistent with the values and principles of youth work.

What are Free Schools?

The Conservative Party has long since held ambitions to offer autonomy and freedom to schools within the state education system. Examples of this were seen in the 1980s when their ‘New Right’ agenda was in full force. At this time, policies were designed to aid parental choice and increase competition between schools – to introduce free-market economics to the education system (Carr and Hartnett, 1996). The policy on Free Schools might best be seen as an extension of these ideas – as another way of helping parents to choose between (and in some cases set up) local schools. It is, of course, also a policy which redistributes power to make decisions about schools from Local Authorities to National Government. The political importance of this should not be underestimated.

Free Schools were established as part of the Academies Act 2010. This Act had two key features. First, it enabled all state schools to apply for Academy status, with the associated benefit of more autonomy for Head Teachers to make decisions about their schools. Second, it enabled groups of individuals to apply to set up their own, state-funded schools (‘Free Schools’). These provisions signal a dramatic change to the education system as prior to this, Academy status had been reserved for ‘failing schools’ which were forcibly taken over and re-launched as Academies. There was no provision for ordinary people to apply for state funding for schools. The Coalition Government have made much of these changes. Michael Gove, Education Secretary, claimed that they signalled ‘radical, whole-scale reform’ (Gove, 20 June 2011).

According to the Department for Education:

Free Schools are non-profit making, independent, state-funded schools. There is not a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach. They are not defined by size or location: there is not a single type of Free School or a single reason for setting them up. Free Schools could be primary or secondary schools. They could be located in traditional school buildings or appropriate community spaces such as office buildings or church halls. They could be set up by a wide range of proposers – including charities, universities, businesses, educational groups, visionary teachers or committed parents – who want to make a difference to the educational landscape (Department for Education, 2011a).

In this statement, one sentence stands out – ‘There is not a “one-size-fits-all” approach’. This

message has been reiterated by Gove who has said:

And for those of you who may have concerns that I am in love with one particular model of school structure and wish to impose it by relentless diktat let me make clear – my desire to see academy freedoms extended springs from precisely the opposite impulse – it’s because I want to see more diversity, more creativity, more professional freedom – that I want to extend autonomy (Gove, 2010a).

This desire for ‘more diversity, more creativity, more professional freedom’ is permissive and implies that Gove is open to a range of different models of Free School. In fairness to him, this sentiment has been carried through in practice so far. An analysis of the first few approved Free Schools suggests that there will be at least some element of diversity; of the first 16 which were approved, there were five faith schools, eleven primaries, and one was based on Montessori principles. Since this, dozens of Free Schools have been approved, including many in deprived communities, several offering alternative curriculums, some special schools, and even one run on co-operative principles. Does this mean that a Free School could be run by youth workers, working in partnership with young people, and based on the ethics and principles of youth work?

Youth workers have not yet been specifically named as one of the groups who might like to set up a Free School (Department for Education, 2011b). However, given that teachers, parents, charities, business, and community and faith groups have been listed, it might be assumed that youth workers might feature in one or more of these categories – charities, or community and faith groups, for example. Prime Minister David Cameron has spoken positively about the contribution which youth workers have made to the education system:

... we need a whole new relationship between state schools and those voluntary bodies and social enterprises which have real expertise in turning around kids who get excluded ... I have seen some extraordinary projects – places like the Lighthouse Group in Bradford, Amelia Farm in Wales, Base 33 in my own constituency, Hill Holt Wood in Lincolnshire – where tough kids are turned around through a mixture of discipline and kindness and hard work ... What do these places all have in common? They tend to include a mix of youth workers and teachers and other professionals specialising in working with children. The people who work there have a vocation not just to educate but to bring up the kids they’re trusted with. They provide holistic, personal care (Cameron, 31 July 2007).

There is one more point worth mentioning. Although all Free Schools must have non-selective admission procedures and serve the needs of a local community, they are not restricted to being either a primary or a secondary school. It is possible to run an ‘alternative provision Free School’. In September 2012, Everton Football Club, for example, is opening an alternative provision Free

School for young people aged 14-19 'who would benefit from a wider range of learning styles and approaches' (Everton Football Club, 14 November 2011). Free Schools can also be offered which specifically target young people aged between 16 and 19, and, given that the compulsory age for leaving school is due to increase to 18 by the end of this Parliament, this is important as it is likely that even more young people will demand new provision that meets their needs.

Let us be clear. The Free School policy is controversial, and has been opposed by The Labour Party, the Teaching Unions, and even the Liberal Democrats (Anti Academies Alliance, 2011, NASUWT, 2011, BBC News, 20 June 2011, Vasagar and Mulholland, 20 September 2010). The main concerns of opponents are that the policy undermines the state education system and further increases divisions between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. There are also concerns about the funding arrangements and cost-effectiveness of these new schools. In addition, the flexibility in staffing and curriculum arrangements has raised questions about quality. Nonetheless, it has been adopted as policy and the first Free Schools opened in September 2011. This leaves youth workers in an interesting situation. By applying to open a Free School, they run the risk of associating themselves with a tainted policy and possibly alienating local schools and other partner organisations. By staying away from the policy, they potentially miss an opportunity to find creative and radical ways of meeting the educational needs of young people.

Youth workers as Free School providers?

The relationship between youth work and the education system is not simple. Youth workers are educators, of course, but their role has usually been defined in terms of informal – rather than formal – education (Jeffs and Smith, 2005). Nonetheless, there are numerous examples of how youth workers contribute to formal educational settings. Some youth workers are employed directly by schools to support informal and after-hours provision. Some youth projects have informal partnerships with schools and run teaching sessions such as drugs awareness, self-esteem or sexual health. Other youth centres have formal partnerships and are paid to offer alternative education packages to individual students, possibly those who have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion. Outside of mainstream settings, youth workers sometimes support the work of Home Education Teams, Pupil Referral Units, Colleges or Vocational Providers. What youth workers offer in these contexts and settings is an alternative way of working – and this is crucial. When youth projects engage with young people as part of a formal education system, they still find ways of holding to their own values and principles. The importance of using conversation, for example, stays central to the work (Young, 2006).

Jeffs and Smith state that 'Educators in formal and informal settings ... have far more in common than both often admit' (2005: 22). They challenge the assumption that youth workers and

schoolteachers are diametrically opposed, arguing that teachers sometimes use informal methods and youth workers formal ones. With the Academies Act, this could potentially become even more apparent. Teachers in Academies have more freedom to work flexibly in terms of curriculum, teaching methods, and the organisation of the school day. They also have greater control over budgets. Youth workers may therefore be able to negotiate a place within these new systems.

Whether this involvement in formal education should extend as far as running a youth worker – led Free School is of course another question. Before considering this, it is important to be clear about the purpose of youth work. In 2007, the National Youth Agency produced the following statement:

Youth work helps young people learn about themselves, others and society through activities that combine enjoyment, challenge, learning and achievement. It is a developmental process that starts in places and at times when young people themselves are ready to engage, learn and make use of it. The relationship between youth worker and young person is central to this process (National Youth Agency, 2007).

In a separate document, eight key values and principles of youth work are outlined: (1) Treat young people with respect; (2) Respect and promote young people’s rights to make their own decisions and choices; (3) Promote and ensure the welfare and safety of young people; (4) Contribute towards the promotion of social justice; (5) Recognise the boundaries between personal and professional life; (6) Recognise the need to be accountable to young people; (7) Develop and maintain the required skills and competence; and (8) Work for conditions in employing agencies where these principles are discussed, evaluated and upheld (National Youth Agency, 2004).

The central question to address is whether it is possible for the purpose of youth work, and for these values and principles, to underpin practice in a Free School. At the time of writing, this question is purely hypothetical as there has – as yet – not been a test case to try this out. In principle though, there appears to be nothing on paper which stops the proposers of a Free School working within these parameters. There are a number of youth work values which would need to be considered though – first, by the youth workers completing the application; and second, by Gove and the Department for Education. Two of these will now be explored.

A central consideration for youth workers relates to the principle of voluntarism, or starting where and when young people are ready to engage. Running a Free School would be part of a compulsory education system, and as such, young people would have to attend. Any non-attendance or unauthorised absence would have to be reported. This could potentially compromise the integrity of a youth worker, but it is important to note here that being part of a compulsory education system does not necessarily mean that all lessons have to be compulsory. There are at least two schools in England which do not have compulsory attendance at lessons – Summerhill School in Suffolk

and Sands School in Devon (Sands School, 2011, Summerhill School, 2011). In 1999, the issue of non-compulsory lessons at Summerhill caused conflict with Ofsted (see Vaughan, 2006 for the full story). In this case, Ofsted wanted Summerhill to make lessons compulsory, but Summerhill refused. They took Ofsted to the High Court, arguing that students learned as much outside of lessons as in them – and they won. Lessons are still optional. For youth workers, this case is important because it helps to separate formal lessons from informal learning. Informal and non-formal learning can happen in many ways, and a youth work led Free School would presumably want to ensure that this was recognised. Although it would be compulsory for young people to attend school, there could be a great deal of flexibility about how they engaged in learning once they got there. It might be possible to argue, therefore, that the principle of voluntarism could be upheld.

A second issue relates to the nature of the relationships between youth workers and young people. In youth work, developing and maintaining good relationships – based on equality and respect – is central to the nature of the work. If youth workers were to be involved in a Free School, either alone or in partnership with teachers, maintaining these types of relationships would be vital. Now, it might be assumed that these types of relationships do not exist between most teachers and students, and that therefore, translating the youth work relationship to a Free School would prove difficult. This is not necessarily the case, as an exploration of two small schools in the independent sector demonstrates.

Sands School is a small secondary school in Devon. It is a fee-paying school, rated as ‘good’ and ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted. The reason this school might be of interest to youth workers is that it is a democratic school. It runs on principles of self-governance, it has no Head and no hierarchy. Students and staff collectively make decisions about the school through weekly School Meetings. The experience of the students at this school is dramatically different from any previous experiences that they had in mainstream schools. One explained that ‘the teachers treat you as equals’. Another said ‘it’s more like a big group of friends who learn stuff from each other than a stressful education’. In this school, teachers and students work together collaboratively. They treat each other with respect. In many ways, the relationships which are fostered are identical to those experienced in youth work settings (Hope, 2010).

The Small School is another independent school in Devon, but this one does not charge fees. It is run as a community school, relying on support from parents and local people for its survival. At this school, students described their experiences as being ‘very informal’, ‘really relaxed’ and ‘more like a youth club’. Although some teachers in this school used traditional didactic teaching methods, others were much more informal. Some were even youth workers and used many methods which would usually be seen within youth centres. In this school, the importance of developing good relationships between staff and students was explicit. The Head explained that the school was

‘run on a family model rather than school model’. For youth workers, this is interesting because it implies that there are different ways to run formal educational settings (Hope, 2010).

These examples show that it is possible to run schools – and good schools at that – which strive to develop strong relationships with young people. If youth workers wanted to run Free Schools, they would have to ensure that they took their experience from running effective youth clubs and youth organisations into these settings. In particular, young people would have to be central in terms of decision-making and governance. And this is where the clash could come with Gove. Although he talks of freedom, autonomy, diversity and creativity, it is unclear whether he would welcome a youth worker-run Free School. This is because the message from Government is not consistent. On the one hand, the Coalition Government want freedom, but on the other, they talk of ‘strong discipline’ and ‘traditional subjects’. In a speech to the Conservative Party Conference in October 2010, for example, Gove said:

We have to stop treating adults like children and children like adults. Under this Government we will ensure that the balance of power in the classroom changes – and teachers are back in charge ... At the moment heads are prevented from dealing with their pupils if they run wild in a shopping mall or behave anti-socially in town centres. So we will change the rules to send one clear – and consistent – message. Heads will have the freedom they need to keep pupils in line – any time, any place, anywhere (Gove, 2010b).

This message runs counter to many of the values of youth work. To talk of keeping ‘pupils in line’ and of ensuring teachers are ‘back in charge’ reinforces a traditional educational agenda – and one which youth workers have worked hard to avoid. It clearly positions teachers as superior, rather than equal, to students. This message is reinforced through a close examination of the guidance of how to set up a Free School. Of the numerous groups listed as able to apply to set up a Free School, and even those named in terms of who should be consulted, students do not feature even once (New Schools Network, 2010). They are clearly seen as recipients – but not designers – of education. If youth workers proposed that students were involved in the governance of a school, it is possible that this would be far more radical than the Coalition Government would be willing to accept.

Key Issues

If youth workers were even to consider applying to open a Free School, there are a number of points which must be considered. This list is far from exhaustive.

First, the questions of ‘what is a school?’, and ‘how do we value a good school?’ must be

considered. The answers to these must be consistent with the values and principles of youth work. Youth workers must not fall into the trap of imagining that a youth worker led Free School must model itself on the local state school. The Academies Act offers an alternative – a youth worker led Free School could be designed by youth workers and young people. This could involve building on good practice from all sectors, including independent schools such as Summerhill, Sands School or The Small School – but more importantly – using the experience of youth work organisations. However, and this is worth noting, the hidden message of the Coalition Government policy on Free Schools is not about freedom and choice. It is about improving educational standards. And of course, measuring the effectiveness of schools is a highly contested area. Is an ‘effective’ school one which produces a specific number of GCSE passes at a particular grade? Or is it one which supports young people to develop more holistically, as citizens? To apply to be a Free School means engaging in some of the debates. This is something that youth workers might reasonably choose to avoid.

Second, the issue of curriculum must be considered in some depth. The attempt to develop a curriculum for youth work has not been straightforward, so it might be assumed that developing a curriculum for a youth work led school would be even more challenging. The Government wants a ‘broad and balanced curriculum’ but does not demand the implementation of the National Curriculum. This leaves some flexibility, although it might reasonably be assumed that the curriculum would still need to include English, Maths, Science and Modern Languages. In order to adhere to the principles of youth work, though, youth workers would have to careful not to conflate ‘learning’ with ‘lessons’. The ‘curriculum’ would have to include recognition of informal learning that took place outside of formal lessons.

Third, attention would need to be paid to teaching and learning methods. The guidance on Free Schools is clear that staff at Free Schools do not have to have Qualified Teacher Status. If there is another way to organise staffing, then the school is free to choose. This means that a school could be run by a whole team of youth workers, or possibly by a combination of youth workers and qualified teachers. The decision on this might depend on the philosophy behind teaching and learning. Would some lessons be student-led, for example? If youth workers were teaching the formal curriculum, is there an expectation about how they would facilitate learning? If qualified teachers were employed, would they be expected to adhere to the values of youth work? The answers to these questions might vary, but one thing is clear. A youth worker led Free School would have to put relationships at the heart of learning.

Fourth, the thorny issue of assessment would need to be addressed. The Government has been clear that it wants Free Schools to raise ‘standards’, and by this, they mean exam results. At the end of the day, a youth worker run Free School would have to get embroiled with these debates. Now, in principle this may not be a problem. Many youth work organisations offer accreditations and qualifications as part of their work and so have developed extensive experience about assessment.

In practice, however, this could be more challenging as the young people who would be attracted to a youth worker led Free School would be likely to be those who struggle, for a variety of reasons, with formal assessments.

Finally, and probably most importantly, empowerment as a principle and as a practice must be firmly integrated within all of the structures and processes of a youth worker led Free School (Hope, 2011). This has implications for governance, leadership and decision-making at an organisational level, but also for issues of choice and control at a personal level. This is the key issue that will ensure that this youth worker led school is consistent with the values and ethics of youth work.

Conclusions

The Coalition Government wants to change the education system in this country. Gove wants ‘radical, whole-scale reform’ (Gove, 20 June 2011). Cameron hopes for a ‘people power revolution’ (Cameron, 8 July 2010). For them, the Academies Act 2010 signalled the start of the process, and it links with the desire for localism, for decentralisation, and for rolling back the state.

At the same time, dramatic cuts in public spending threaten youth services. Many youth workers face an uncertain future. And the removal of the Education Maintenance Allowance, the change in the way that Universities are funded and the raising of the school leaving age to 18 all affect – for better or worse – the educational futures of young people in this country.

In this political landscape, to suggest that youth workers even consider applying to set up a Free School might seem ludicrous. The policy is controversial, untested, and liable to change in line with political whims. And yet – for me at any rate – there is something about the idea that is intriguing. Could this be a new way, an innovative way, of working alongside young people to meet their needs?

In reality, the most likely way in which youth workers might set up a Free School would be to focus on developing an alternative provision Free School for young people alienated and/or excluded from mainstream schools. This is, after all, the type of work in which youth workers have developed considerable experience and demonstrated expertise. Another possibility is to run a Free School for young people aged 16-19. This could be an exciting addition to the educational choices for young people once it becomes compulsory for them to be in education until the age of 18.

What is certain is that the Coalition Government are working hard to change the relationship between ‘the state’ and ‘the people’. This has huge implications for everyone working in public service, including youth and community workers. The question that has been explored in this

article is whether youth workers want to engage with the Government head-on – such as through applying to open a Free School – or whether they want to stay outside the formal education system. It will be exciting to see what happens.

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Why Youth Participation? Some Justifications and Critiques of Youth Participation Using New Labour's Youth Policies as a Case Study

Rys Farthing

Abstract:

Despite an emerging consensus around the need for youth practitioners to 'do' participation, there has been limited exploration of why participation might be desirable in the first place. Often, heroic claims are made to justify participation, ranging from a radical capacity to liberate oppressed young people to achieving the utmost efficiency in youth policies and services. However, these justifications have rarely been interrogated. This paper attempts to address this anomaly by offering three analyses. Firstly, it constructs four ideal-type justifications for participation from existing literature; rights-based, empowerment, developmental and an efficiency justification. Secondly, it challenges these justifications against three emerging critiques of participation; radical, conservative and secular critiques. Thirdly, it uses New Labour's youth policies from 1997-2010 as a case study to highlight the need for critical reflection about the merits of participation before embracing it as an intrinsically 'good thing'.

Key words: Participation, youth work, youth development, youth policy.

PARTICIPATION HAS become such a powerful idea that is approaching orthodoxy or arguably, tyranny as a practice (Cooke and Kothari, 2002). This is especially true for youth practitioners; participation features centrally in much policy formation and is a near hegemonic practice in youth work. Heroic claims are often made to justify such participation, ranging from a radical capacity to liberate oppressed groups to the ability to achieve the utmost efficiency in policies and services. However for all of this popular currency, these justifications have rarely been interrogated. The aim of this paper is to provide an informed critique of youth participation, by interrogating why the process of participation might be a desirable practice for youth practitioners, and whether these justifications hold up to critique. This paper argues that rather than viewing participation as an intrinsically 'good thing', the merit of participation depends upon the type of society we want for young people in the first place.

This article addresses three areas. Firstly, it addresses an under-analysed area by synthesising

justifications for youth participation from existing literature. A typology of four ideal-type justifications is developed, suggesting that participation can be seen as desirable for its rights fulfilling capacities, its ability to empower young people, to achieve efficiency in services or to support youth development. Secondly, the article looks to other disciplines to develop three critiques of youth participation; a radical critique that suggests participation is an undesirable form of social control; a conservative critique that suggests it is ill-advised, and; a secular critique that suggests that participation is an unwarranted, obfuscated missionary tendency. These three critiques are then engaged to challenge the four dominant justifications for participation, critically evaluating the call for youth participation. Thirdly, applying this typology and critique, New Labour's youth policies from 1997-2010 are explored as a case study. This case study problematises the lack of clarity in applied policy justifications for participation. The conclusion suggests that current rationales for youth participation are vulnerable to critique, and that perhaps a more reflective exploration of the why of participation is needed if practitioners are serious about 'bettering the lot' of the young.

Such an exploration is necessary because, despite the near consensus around the need for youth practitioners of all varieties to engage in participation, it is not entirely clear why they must do so or, often, what it is they are engaging in. Without critically exploring the why of participation, embracing the practice becomes an act of faith; a much revered and little analysed habit. This act of faith rests on two assumptions (adapted from Cleaver, 2002: 36): firstly, that participation is intrinsically a good thing, especially for young people, and therefore secondly, that any further analytic developments need to be purely methodological. That is, if participation is inherently good, then we just need to get the methodology right. However, as this article argues, without critical reflection about what is a 'good thing' for young people in the first place, which is born from different visions of the 'good society', youth participation has the capacity to be potentially unhelpful to both individual young people, and young people as a social group.

This article is in essence, analytic in its approach and aims to synthesis existing literature into ideal types and broad schemas. It does, however, engage in some empirical analysis of New Labour's youth policies, with evidence drawn directly from policy documents themselves. The sample for this analysis is derived from Participation Works' outline of participation policy 1997-2010 (www.participationworks.org.uk, 2010).

Youth participation and justifications for its desirability

Before critically analysing why participation might be desirable, it is important to understand some of the multiple and contested definitions of participation already in use and to construct a working definition. Hart (1992: 5), in his seminal essay on youth participation, defined it perhaps too expansively as:

the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which a democracy is built and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured. Participation is the fundamental right of citizenship.

Since then, definitions that stress the process of participation have dominated. For example, Holdsworth (2001) suggested that:

participation is a verb, rather than a noun – it's a way of approaching our work, of looking at the ways in which society functions, of perceiving a desirable construction of “young people” within that society.

In further defining participation, a plethora of authors have offered a myriad of ideas that appear to coalesce around concepts of engagement in decision-making, taking part and active social citizenship for young people. An analysis of 14 different definitions of youth participation found that:

- Ten described it as making ‘decision/s’, while two noted the lesser power-sharing concept of ‘expressing views’ and two a more general ‘taking part’;
- Seven connected, or perhaps limited, these decisions to matters ‘affect/ing’ young people;
- Four noted that this needed to be ‘active’ or required ‘action’;
- Two associated this action with ‘citizenship’ and two referenced ‘em/power’. (See appendix one for the 14 definitions included).

From this analysis, the working definition of youth participation for the purposes of this paper is; that youth participation is *a process where young people, as active citizens, take part in, express views on, and have decision-making power about issues that affect them.*

Figure one: A word cloud made from 14 different definitions of participation (See Appendix One)



This definition is inextricably linked to normative claims about the merits of an active, democratic society. A concern about participation appears to reflect a deeper concern about the role of young people as ‘active citizens’ in society. This is underpinned by an implicit assumption that young people’s active engagement in democracy is an intrinsically good thing. This assumption has been little analysed, and despite the abundance of definitions laden with value claims, theorisation around the desirability of participation and articulations of its inherent ‘good’ have been limited (Thomas and Percy-Smith, 2010: 3). The literature around youth participation has been dominated by explorations of how to do participation, mostly through the constructing and refining typologies, for example, from Hart’s (1992) ‘ladder of participation’, Westthorp’s (1987) ‘modular vision’, Treseder’s (1997) ‘circles’, and Shier’s (2001) ‘stepping stone map’. While these have been useful tools for thinking about and extending how participation is done, typologies alone ‘are insufficient to address tensions in children and young people’s participation and assist in moving this participation forward’ (Kay and Tisdall, 2009: 318). Critical analysis of the reasons for participation itself, or the why of participation, have been limited to date.

Often articulations of justifications for participation are ‘thin’ in scope. For example, early works often simply cited an implicit connection between the process of participation and maximising ‘citizenship’ for young people. This may be a historical convenience; by the time participation became a serious topic of concern for academics and practitioners in the early 1990s, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) (1989) had guaranteed children the right to participate. Others simply suggested that it was a good idea as it helped to produce better services (see, for example, Schofield and Thoburn, 1996: 1), before addressing the more pressing question of how to ‘do’ participation.

Breaking with this general trend, three previous authors have given serious attention to articulating justifications for participation’s desirability:

Firstly, Sinclair and Franklin (2000) offered eight justifications for participation:

1. to uphold children’s rights;
2. to fulfil the State’s legal obligations and responsibilities;
3. to enhance the democratic process;
4. to improve services;
5. to improve decision making;
6. to promote children’s protection;
7. to build children’s skills; and
8. to empower and enhance self esteem.

Secondly, Warshak (2003) offered four key justifications:

1. an *enlightenment* justification that sees young people as bearers of their own truths that only they can share through participation;
2. an *empowerment* justification which suggests that participation can fulfil children's rights and shift power down the generations;
3. a citizenship rational, that sees participation as a way of maximising young people's *citizenship*; and
4. an *outcomes for relationships* based rationality, that suggests participation reduces intergenerational conflicts.

Thirdly, analysing justifications for participation in development, Cleaver (2002) suggests there is a means / ends binary in rationales. He suggests that essentially participation is sometimes justified as a means to some other desirable outcomes, such as increased policy effect or to build skills, or as an ends, where the process itself is seen as a good thing or a right.

As useful as these three schemas are as a starting point, they are not comprehensive. Conflating categories and combining schemas produces a more comprehensive ideal-type typology that is useful for analysing contemporary policy. As ideal-types in the Weberian sense (Weber, 1949) they are designed only to capture common analytic constructs and describe a set of underlying characteristics about the 'good society'; they speak to, rather than reflect actual cases. 'Inevitably, an ideal-type cannot capture all of the complex features of any specific social phenomena' (Giulianotti, 2011: 762). This modified typology offers four ideal-type justifications for participation:

1. A '*thin*' rights-based justification.

This is essentially a justification for participation that starts with the CRC. It suggests that young people are full, rights bearing citizens, and as such have the right to participate in decision-making that affects them. It points to the need to achieve this right to fulfil the UK's obligations as a duty bearer.

The vision of the 'good society' invoked by this justification is of a nation-state that upholds its international legal obligations, as codified in various human rights charters.

2. *Participation as radical empowerment.*

The second argument, which stems closely from the first, presents a critical call for young people's collective empowerment *per se*. While the CRC may provide the initial imperative for a rights-based justification, the empowerment justification moves beyond a call to simply fulfil prescriptive rights obligations, into a more progressive call for young people's participation as a radical tool for empowerment. This justification reflects the ideas captured in the *New Sociology of Childhood* (Prout and James, 1997, Qvortrup, Corsarso and Honig, 2009) – which suggests that social positioning has rendered children and young people marginalised

and oppressed. Proponents of this justification suggest that participation, as a process that requires power sharing, can shift the balance of power between the generations and redress young people's marginalisation. The implicit claim is that young people's marginalisation and oppression is a 'bad thing', so their empowerment must be a 'good thing'.

This justification invokes a particular normative view of democracy (see for example, Dryzek, 2002). It views the 'good society' as active and inclusive, as a democracy where all people participate in decision-making, especially children and young people. This vision of a good society fits nicely with the critical pedagogy (see for example, Freire, 2000) underpinning some youth work practice in the UK.

To clarify the distinction between the first and second categories is not to suggest that a rights-based argument for participation is necessarily 'thin' or unempowering but rather that it does not always, or necessarily, lead to a position where participation is advocated on the basis that there is a need to empower young people and that such empowerment is a good thing. Some rights-based arguments call only for the fulfilment of the right to participate for its own sake, and speak to a different vision of the 'good society' for young people.

3. *Participation for efficiency in policy/practice/services.*

The efficiency argument implies that participation with young people – through some sort of 'enlightenment effect' (Mannion, 2007) – produces more informed policy or practice. This rationale suggests that young people best know real truths about youth, and that if adults can come to know these truths through participation, policy and practice can be improved. In this context, youth participation is seen as desirable as a source of knowledge for policy makers and practitioners.

This justification speaks to a vision of young people as citizen-consumers. It invokes a neo-liberal vision of the good society, where young people's citizenship comes to be realised through the consumption of services. The relationship between the state and the market is shifting, and public services are increasingly being modernised and reformed around the discourse of the 'consumer' (Clarke et al, 2007). The role of young people in this reforming state is as a particular category of citizen-consumers. The good society then, is one where the state provides efficient, market like services, and the good citizen-consumer exercises their 'choice' (Le Grand, 2007) to improve this provision.

4. *Developmental justification.*

The fourth argument suggests that participation is desirable because it can be used to encourage positive youth development. It suggests that by engaging in decision-making, young people can learn the social and emotional skills necessary to thrive as adults. While this rationale often

lacks a clear articulation of the specific developmental theory underpinning this claim, the development of self-esteem, confidence, negotiation skills, a sense of autonomy and a host of other ‘soft’ skills expected from participation, are integral to a range of developmental theories (such as Erickson (1959), Kohlberg (1981), Piaget (1928) and Vygotsky (in Smidt, 2008)). While occasionally development is discussed as ‘empowering’, such empowerment is always individual rather than collective.

This justification is somewhat agnostic in its visions of the good society. It obfuscates any discussion about what a good society might look like and rather argues that participation is good because it is a tool to enable young people to develop into functional adults within this unexamined society. It is an individualised and conservative analysis – the idea of participation is to develop model citizens, with limited critical reflection about what sort of society they should be citizens of.

Table one: typologies of justifications for participation

Rights-based

- Sinclair and Franklin (2000)
 - to uphold children’s rights
 - to fulfil the state’s legal obligations and responsibilities
- Warshak (2003)
 - citizenship rationale
- Cleaver (2002)
 - ‘ends’

Empowerment

- Sinclair and Franklin (2000)
 - to enhance democratic decision making
- Warshak (2003)
 - empowerment
- Cleaver (2002)
 - ‘ends’

Efficiency

- Sinclair and Franklin (2000)
 - to improve services
 - to improve decision making
 - to promote protection
- Warshak (2003)
 - enlightenment rationale (depending on why you enlighten)
 - outcomes for relationships (depending on why you value relationships)
- Cleaver (2002)
 - ‘means’

Developmental

- Sinclair and Franklin (2000)
 - to build children’s skills and to empower and enhance self-esteem

While alternate typologies may be possible, or distinctions between categories may prove unwarranted, this typology provides a useful analytic tool for critique. This typology is not meant to be the ‘final say’, rather it facilitates a critical discussion about why participation may or may not be desirable.

Critiques of youth participation

Critiquing participation is necessary to understand why participation may or may not be desirable. Borrowing heavily from other disciplines three existing critiques of participation itself (rather than its methodology) can be identified.

1. *The radical critique*

The radical critique of youth participation suggests that far from empowering youth, participation is simply a new form of governmentality (Bessant, 2003), and this is implicitly a ‘bad thing’. While still emergent, this is perhaps the most dominant critique and has emerged in the fields of youth studies, critical theory and international development.

This critique suggests that the act of including young people in decision-making processes is perhaps best understood as another exercise in power over them. As Cohen (1985) suggests, bringing the most ‘excluded’ to the table can ensure that those with the greatest reason to challenge the state’s existing power structures, continue to conform. Engaging young people through ‘participation’, gathering their thoughts on policy X or service Y does not empower them, rather it simply placates them and increases the likelihood that young people will comply with policy X or use service Y appropriately. According to this critique, participation is best understood as a hegemonic tool for social control, or a cosmetic device designed to secure compliance with an existing power structure (Taylor, 2002, 136) and is a deeply conservative practice.

Participation is arguably not empowering because the concept of ‘power’ used to link participation to empowerment is inadequate. Lukes’ (2005) theory of power highlights this inadequacy. As Lukes (2005) suggested, power ‘over people’ can exist across three dimensions, and acts in more ways than participatory practice acknowledges. Power is not simply the power of one group over another, in this case the power of older people to make young people do X or Y. This one-dimensional view of power sees it simply as a force that is negotiated between people(s). Power also exists in setting the terms of engagement for this negotiation, or what Lukes (2005) called the two-dimensional view of power. Along this second dimension, young people clearly have very little say in setting the terms of engagement for participation. As the British policy context discussed below highlights, a very adult agenda sets the terms of engagement for young people’s participation and outlines why they would like them to do so. Non-participation is not a valid

option for young people; there is no ‘opposite’ to participation to choose. If young people reject the terms of the debate and choose not to participate, they are very much cast as deviant. This was powerfully highlighted by the *Youth Matters* (DfES, 2005) policy document, which explicitly outlined consequences for young people who choose not to participate positively. In this sense, by participating in the first place, young people merely play the reshaped role the government has already set out for them; this might not be empowering.

Power however, also exists in a critical third dimension (Lukes, 2005). This third dimension for Lukes, following the works of Foucault (1964) and Gramsci (1998), highlights the ability of the powerful to shape the norms and values of the powerless. Even the shaping of young people as targets for participation – regardless of the justification – is an exercise of power. Engaging ‘young people’ in participation already requires the development of the construct of ‘youth’ in which young people probably had little say. According to this critique, participation is not empowering. It does not gift power from one generation to the other, but rather reinforces the very power relations it claims to challenge through complex, less visible manipulations.

In practice, Bessant (2003 and 2004) persuasively developed this argument in the field of youth studies. Exploring Commonwealth youth policies, she suggested that participation was largely being used as a tool to regulate young people’s behaviour, and that this both manipulated and disempowered young people further. Likewise, authors in the field of development studies have highlighted the disempowerment of participation, suggested that the more participatory the inquiry, the more the outcome will mask power structures (Woodhouse, 1998).

For many critical youth practitioners, this might be especially troubling. For example in their powerful open letter, the In Defence of Youth Work Coalition (2009) criticised modern practice as too state oriented:

... thirty years ago Youth Work aspired to a special relationship with young people ... It claimed to be ‘on their side’. Three decades later Youth Work is close to abandoning this distinctive commitment. Today it accepts the State’s terms. It sides with the State’s agenda.

If participation simply increases compliance with ‘the State’s agenda’, it may not be a desirable practice for youth workers.

2. *The conservative critique*

Quite in contrast, a conservative critique of participation can be developed that suggests that perhaps the valorisation of young people’s knowledge and input is at best naïve, and at worst damaging. Such a position starts with the acknowledgement that participation is underpinned by a rejection of a traditional epistemology; it requires a rejection of adult, professional knowledge

in favour of young people's 'truths'. However this critique questions whether this epistemological inversion is desirable. There are many situations where experts or adults can know best and produce the best outcomes. The many idioms around 'wisdom through experience' or 'wise with age' encapsulate this notion.

Many developmental theories support this pointing to the ways in which children and young people grow both physically and cognitively. Developmental theories that explain or typologise young people's growth inherently point to biological limitations to young people's capacities at given points in time. According to developmental theory, there are things young people can do, understand or know at different stages as they age. Young people develop different knowledge schemas at different stages (as Piaget (1928) and Vygotsky (in Smidt, 2008) highlight) and develop social behaviours as they age (see for example Bronfenbrenner, 1979 or Bowlby, 1988). Some neuropsychologists have even suggested the brain structure necessary to be rational only emerges at 25 years old (Straunch, 2004). The corollary of these arguments is that there are things young people cannot do, understand or know before 'their time'. Given this, privileging the knowledge of less capable young people over competent adults would be deeply perverse.

The conservative critique suggests that if young people are limited in what they can know or understand, it is not appropriate to seek their input in decisions that affect them before they are old enough (think: ask a child what they want for dinner, they reply 'sweets'). Rather it is more appropriate to seek expert knowledge to guide these decisions until such time as young people grow into rational, fully evolved adults (think: ask a dietician what a child should have for dinner, they say 'a balanced meal, probably with greens'). This position suggests that participation skews the balance between expert opinion and young people's opinion, and that this can lead to bad outcomes for young people. If the view of some developmental neuropsychologists that young people lack rational competence before the age of 25 is accepted, (Straunch, 2004), sharing any power in important decision making with young people could be a bad idea.

This critique is not often explicitly articulated (although see Purdy, 1992 for an example). However, it can be 'read off' paternalistic youth policies and practices, and takes form, in small ways, through the exercise of welfare paternalism. Young people's knowledge is deferred to parental or professional expertise on a daily basis, for 'their own good'. Young people are often coerced or forced to do things they do not want to do, for reasons they either do not understand, are not told, or outright reject; from going to school, not getting tattoos to delaying unprotected sex. Against their own wishes, young people often get an education, do not get Jedward tattoos and avoid risks of STIs. It would be a very radical youth practitioner (or big Jedward fan) to suggest that these are bad outcomes, or that privileging this parental or professional knowledge over young people in these cases was wrong. Participation according to this critique then, is not just desirable in and of itself alone.

3. *A Secular critique*

Perhaps the most marginal of the critiques, Henkel and Stirrat (2002: 174) suggest that the notion of participation bears many markers of Protestant religiosity and is therefore vulnerable to a secular critique. For Henkel and Stirrat (2002), participation is best understood as the realisation of Protestant ecclesiastical law in practice. This is evidenced by:

- the focus on reversals (think ‘the meek shall inherit the earth’ as a metaphor for empowering earthly marginalised groups like the young);
- the valorisation of integrating dissenting opinions through a process of co-operation (Martin Luther’s legitimate dissent in the reformation sets a powerful precedent for practitioners to strive to include dissenting opinions);
- the significance placed on conversation and dialogue; and
- the duality of good and evil presented in defining processes (participation is good, non participation is evil).

Beyond this, participation has reached an almost hegemonic status for practitioners, and can be seen as a system of world ordering knowledge that is defended by the passionate faith of a community of believers, rather than critical reflection (Henkel and Stirrat, 2002).

While this critique argues that participation is a distinctly Protestant act, more broadly participation also bears hallmarks of Catholic teachings. For example, one legacy from Vatican II was a belief that ‘only dialogue and negotiation can solve conflict’ (Bishop Tong Hon in O’Connell, 2012).

While drawing parallels between the process of participation and the practices of the Protestant faith does not necessarily undermine the call for participation, it does highlight the possibility of unarticulated, alternative motivations. If participation is simply the acting out of deeply protestant tendencies, far from being ‘good practice’, participation might just be a deeply obfuscated missionary act. The appropriateness of participation for young people of alternate or no faiths is clearly questionable.

Do these critiques challenge the ideal-type justifications of why participation might be desirable?

Having outlined four rationales for participation and three critiques, the next logical step is to connect them. A shortened summary of this comparison is presented in table 2.

1. *Critiques of the rights-based justification.*

Firstly, the rights-based justification – which suggests that participation is desirable because it

fulfils young people's rights – is vulnerable to perhaps all three critiques, depending on how 'thin' the conception of human rights is. If the purpose of achieving rights is an end unto itself, then the process of participation is vulnerable to a conservative and secular critique. The conservative critique, which suggests that participation badly skews the balance between expert opinion and young people's opinion, provides a rather potent critique for a rights-based justification. Article 5 of the CRC outlines that the state has an obligation to ensure that family members, community members and professionals responsible for a child 'provide in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognised in [CRC, 1989]'. Participation – according to a conservative critique – can place too much emphasis on young people's opinions and desires before they are able to rationally offer them. It places the burden of making decisions on the still developing young person, and this may have severe consequences for the realisation of other rights. The right to an education, for example, may be undermined by a young person's choice to leave school early. A conservative critique simply suggests that participation does not necessarily produce the best outcomes for young people, and does not help them realise the rest of their rights effectively. This critique has been powerfully articulated by Purdy (1992), who at one point uses Piaget to suggest that realising children's rights might not be a good thing.

Secondly, according to a secular critique, participation for young people does not respect their right to freedom of religion as enshrined in the CRC. If participation is an obfuscated missionary act, asking non-Protestant children to participate is simply proselytising. Article 14 of the CRC protects children's right to religious freedom.

Both of these critiques however, simply point to the need to balance the right to participate against other rights enshrined in the CRC – they do not suggest that the 'participation project' should be entirely abandoned. It forces practitioners to ask the deeper question of 'human rights for what?', to devise a fuller conception of human rights, before they can decide how to balance these competing demands.

If the conception of human rights is already somewhat 'fuller'" (or embedded more in critical pedagogy than legal normativity) so that article 12 is read as a call for age-based equality, then the rights-based justification is vulnerable to a radical critique. A radical critique could suggest that a rights-based justification does not pay enough attention to the power relations inherent in the structuring of participation, so that in reality the act of participation can further marginalise young people. The right to participate for its own sake does not address fundamental power imbalances between generations.

2. Critiques of the empowerment justification

As alluded to above, the empowerment rationale for participation is vulnerable to a radical critique.

The empowerment justification suggests that participation is desirable because it empowers the young and views the good society as an inclusive democracy. However, there is much evidence to suggest that participation is all too easily co-opted by adult agendas (Cockburn, 2005) and that ‘the rhetoric around participation is not always matched by the delivery’ (Mannion, 2007: 409). Young people do not set the agenda for their participation, nor do they (as a group) choose to participate. Participation then, simply becomes another disempowering process for young people. This presents participatory practitioners with a critical paradox. If participation is intended to empower young people and develop an inclusive society, but actually functions an insidious form of social control, the participation project needs to be abandoned. The justification for embracing participation is mutually opposed to the practice.

Further, a conservative critique could suggest that the empowerment justification is misguided, as the empowerment of under-developed young people is probably not desirable in the first place. A secular critique could suggest that the desire for empowerment is simply the acting out of religious inversions, and inappropriate for non-Protestants.

3. *Critiques of the efficiency justification*

The efficiency argument, which suggests that participation is desirable because it improves services and policies and views the good society as essentially neo-liberal, is deeply challenged by a conservative critique. If the purpose of participation is to produce more efficient services or better youth outcomes, then prioritising young people’s knowledge does not always make sense. If there are some forms of knowledge that older people/professionals hold, they might be able to produce more efficient services or policies than young people. Developmental theory provides a strong argument against valorising young people’s knowledge over professional knowledge. This is not however, a call to abandon the participation project all together. Rather it suggests that the information gathered from participatory practices needs to be finely and carefully balanced against the knowledge of experts. This balancing and weighing, between youth and expert opinions, becomes the critical process to developing efficient services and policies; the ability of participation to almost magically make services and strategies effective is not guaranteed.

A radical critique could suggest that participation undertaken to improve policies and services is undesirable in the first place, as it is simply designed to ensure compliance. It would question the underlying assumption that young people’s docile role as citizen-consumers in a neo-liberal State is inherently a good thing.

Likewise, a secular critique could hold that participation undertaken for efficient policies and services is undesirable, as it reflects the attempt to develop services/policies that are better at proselytizing.

4. *Critiques of the developmental justification*

The developmental justification simply suggests the participation is a good thing as through engaging in decision-making processes, individual young people will develop the ‘soft skills’ necessary to thrive as adults. Aside from the dearth of evidence linking participation to development and soft skills in practice (Kay et al, 2006), this justification is difficult to critique in theory. This is in part due to the very vague notion of ‘development’ that participation is meant to lead to. Youth development has been theorised in many different ways and to many different ends. Without clarity around a specific rationale, youth development is difficult to either defend or critique.

For example, a conservative critique encourages a careful think about the appropriateness of participation *for development*, asking practitioners to evaluate participation against the developmental model they adopt. For example, Piaget’s (1928) theory suggests that there are different stages of learning that come at fairly reliable ages, and that functioning above a child or young person’s stage is impossible. So asking an eight-year-old child, who is in their concrete operational thinking stage, to participate in a decision making activity that requires abstract thinking would be pointless. Other models, however, suggest that there are zones of proximal learning, or phases children and young people go through where their learning and development is more susceptible to being stretched in certain directions (Vygotski in Smidt, 2008). Participation in the right level of decision-making at these times could be very beneficial. A conservative critique does not reject the call to engage in participation as a tool for youth development, rather it asks practitioners to interrogate their justification and ask exactly what forms of development might legitimately be possible.

A radical critique can also challenge a developmental justification, by reframing participation as a process of subjugation. Radical critics could argue that by encouraging the development of ‘State-sanctioned’ soft skills, participation can be seen as a form of social control. Practitioners should therefore go one step beyond privileging development for its own sake; instead it might be helpful for practitioners to ask what they are developing young people for. If personal development encourages young people to develop traits that challenge oppression, this might be a good thing, otherwise...

A secular critique could suggest that participation to develop young people is not necessarily a good thing as it could just work to grow Protestant values in the young.

Table two: Justifications for participation against critiques.

| Justification – why participation? | Critique – why not participation? |
|---|--|
| <p>Rights-based justifications; participation because it is a young person’s right.</p> <p>The ‘good society’ adheres to international legal obligations.</p> | <p>A conservative critique could suggest that participation is undesirable as it does not allow professionals or family members to guide young people appropriately, as is their right.</p> <p>Radical critiques would suggest that this justification does not pay enough attention to the power relations inherent in framing participation. Participation could be undesirable, as it is a form of social control and this does not realise young people’s broader rights to freedom and equality.</p> <p>A secular critique could suggest that young people have the right to religious freedom, and therefore to not be subjected to participation.</p> |
| <p>Empowerment justification; participation to empower young people as a social group or as individuals.</p> <p>The ‘good society’ is an active, inclusive democracy.</p> | <p>A radical reading could suggest that participation could be undesirable as it can be used to subjugate young people and bring them under more social control, this would not be empowering.</p> <p>A conservative critique could say that empowerment of under developed young people is undesirable in the first place.</p> <p>A secular critique could suggest that such power inversions are an undesirable acting out of protestant ecclesiastical law.</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Efficiency justifications; participation as a way to improve service delivery/policy/practice.</p> <p>The 'good society' is neo-liberal and citizens are consumers of state services.</p> | <p>A conservative critique suggests that valorising young people's knowledge as more accurate than professional knowledge is undesirable as it does not always produce the most efficient services, policies, or outcomes.</p> <p>A radical critique could suggest that efficient services/policies are undesirable in the first place, as they are just a more effective form of governmentality.</p> <p>A secular critique could suggest that efficient services are undesirable if they are produced through missionary processes.</p> |
| <p>Developmental justification; participation as a way to achieve individual, personal development.</p> <p>No vision of the 'good society', but inherently conservative.</p> | <p>A radical critique challenges the implicit assumption that helping young people develop into responsible adults is a 'good thing'. Developing social (as opposed to anti social) citizens may simply be a means of silencing dissent.</p> <p>A conservative critique could suggest that the nature of the development that can be expected from participation should match known models of development, otherwise it is pointless.</p> <p>A secular critique could suggest that participation is undesirable as it works to develop young people in Protestant ways.</p> |

Case study: the desirability of youth participation under New Labour

Having outlined some justifications and critiques of participation, I now turn to the task of applying this analysis to New Labour's youth policy, 1997 – 2010. This analysis problematises the dynamics of justifications, highlighting the political drift and co-opting of the concept that stemmed from the multiple, uncontested understandings about why participation might be desirable. Although critiques have only been sketched out below – due to the limited scope of this paper – hopefully the discussion about shifting justifications makes the need for critical analysis more evident.

Youth participation emerged as a stand-alone policy concern in England in the late 1990s (Kay et al, 2006), evidenced by the release of *Learning to Listen: Core Principle for the Involvement of Children and Young People* (Children and Young People's Unit, 2001). *Learning to Listen* (2001) presented participation as a new, core task for Government Departments because of the efficiencies it can generate. It boldly asserts on page one that participation is a good thing because 'the result of effective participation should be better policies and services'. And while in some of the text, this efficiency argument is couched in the language of empowerment, it is not radical; *Learning to Listen* talks of empowering young people to take control of policies and services only so they can be improved. The policy problem was very much represented as a problem with inefficient and inadequate public services.

In addition, the document does go on to *briefly* provide two additional justifications; rights-based and developmental. The ratification of the CRC was noted, and *Learning to Listen* suggests that involvement promotes citizenship and inclusion. This particularly thin interpretation of CRC rights has both limited participation to involvement and added an element of conservatism, by coupling citizenship with the more integrationist language of inclusion. Secondly, almost without expansion, the document states that involvement promotes 'personal and social education and development' (Children and Young People's Unit, 2001: 6).¹

This prioritisation of efficiency may reflect the early meteoric rise of 'evidence based practice' as a dominant New Labour ideology (Alcock, 2008), or the mantra of 'what matters is what works'. Participation was presented as an ideologically neutral way of making policy and services work, however as the conservative critique would suggest – it is not necessarily self-evident that participation would improve public service provision.

Further New Labour youth policies highlight a 'pick and mix' approach to justifications, demonstrating shifting political priorities and policy problematisations. Despite being produced only 22 months later, *Every Child Matters* (ECM) (DfES, 2003) prioritises different justifications for participation. ECM continues using both the efficiency argument and the rights-based argument, albeit in a different order, but omits the developmental argument. ECM states that involving

children and young people in the development of better services is firstly ‘important in its own right’ (DfES, 2003, para 5.47) and secondly because it creates bottom up pressure for positive reforms. The problem was firstly identified as a lack of realisation of young people’s rights, and secondly as a problem with service provision. Again, there is the capacity for a strong conservative critique, it is not self-evident that participation improves services, nor that the realisation of young people’s right to participate is a good thing.

The subsequent *Youth Matters* (DfES, 2005) green paper and the White Paper, *Youth Matters: the Next Steps* (DfES, 2006) maintained the dual justification presented in ECM. Notably though, *Youth Matters* inverts the rights-citizenship nexus; the right to participate became the duty to be a citizen. For example, on page one, *Youth Matters* states that opportunities for involvement should be denied to young people who behave anti-socially (DfES, 2005: 1). That is, unless young people are already acting in a way that demonstrates their integration into mainstream society, they should not be able to exercise their right to participate. This logic is vulnerable to a radical critique; is it really desirable for policy or practice to further increase the State’s control over already marginalised young people? Is integration into a society that oppresses a good thing?

Secondly, and secondarily, *Youth Matters* argued that participation was a key way of ensuring that youth services meet local needs efficiently. Again, the conservative critique would suggest this logic was questionable.

A year later, *Aiming High for Young People* (DCSF, 2007), outlined a strategy to reform ‘leisure’ for young people and provide opportunities for positive activities. Given this focus, the document develops a dual vision of participation. Firstly, it suggests that participation can occur through engagement in the positive activities (such as taking part in a poetry slam) and secondly, it provides for participation as the process of planning or delivering activities themselves (such as running or funding the slam). As discussed below, it remains debateable if the first type of participation is ‘participation’ at all. This split understanding of participation – as ‘decision-making’ and ‘doing stuff’ – was also present in the accompanying *Aiming High for Children: Supporting Families* (DfES, 2007a).

Aiming High presents two justifications for the dual vision of participation; personal development and efficiency. *Aiming High* (DCSF, 2007:13) states that ‘participation in positive activities, and support and guidance from trusted professionals and adults, plays an important role in enabling children to gain (soft) skills’. This marks a return to a developmental justification for participation, which had been absent in *ECM* and *Youth Matters*, and again represents the problem as a problem with young people themselves – their under-development in this case. A radical critique offers an alternative perspective on this logic. It might suggest that the need for young people to develop the social and emotional skills to assimilate into mainstream society is perhaps undesirable in the first place.

Aiming High also utilises an efficiency justification: ‘when young people have the opportunity to influence services they are more likely to find them attractive and to access and benefit from them’ (DCSF, 2007:14). Tellingly, this justification is erroneously labelled ‘empowerment’ in the document, despite lacking any radical potential. Regardless, accompanying legislation did give young people some control over Local Authority budgets for youth services. Despite the drastic depoliticisation of participation, and even if this was done for efficiency reasons, it is nevertheless possible that *Aiming High* was in parts genuinely empowering.

Care Matters: time for change (DfES, 2007b) also used the justifications present in *Aiming High* (DCSF 2007) and is vulnerable to the same criticisms.

Labour’s last youth policy, *Young People Leading Change* (DCSF, 2008), put forward a slightly different vision of youth participation, aimed at stretching the leadership capacities of already empowered young people. These empowered young people were to take active leadership roles in the community ‘for the benefit of wider society’ (DCSF, 2008:16). While this may have been Labour’s first focus on empowered young people, their participation was still seen as a means to a more instrumental end. The policy problem was very much represented as a problem with young people, in this case empowered young people not taking leadership roles. A radical critique could suggest that it would be *particularly* undesirable for empowered young people to participate in State-sanctioned leadership roles, as it would only serve to bring the most empowered young people under the State’s control.

Table three: a summary of definitions of participation and its justifications in recent policy documents.

| Policy document | ‘Vision’ of participation for young people | Justifications engaged |
|--|---|--|
| <i>Learning the Listen: Core Principle for the Involvement of Children and Young People</i> (2001) | Being involved in planning and delivering services | Rights-based Efficiency Personal development |
| <i>Every Child Matters</i> (2003) | Being involved in planning and delivering (broadly) protective services | Rights-based Efficiency |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <i>Youth Matters</i> (2005 and 2006) | Taking up positive opportunities <i>and</i> planning and delivery | Rights-based, but very focused on responsibilities Efficiency |
| <i>Aiming High for Young People</i> (2007) | Taking part in <i>and</i> planning/ delivering organised activities | Personal development Efficiency |
| <i>Aiming High for Children: Supporting Families</i> (2007) | Being involved in planning and delivering children's services | Personal development Efficiency |
| <i>Care Matters: time for change</i> (2007) | Being involved in shaping services for young people in care | Efficiency Personal development |
| Young People Leading Change (2008) | Empowered young people leading projects to improve the community | Efficiency Some personal development |

Overall, Labour's 1997 – 2010 administration was marked by two key shifts in justifying participation. Firstly, there was gradual hollowing out of any radical potential that participation may have offered, reflecting the broader shift in focus from rights to responsibilities that was occurring at the time (Alcock, 2008). Increasingly under New Labour, the justifications presented for 'doing participation' shifted towards framing the policy problem as young people *themselves*. For example, what had emerged as a call to engage young people in decision making because it was their political right (as in *Learning to Listen*, 2001) and because real, positive reforms could be achieved through this, gradually dissolved into being important because it 'enable(ed) children to gains (soft) skills' needed for their future (DCSF, 2007:13). The policy problem shifted from a problem of the State (inefficient, inadequate services and a lack of realising rights) to a problem with young people themselves (their under-development). The reasons for 'doing participation' shifted from potentially radical to ameliorative, and this has real consequences for the types of participation – and indeed citizenship – open to young people.

Secondly, following from this, presenting young people as the policy problem limited the scope of their decision making to increasingly depoliticised domains. The political spheres within which young people's participation – and citizenship – was called for noticeably narrowed between 1997 and 2010. Policy debates shifted from engaging young people in decisions about important policies and services, as the problems were with the State (see for example *Every Child Matters*, 2003) to getting young people to 'do stuff' because the policy problem was now young people themselves

(see for example *Young People Leading Change*, 2008). The types of participation outlined in *Aiming High* (DCSF, 2007) for example, could hardly be described as politically powerful nor as offering radical opportunity for youth liberation. While there is no denying that young people can engage in individual decision-making processes through taking part in activities, such as choosing a poem to slam, this vision is highly depoliticised and provides limited scope for empowerment. This makes sense if young people had become the policy problem; why would right-minded policy makers and politicians share more power with problematic and under-developed young people? Returning to the earlier definition of youth participation as *a process where young people, as active citizens, take part in, express views on, and have decision-making power about, issues that affect them*, it is debateable if ‘participation’ within these narrower spheres is participation at all.

Analysing justifications renders visible the policy framing of the ‘problem’ behind the call for participation. Behind these shifts – from empowerment to control and from politics to entertainment – lies an implicit articulation of the good society. The ‘good society’ undergirding the political drift outlined above is a society where young people are, once again, less powerful. It is a society where problematic and under-developed young people are kept active and developed through positive activities, so that they may become good citizens. They are denizens of today, citizens of tomorrow. Without critiquing the justifications presented for youth participation and analysing why it has been presented as a good thing, it can be difficult to understand the possible consequences of ‘doing participation’ with young people today.

Conclusion

The history of New Labour’s participation policies highlights the need to unpack implicit assumptions about the merits of participation. A lack of clarity about why we engage in youth participation may present a deep challenge to the capacity of policy makers and practitioners to better ‘the lot’ of the young. It points to a fundamental question for policy makers and practitioners; why are you doing participation, and is whatever it is that you are doing, what you *mean* to be doing?

Four main justifications for participation are often engaged; an argument that it fulfils young people’s rights; that it empowers youth; that it makes policies and services efficient; and that it helps develop young people. These justifications are however, vulnerable to a range of criticism. Criticisms can be radical and suggest that participation is simply an act of control conservative in nature and suggest that it is simply not a wise idea, or secular and suggest that it is a modern, missionary act. This points to a need for deeper critical reflection about why we ‘do’ participation. Why fulfil rights? Why empower? Why develop young people? Effective services for what? Critical reflection around these deeper questions –reflecting on your normative judgements about

what are good things for young people and what a good society looks like in the first place – is perhaps the only way to ensure that youth participation can better the lot of the young.

Note

1. The priorities of this tripartite justification appear to have filtered across into other policy documents, with these justifications repeated in later research into youth organisations in a similar manner (Kirby et al, 2003 pp. 7).

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Appendix 1:

The definitions or articulations of participation used to generate the working definition

'the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which a democracy is built and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured. Participation is the fundamental right of citizenship.' – Hart, 1992

'participation is a verb, rather than a noun – it's a way of approaching our work, of looking at the ways in which society functions, of perceiving a desirable construction of 'young people' within that society.' – Holdsworth, 2001

'Youth participation is about giving children and young people (usually up to the age of 18) the opportunity to express their views on aspects of life that affect them.' – Middleton, 2006

'States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.' – CRC, 1989

'Participation is taking part... most closely linked with decision making.' – Davis and Hill, 2006

'Children's participation in decisions that affect them as individuals requires a child-centred approach. This implies taking account of their wishes and feelings and including the child's perspective in all matters. This is ongoing and requires continuous dialogue but may also be exercised around procedures such as assessment, care planning and reviews, child protection conferences, care or adoption proceedings, Family Group Conferences and complaints.' – Sinclair and Franklin, 2000

'Ultimately, youth participation is not only about creativity and belief in youth. It is also about power. How much decision-making are we willing to let grow out of the voicing of concerns?' – Noam, 2002

'... a constellation of activities that empower adolescents to take part in and influence decision

making that affects their lives and to take action on issues they care about.' – O'Donoghue, Kirchner and McLaughlin, 2002

'Simply defined, participation is the act of taking part in or 'becoming actively involved' or 'sharing' in (Collins English Dictionary 1991), but the reality of young children's participation is more complex. As Kirby and colleagues point out, participation is a multi-layered concept that may involve young people's active involvement in decision-making at different levels, from the everyday to a specific event (Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin and Sinclair 2003). Participation is also fundamental to the practice of active citizenship.' – Thomas and Percy-Smith, 2010

'Participation should go beyond consultation and ensure that children and young people initiate action and make decisions in partnership with adults, for example, making decisions about their care and treatment or day to day decisions about their lives.' – Department of Health, 2002

'Asking children and young people what works, what doesn't work and what could work better; and involving them in the design, delivery and evaluation of services, on an ongoing basis.' – DCSF, 2010

'Youth participation is the active engagement of young people throughout their communities. It is often used as a short-hand for youth participation in many forms, including decision-making, sports, schools and any activity where young people are not historically engaged.' – Wikipedia, 2009

'Youth participation is the involving of youth in responsible, challenging action that meets genuine needs, with opportunities for planning and/or decision-making affecting others in an activity whose impact or consequence is extended to others— i.e., outside or beyond the youth participants themselves. Other desirable features of youth participation are provision for critical reflection on the participatory activity and the opportunity for group effort toward a common goal.' – National Commission on Resources for Youth, 1975

'Meaningful youth participation involves recognizing and nurturing the strengths, interests, and abilities of young people through the provision of real opportunities for youth to become involved in decisions that affect them at individual and systemic levels.' – McCreary Centre Society, 2002

Models of youth work: a framework for positive sceptical reflection

Trudi Cooper

Abstract

In the post-welfare state, youth workers need models to articulate the purpose and value of their work to politicians and the public, and to explain foundational assumptions about society, young people, values, and mechanisms for personal and social change. Robust on-going discussion about models clarifies the relationship between theory and practice and enables youth work to make use of advances in knowledge in other disciplines, and to innovate constructively when faced with social and political change. Theorisation of models of youth work flourished briefly in the final quarter of the twentieth century. Renewed models of youth work are urgently needed. To re-start this process, this article develops a Framework for Positive Scepticism Reflection. The framework is then used to review four models of youth work developed between 1978 and 1994, to identify their contemporary relevance and where further theoretical work is required to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Key words: Models, youth work, theory, training, history.

THE CONTINUED existence of youth work, and the sources of its funding, cannot be assumed in the twenty-first century post-welfare state. Youth work will receive support only if policy makers can see a positive connection between youth and community work and their policy agendas, if commentators and the public can understand and value what youth workers do, and if youth workers have the tools to be able to refine and reinvent their own practice to retain core values in ways that are relevant to changing social circumstances. Relevant models of youth work can help youth workers to develop clear answers to all these questions, but presently, youth workers do not have such models that will perform all these functions.

Youth work in what I refer to as 'British-influenced youth work' (BIYW) countries has diverged during the last thirty years. Triggered by incremental changes to government policy affecting both youth work goals and service delivery arrangements, Australian youth work is entering a period of re-consideration of the role of youth work, as evidenced by the extensive discussion about the nature of youth work at the 2011 Australian Youth Affairs Coalition Conference. This process of deliberation offers potential for renewal, but can lead to vulnerability, especially if youth workers are not able to articulate the relevance of their work in a changed political landscape.

In the UK, the situation is somewhat different. Policy documents such as *Benefits of Youth Work* (McKee, Oldfield, and Poultney, 2010) relate youth work to key values within government policy frameworks. Training standards documents (Lifelong Learning UK, 2008) articulate the professional training standards required for youth work. However, as seen by recent cutbacks, youth work is also vulnerable in the UK, even with such standards in place. There is still a need for greater theorisation and model development, both to refine youth work practice and to provide a basis for critique of youth work policy.

The central purpose of this article is to revive interest in youth work theory development, especially in BIYW countries. Renewed commitment to theory development is essential to the future health of youth work as an occupation, and to its survival as a distinctive form of practice. Theory development and shared commitment to purposes, values and boundaries provide occupations and professions with a number of benefits. An agreed theory base is essential to explain the contribution of practice to others outside the occupation. It also provides a necessary foundation to guide development of coherent and relevant education and training programmes for practitioners. A clear articulation of purpose and values enables well-considered and timely responses to social policy initiatives pertaining to youth work. A clear understanding of purpose and methods provides a basis from which to demarcate boundaries with other professions. Finally, clarity about theory, purpose, values and methods is essential to the on-going quest to critically develop the discipline and the occupation, and to appropriately connect youth work to new knowledge as it emerges in cogent disciplines.

This article builds both upon the method of personal reflection, questioning and scepticism discussed by Davies (2006), and upon the work of Sterman (1991) who discusses the knowledge claims of models, to develop a Framework for Positive Sceptical Reflection. The Framework is then used to critically assess selected historic models of youth work to determine their theoretical adequacy, usefulness and contemporary relevance. The article concludes with a discussion about how youth work models from the late twentieth century can be reworked to enhance their relevance to contemporary youth work.

Background

In the two decades between the late 1970s and the late 1990s, several systematic attempts were made to develop schematic conceptual ‘models’ of youth work. Commitment to theory discussion has continued within academia in the twenty-first century, (for example Batsleer and Davies, 2010; Bessant, 2004; Bowie, 2004; Corney, 2006; Jeffs and Smith, 2005; Martin, 2002; Sercombe, 2007; Smith, 2005). However, recent theory development has either focussed upon single issues or single approaches, or on issues concerned with professionalization, rather than the more encompassing

projects of the late twentieth century. Simultaneously, conference discussions indicate that youth work practitioners have reverted to a-theoretical practice-oriented descriptions when faced with new policy environments. Both theoretical and policy driven changes have contributed to this retreat from theory and caused the relevance of older models to be questioned. Had a Framework for Positive Sceptical Reflection been applied, these changes might have led to a flowering of dialogue, extension of theory, recognition of the competing and often contradictory discourses about young people, social relationship and social issues, and might have supported soundly-based practice innovations.

Policy driven changes that challenged the relevance of previous models occurred as governments in both England and in Australia re-shaped political and institutional structures and practices that defined youth work. In Australia, this occurred during the 1990s, when competitive tendering replaced allocated funding for youth work provision. This arrangement required youth organisations to compete with each other, and to demonstrate achievement of externally imposed targets and outcomes. As a consequence, and as a survival strategy, some youth organisations diversified their services beyond the traditional boundaries of youth work. In England, structural re-organisation of youth work occurred under New Labour when youth services in many boroughs and counties were incorporated into Children's and Young People's Services, Connexions, and Integrated Youth Support Services. These policy directions served to blur boundaries between youth work and other professions and to undermine youth workers' occupational identity by weakening the tie to employment conditions defined by the Joint Negotiating Committee for Youth Leaders and Community Centre Wardens (JNC). More recently, further weakening of youth services has occurred in Britain since the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition took government. The coalition government has imposed substantial funding reductions and reorganisation of services, and has implemented its 'Big Society' policy initiatives, which has continued use of externally imposed targets first introduced by New Labour.

Within the academy, theoretical debates within sociology challenged the assumptions of some previous youth work models. These debates emanated from the critiques of structuralist sociological perspectives, especially Marxian sociology, the rise of post-structuralist perspectives, and the on-going theoretical struggles within the discipline. Many of the late twentieth century models of youth work were implicitly or explicitly grounded in Marxian structuralist sociological perspectives or analysis. The rise of post-structuralism in sociology meant that the underlying assumptions of the models became less fashionable and more contested. Youth work theorists have been divided in their response to how the insights of post-structuralism relate to youth work theory.

BIYW youth work occurs in post-colonial countries where English youth work education and training has been exported, either formally or informally and where youth work operates within Westminster-style institutional structures. Potentially this includes countries such as Wales,

Scotland, Northern Ireland, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Malta, and some other countries where the Commonwealth Youth Development Programme operates. In the next section of this article, examples are drawn from England, Ireland and Australia.

Youth Work Models

This section provides a brief overview of four BIYW models that were developed during the two decades between the mid-1970s and the mid-1990s, before the theoretical and policy changes discussed above had occurred. The models have been selected because they attempted to theorise about the whole youth work field rather than present a singular model of practice, and because each model has been influential in at least one country. The models were developed for different purposes, use different organising principles, and have different theoretical bases. Very short outlines of each model are provided because some models are not well-known outside their country of origin, and some of the original publications are no longer easily accessible. In every case, because of requirements for brevity, some details and features have been omitted from this outline. References are included so interested readers can refer to the original publications, where these are still available. Most summaries presented here stay close to the language used in the original publication, but in some instances language has been changed to enhance clarity. For example, Butters and Newell describe ‘critical breaks’ between historic eras. This article uses the term ‘epistemic break’ derived from Kuhn (1970), to avoid confusion with the other meanings of ‘critical’ used within this and other models.

The organisation of this section is by country of origin. The UK section includes models by Butters and Newell (1978), and Smith (1988). Within the time period covered in this article, others added to this tradition using similar organising principles to Smith. However, to maintain the focus of the article, extensions to basic models will not be discussed separately. The Irish section includes a model developed by Hurley and Treacy (1993) and the Australian section includes a model developed by Cooper and White (1994). The overview of each model summarises its stated purpose, organising principles, main argument and principle features.

Two UK models

The two UK models form a sequence, with Smith’s work responding to critiques or gaps in Butters and Newell’s earlier work. Butters and Newell’s (1978) model of youth work was presented in a review entitled *Realities of Training*. This model was critiqued in the decade following its publication (Leigh and Smart, 1985; Smith, 1988) and is included because it was almost certainly known to the writers of later models, even where not explicitly cited as a reference. This model and its critiques have also influenced the language, structure and focus of subsequent work.

The purpose of the *Realities of Training* review was to inform development of training provision for part-time workers and volunteers in England and Wales. To complete this task, Butters and Newell devised a model of youth work using history and epistemology as an organising principle. Their model suggested that the history, present and future of youth work could be characterised by three main linear, historical epochs. They argued that these epochs had clear epistemic breaks between them. During the first epoch of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century they claimed that youth work was motivated by concern for social integration, and they described the dominant strategy used as Character Building. This term became the model-nomenclature for youth work of this epoch. The second (then, contemporary) period, Butters and Newell called the Social Education Repertoire (SER) stage of development. The third (then, future) epoch they argued would occur when social analysis became based upon critical sociology and its main strategy would be Self-Emancipation. For some reason, this last strategy is usually referred to as the Radical Paradigm, rather than by the name of its strategy.

The main features of Butters and Newell's model were elaborated in their discussion of the SER and the Radical Paradigm. Within the SER epoch they distinguished between three approaches to youth work. They argued that these 'strands' were similar because they each used a form of social education, but differed in their strategies and goals for social education. Butters and Newell contended that each approach used a different theoretical analysis of the central problems facing society, and used different strategies to achieve their ends. Thus, they argued that analysis informed by *cultural pluralism* resulted in strategy focussed upon Cultural Adjustment. Analysis informed by *structural functionalism*, they argued, resulted in adoption of strategies based upon Community Development. They contended that analysis informed by *conflict theory* resulted in strategies focussed upon Institutional Reform. As in the first epoch, each strand within the SER has become known by the nomenclature Butters and Newell provided for the strategy: Cultural Adjustment; Community Development; and, Institutional Reform. Table 1 shows a simplified overview of Butters and Newell's (1978) main model of youth work, and illustrates the links between analytical frameworks, strategies and methods. In their discussion of the Radical Paradigm, which they believed would displace SER as the future basis of youth work, they explicitly linked youth work practice to the methods of critical pedagogy developed by Freire (1972), still being developed by Giroux (2011), and to theory development in radical social work, especially the work of Leonard (1975). These links have influenced subsequent theory in youth work.

In 1988, in *Developing Youth Work*, Smith presented an alternative model of youth work. Smith developed the model to address deficiencies he and others had identified with Butters and Newell's model which Leigh and Smart (1985) argued was insufficiently related to practice and overly intellectualized. Smith also contended that Butters and Newell's model omitted important traditional areas of youth work practice (1988: 50).

Table 1: Structure of Social Education Repertoire (SER) and historical adjuncts (adapted from Butters and Newell (1978: 39)).

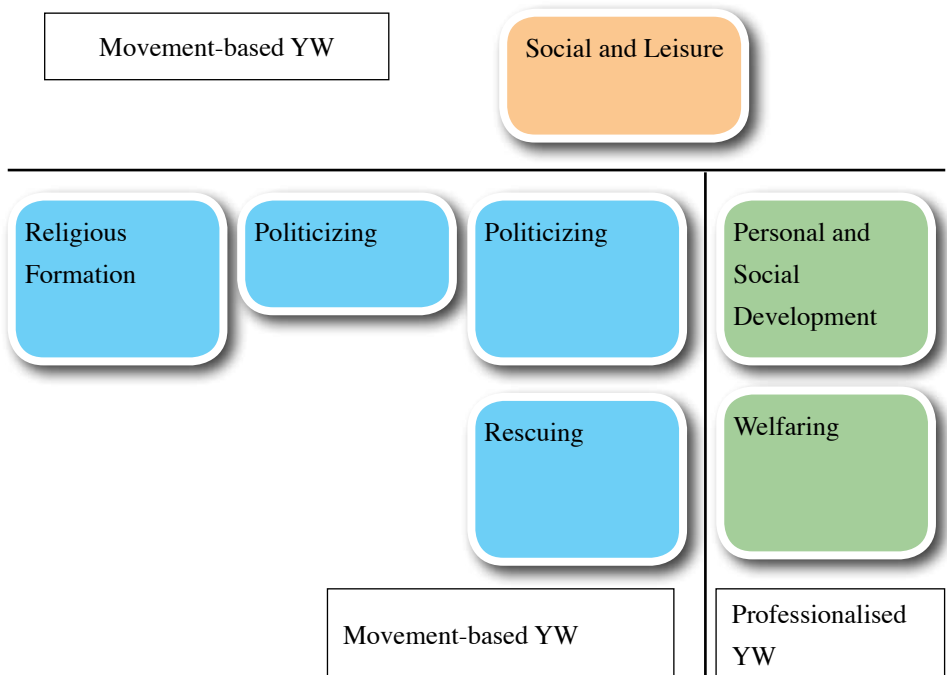
| Historical tendency | Analysis | Strategy | Method | Training model |
|---|--------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1870–1919 (liberal incorporation) | Social integration | Character building | Role model | Transmissive |
| Critical (epistemic?) break to enter SER | | | | |
| 1930–1970 (progressive education) | Cultural pluralism | Cultural adjustment | Non-directive enabling | Interpretivist |
| 1960–1970 (advanced progressive education) | Structural functionalism | Community Development | Enabling in local community | Interpretivist/constructivist |
| 1890–1970 (social democracy) | Interest Group Conflict Theory | Institutional reform | Rights and mobilisation | Transmissive/constructivist |
| Epistemic break to escape SER | | | | |
| Future (radical paradigm) | Critical sociology | Self-emancipation | Critical pedagogy | Transgressive |

Smith’s stated purpose for his model was to define youth work by developing ‘a system for the naming of the different strands of youth work practice and thinking which reflect the experiences of workers’ (Smith, 1988: 63). As an organising principle for his model, he used the traditions recognised by practitioners. His main argument was that using recognised traditions within youth work ensured that his model reflected practice. Smith asserted that the traditions he identified had different primary purposes and made different assumptions about the needs of young people and their position in society. Thus, he argued that similar practice methods (like social education) are often used within different traditions for different purposes. He contended that it was important to avoid categories that would draw artificial distinctions between traditions where these did not reflect the actual nature of practice.

Smith’s model made a primary distinction between *professionalised* youth work and *movement-based* youth work. Within movement-based youth work, he made a further distinction between movement-based social and leisure provision, (where social and leisure participation constituted the primary purpose of the work), and other forms of movement-based youth work, such as organisations concerned with character building (the uniformed organisations) and politicising organisations (where social and leisure activities are used as a means to achieve other purposes).

In addition to this, Smith correctly argued that Butters and Newell had omitted welfare traditions from their model (Butters and Newell discuss welfare within the text of their work, but it does not form an explicit part of their model). To build a comprehensive model of youth work, Smith included ‘welfare’ in the professionalised domain, and ‘rescuing’ within the movement based domain. Reflecting later on his own model, Smith (2001) states that in its original form it does not adequately include church-based youth work. He suggests that this could be remedied either by extending the politicizing tradition, or by adding an additional box concerned with religious conversion or formation. Smith identified another important difference between his model and that of Butters and Newell, when he asserted that there had been no epistemic break between pre-SER youth work and SER youth work, because character building formed an important contemporary component of uniformed movement-based youth work. A diagram of Smith’s 1988 model, modified to include changes he suggested in 2001, is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Traditions in Youth Work, adapted from Smith (1988, 2001)



An Irish model

In 1993, the Irish Youth Work Press published a book by Hurley and Treacy entitled *Models of Youth Work – a sociological framework*. The stated purpose of their model(s) was to provide a theoretical framework to guide youth work practice, (1993: ii). As an organising principle for their model, Hurley and Treacy used a sociological framework originally developed by Burrell and Morgan (1979). In Ireland, youth work is structurally allied to education, and discussion within this model begins with a sociological exploration of the role and practice of education from each sociological perspective that informs their model. Their main argument is that very different forms of youth work developed from differing modes of social analysis by practitioners, and that these forms still co-exist.

In their full explanation of their model, Hurley and Treacy elucidate the ideological dimensions of each approach, how each approach analyses young people’s needs, and implications of each approach for programmes in areas of life – skills education, recreation, political education, vocational training, and arts and creativity. They also draw out the practical implications of each approach for the youth work role and processes, for relationship with young people, for how participation should be structured, and for intended outcomes for young people and society. Hurley and Treacy’s model is summarised in Figure 2. For a full account, the interested reader should refer back to the original publication, if it is still available. The model is well-known in Ireland, but not widely known elsewhere.

Figure 2: A schematic summary of the major features of Hurley and Treacy’s (1993) Models of Youth Work – a sociological framework. This diagram incorporates elements of their summary on p.60, plus features from other Tables within the text

| Sociology of Radical Change | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|---|--------------------|
| Subjectivist | Critical Social Education (Radical Humanist) YW as animateur, enabler, consciousness-raiser, critical social analyst Reformist YP have ability to analyse and assess alternatives ... and to act to change their world if they choose Programme: explore personal experience as basis for consciousness raising | Radical Social Change (Radical structuralist) YW as radical activist Revolutionary YP gain skills needed to act for social transformation Programme: Indoctrination of young people into revolutionary perspective; rejection of social institutions as oppressive | Objectivist |
| | Personal Development (Interpretivist) YW as Counsellor, supporter group worker Liberal YP prepared for active role in society, respect themselves and develop ability to build and maintain relationship Programme: Personal responsibility for choices; leadership; good skills for mixing socially | Character Building (Functionalist) YW as role model and organiser Conservative YP develop discipline Programme: focus energies in constructive way; healthy lifestyles | |
| Sociology of Regulation | | | |

An Australian model

In 1994, *Youth Studies Australia* published an article on Models of Youth Work Intervention by Cooper and White (1994). The stated purpose of the model(s) was to ‘clarify the different orientations and practices associated with different kinds of youth work activity’ (1994: 30). Six different models (or approaches) were presented and brought together through the organising principle of political ideology. The nomenclature used to describe each approach relates to the nature of the intervention. The main argument, implicit within this overall model, is that different political ideologies, worldviews and values spawn very different forms of youth work, and that these different forms continue to develop and co-exist. Structurally, this argument parallels the argument proposed by Hurley and Treacy about social analysis, and is consistent with Smith’s analysis.

The six approaches discussed are *Treatment, Reform, Non-radical Advocacy, Radical Advocacy, Non-radical Empowerment, and Radical Empowerment*. Each approach is discussed in terms of its political ideological foundations, how it constructs young people’s problems, its perspective on society, assumptions about human nature, core values of the approach, motivation for intervention, types of intervention, skills required of workers, and disciplines that inform practice. The model explicitly refers to the language used to describe young people and relates this to political ideological perspectives and assumptions about human nature. The focus on language highlights two aspects not discussed in other models. Firstly, similar language is used to describe some quite different forms of intervention, see for example Radical Empowerment vs. Non-radical Empowerment, and Radical Advocacy vs. Non-radical Advocacy. Secondly, the focus on language provides a useful quick method to identify underlying values within new policy initiatives. Table 2 captures the main features of this model and the interested reader should refer back to the original journal article for a fuller account. The model is well-known in Australia, but not elsewhere.

Table 2: Models of Youth Work Intervention: an abridged summary from Cooper and White (1994)

| Name | Political tradition | Human nature | Vision/Goals | Values | Language |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|---|--|--|
| Treatment | <i>Conservative</i> | <i>Negative</i> | <i>Social Harmony</i> | <i>Social cohesion</i> | <i>Deviancy, inadequacy</i> |
| Reform | Liberal | Reformable | Social mobility | Equal opportunity | Disadvantage, poor social environment |
| Advocacy (non-radical) | Liberal, Social democratic | Reformable | Social contract, individual rights | Rights as due under existing law | Rights, social justice |
| Advocacy (radical) | Social democratic socialism | Positive | Gradual social change towards more just and equitable society | Social justice, positive rights Law reform to extend rights | Rights, social justice |
| Empowerment (non-radical) | Classical liberal/ neo-conservative | Neutral or negative | Small government | Freedom from interference | Empowerment, enfranchisement |
| Empowerment (radical) | anarchist | Highly positive | Self-government, grassroots democracy | Equality of social power | Empowerment consciousness-raising, enfranchisement |

This concludes the summary of existing models. The next section builds a Framework for Positive Sceptical Reflection that will be used to assess these models.

Framework for Positive Sceptical Reflection

The Framework for Positive Sceptical Reflection builds upon the work of two theorists; Davies (2006), who argues for the value of doubt in youth work and the on-going need for reflective practice, and Sterman (1991) who, in the context of computer modelling, discusses the nature of models and suggests appropriate criteria for assessment of models. The proposed framework is ‘positive’ in the sense that its purpose is to provide a method to improve youth work models through critique, rather than to provide critique alone. The framework is ‘sceptical’ because it rigorously questions assumptions made within models, making use of methods derived from Sterman (1991).

Davies (2006) argues that doubt and scepticism have a positive role in the development of youth work theory and practice, and connects this with the need for reflection on practice. The framework is ‘reflective’, because reflection enables both practitioners and theorists to deepen their understanding of youth work. The sceptical youth worker uses reflection to become aware of contradictions and inconsistencies, and to identify their own worldview, tacit beliefs and assumptions. Davies argues that, ‘Ultimately ‘practice’– youth work practice no more or less than any other – is delivered by and through the subjectivity of the human being. That subjectivity certainly needs to be checked and balanced by disciplined reflection and self-reflection’ (2006: 71).

What are the functions and purposes of models? What kinds of truth claims do they make? Sterman argues that the purpose of any model is to simplify a complex state of affairs to make it more comprehensible for the intended purpose. The function of a model is to *usefully* guide decision-making related to a nominated purpose. Models do not make truth claims about how the world is because, as Sterman (1991) asserts, all models are (ultimately) wrong, by virtue of their role. To explain his position, Sterman (1991) uses the analogy of a map as a model of a terrain. A good map-maker does not attempt to include every detail of the terrain; otherwise the map would be too large and too complicated to be useful. To extend that analogy, maps have different purposes. For example, a useful map for a motorist must include features of use to motorists (like road type, roundabouts, one-way streets, and traffic lights) because motorists need this information. A useful map for hikers would include different information (like topological information, steepness of hills, trees, whether the terrain is difficult to cross on foot, legal rights of way; it would generally need to be more detailed and to be of a larger scale). A motorist’s map and a walker’s map of the same area do not look the same. Neither map provides a completely ‘truthful’ picture of the landscape. Maps look nothing like photographs, which are also not completely accurate pictures of a landscape.

Hence, Sterman argues, models, like maps, should be judged according to their *utility*, or fitness for purpose. Within any model, there is always a tension between comprehensiveness and comprehensibility. A good model should be sufficiently comprehensive for its purpose, without being unnecessarily over-complicated. Model-making, therefore is an art, rather than a science, because it requires judgement about what to include and what to exclude, to ensure that the model is both easy to understand, and useful for its intended purpose. In addition to understanding its purpose and function, the foundational assumptions and claims of any model should be made available for scrutiny and should be defensible. Sterman argues that model-makers should explicitly state all their assumptions, to enable others to audit the model making process, although he acknowledges this rarely occurs. Sterman (1991) argues that model-makers should document not only the theoretical assumptions that inform a model, but also their tacit ‘worldview’ that is implicit in the model, their assumptions that guided decisions about what to omit, and their decisions about methods for model development.

Following this analogy, it is not simply a question of asking whether a model is true or false. The primary measure of success for models of youth work should be whether the particular model of youth work is useful for its intended purpose. A useful model of youth work should be based upon justifiable decisions about how to organise information to ensure that the model includes all that is essential to the purpose of the model. For clarity, the model should exclude all information about youth work that is not relevant to the purpose of the model. The organising principle used to structure information in the model is very important because it determines what is included and excluded, and shapes the most important model assumptions. The Framework for Positive Sceptical Reflection presents these considerations in tabular form, see Table 3.

Table 3 Framework for Sceptical Reflection on Models of Youth Work

| Key concept | Question | Sub-question | Sub-question | Sub-question |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| Model Purpose(s) | What are the purposes of the model of youth work? | Is the model useful for its intended purpose? | Is this purpose (still) relevant? | |
| Organising principle(s) for the model | What theoretical principle as used to organise information in the model? | What discipline(s) inform organising principle? | Is the principle defensible? | What key assumptions/worldview are implicit in the organising principle? |
| As above, continued | | How did organising principle influence what was given prominence in the model? | How did this influence what details were excluded from the model? | |
| Methods of Model Building | What methods did the model maker use to build the model? | What assumptions did the model maker make about the relationship between theory and practice? | | |

To summarise, to judge the utility of any model it is necessary to know the purpose of the model and to scrutinise assumptions made by the model-maker when they constructed the model, including organising principles and methods used to develop the model.

Discussion

The Framework for Positive Sceptical Reflection will now be used to determine the utility and relevance of the four selected models for contemporary BIYW. Discussion will focus on: model purpose, central organising principle of each model, and model-making methods including the relationship between theory and practice in each model.

Purposes of models

The models presented in this paper were developed for different primary purposes. In most cases, the authors’ discussion indicates both primary and secondary purposes for their model. Purposes of the models examined can be classified into five types: 1) models primarily concerned with naming and describing youth work practice, 2) models primarily concerned with providing a basis for youth work education and training, 3) models primarily concerned with providing a theoretical foundation for youth work by linking youth work practice with bodies of theory in other disciplines, 4) models of youth work that have a policy orientation, and finally, 5) models of youth work that are primarily concerned with issues of occupational demarcation between youth work and other educational and social welfare occupations. The primary and secondary purposes of the four models are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Purpose of model of youth work

| Purpose/author | Butters and Newell | Smith | Hurley and Treacy | Cooper and White |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|-----------|-------------------|------------------|
| Naming/explaining | Secondary | Primary | Primary | Primary |
| Training/education | Primary | | Secondary | |
| Theory/disciplines | Secondary | | Primary | Primary |
| Occupational Boundaries | Secondary | Secondary | | |
| Policy Oriented | | Secondary | Secondary | Secondary |

All primary and secondary purposes of these models are still relevant to contemporary youth work. In accordance with Sterman’s contention that models should be developed for particular purposes, the implication is that contemporary youth work will require different models for different purposes.

Organising principles

Each model is shaped by a different central organising principle, as shown in Table 5. This principle shapes decisions about how to relate theory and practice, determines the focus of the model, informs decisions about what to include and exclude, and about which disciplinary base to privilege.

Table 5: Organising principles of models

| | Butters and Newell | Smith | Hurley and Treacy | Cooper and White |
|-----------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Organising principle | Sociological analysis (Teleological Historicism) | Contemporary traditions within the field (UK) | Sociological: (Burrell and Morgan) | Political ideologies: Multi-lens |
| Disciplinary base | Sociology/History | History/ Education | Multi-lens Sociology/ Education | Politics/ Philosophy |

Two model-makers, Butters and Newell (1978) and Hurley and Treacy (1993), use explicit sociological frameworks. Butters and Newell discussed multiple sociological perspectives but implicitly assumed a linear historical progression (or teleological historicism) in their model. Teleological historicism is discredited practically (Smith, 1988), who argued that the historical account of practice was inaccurate, and also as a social theory. The theoretical objections are epistemological and come from both post-positive perspectives, and post-structuralist perspectives. In brief, post-positives, such as Popper (1957), argued that historicism was not a genuine social theory because it was compatible with all possible circumstances, was not falsifiable, and therefore had no predictive power. Post-structuralists such as Foucault (1989) argued that discourses in social sciences are inexorably shaped by dominant power relationships, however, unlike structuralists, Foucault claims that theories are socially embedded and any search for truth based in totalising ‘grand theory’ of any variety is a mistaken and futile endeavour. According to Foucault’s argument it is simply not possible to ‘step outside’ the intellectual stream of the time. He argues that discourses change and develop, but in the end, a discourse is always a discourse, and hence always partial, and situated in the assumptions of the epoch. According to this argument, teleological historicism is an example of such a discourse. Because of practical and theoretical objections taken together, the central organising principle of this model seems to be invalid, and the model is not suitable for future development.

Hurley and Treacy use Burrell and Morgan’s (1979) sociological framework as the basis for

their model. Sociology as a discipline has developed considerably since 1979. Within Burrell and Morgan's framework, the radical humanist perspective is able to incorporate some of the developments within sociology, including post-Marxist critical sociology and the critical postmodern approach advocated by Alvesson (2002). However, it does not create a space for other forms of post-modern sociology, or for Giddens' (1987) structuration theory, or Foucauldian post-modern sociologists who reject totalising models because they are discursive, as discussed previously.

Setting aside this last objection, a multi-lens sociological approach (and even possibly a modified form of Burrell and Morgan's framework) provides a defensible central organising principle for future youth work models, whose purpose is to tease out and contrast the implications for youth work of different approaches to social analysis. However, the sociological basis of any future model of youth work would need to be re-worked to include more recent sociological developments. Alternatively, a model could be developed from a named set of sociological perspectives, without the implication that it included all perspectives. Because Hurley and Treacy also linked their model to observed practice, their accounts of practice would need to be updated to reflect current practices within the youth field.

Smith's central organising principle was based upon observations of contemporary traditions in the youth field. As a central organising principle, the use of practitioner identified traditions is defensible for its primary purpose, which was naming. However, changes in the composition of the youth field since 1988 and international application of the model would require review of the categories within the model to ensure contemporary relevance. Smith suggested modifications to the original model in 2001, as discussed, and subsequently used the same approach as a basis for critique of new forms of youth work that emerged in the UK in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century (Smith, 2003).

Cooper and White's central organising principle was political ideology. This sub-discipline straddles the boundary between politics and philosophy. The discipline characterises and analyses the values and worldviews of different political traditions and their implications for youth policy direction. Some new political perspectives have become more prominent since the early 1990s, especially the so-called 'cross-cutting' perspectives, such as environmentalism or green politics, which transcend previously accepted political boundaries (Heywood, 2003). However, unlike sociology, political ideology as a sub-discipline has not changed fundamentally in the past two decades. This approach to political ideology is therefore defensible in terms of the purpose of the intended model, and still provides a useful central organising principle for future youth work models. The categories may need to be revised to reflect contemporary political configurations such as the emergence of new political perspectives, including those within established political traditions. As noted with other models, because Cooper and White's model was linked to observed

Australian practice, their accounts of practice would need to be updated to reflect present-day Australian and international practice within the youth work field.

Methods

An overview of the four models shows an interesting divide in the method used to relate theory to practice within models. All models assume that there is a relationship between theory and practice, and both Smith, and Butters and Newell claim that their models are directly grounded in observations about practice. Smith began from historical and contemporary descriptions of practice, but Butters and Newell do not explain exactly how their model was derived from their interview data. From their discussion of their model, it appears Butters and Newell took their theoretical perspective as the starting point for their model and then organised their data with reference to the theory. Both Hurley and Treacy and Cooper and White began with an explicit theoretical lens through which to observe practice, and hence these models developed from theory to practice (see Table 6).

Table 6: Theory and practice

| | Butters and Newell | Smith | Hurley and Treacy | Cooper and White |
|------------------------------|---|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| Theory driven | Analysis privileges single perspective, data fitted to theory | No observations used to develop taxonomy | Multiple perspectives approach | Multiple perspectives approach |
| Primary practice lens | Intervention Strategies | Traditions recognisable by practitioners | Youth work purpose, strategy and methods | Intervention Purpose and Strategies |

Three main methods were used by the authors to locate practice within their models. These were historical and documentary, especially the use of historical and contemporary accounts to create a taxonomy, reflection on multiple theoretical perspectives to interpret informal observations of contemporary practice, and in a single case, interview data analysed from a single, pre-determined theoretical perspective (see Table 7). Only Butters and Newell used interview data to develop their model; however, as discussed above, it appears that the data was placed into a pre-existing framework, rather than being used as a grounded theory approach. This is evidenced in Butters and Newell’s description of practice, where they privilege the Radical Paradigm, even though it was least represented in their empirical data. It might be argued that Butters and Newell’s radical paradigm was future oriented, and therefore not likely to be well-represented empirically. If this is the case, Butters and Newell must acknowledge that their work is essentially theoretical (with illustrative case studies) rather than empirically-based. A second problem is that with the benefit

of hindsight, in the thirty years since *Realities of Training* first appeared, the radical paradigm has not emerged as a visible form of practice in contemporary youth work.

Table 7: Model-making methods

| | Butters and Newell | Smith | Hurley and Treacy | Cooper and White |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Historical/ documentary | Marxian historical method | Descriptive/ Conceptual historical | a-historical | a-historical |
| Reflective process | Implicit | Explicit | Explicit | Explicit |
| Empirical data | Yes | No | No | No |

Reclaiming Positive Scepticism

As in previous decades, youth work remains ambiguously positioned as an institution that variously supports social conformity, affirms and extends young people’s rights, promotes holistic human development and transcendent search for meaning, and works practically and politically toward a more just and humane society. The youth work models reviewed in this article, were developed in response to different facets of the social and political context of their time. The policy environment has now changed.

Application of the Framework for Positive Sceptical Reflection indicates that the central organising principle within three of the models has some contemporary utility. With some reworking, all except Butters and Newell’s model, could provide analytical tools that youth work still needs. Smith’s method of mapping traditions is useful to identify how contemporary forms of practice fit with previous traditions. In his subsequent work, Smith has demonstrated how his basic model can provide a foundation for analysis of emergent forms of youth work, for example, Smith (2003). The sociological analysis that underpins Hurley and Treacy’s model needs updating, but this approach still provides essential insights into how assumptions and public discourse about society, in a very practical way, shape the purposes of youth work and discourse about the role of youth work in society. Finally, Cooper and White’s approach, which links political ideology and youth work practice, still provides a useful method to understand how political worldviews shape government policy, and how this in turn, shapes the space in which youth work operates. This understanding provides a number of benefits. It allows youth workers to communicate with politicians in ways pertinent to the politicians’ worldview. It also enables youth workers to infer the values behind new government policies, like the ‘Big Society’, and to quickly analyse the likely implications for youth work. Such knowledge is also essential for effective public education and political lobbying to create a public understanding of why youth work is necessary and what it can achieve. The attention to language in this model also links to discourse analysis, and promotes an understanding

of how discourse informs claims to legitimacy in youth work practice.

The Way Forward

An important purpose of this article has been to renew interest in the theorisation of youth work and to re-start discussion about models of youth work. The Framework for Positive Sceptical Reflection was used to evaluate four existing models, and has identified areas of research and investigation that are needed for future development of youth work models. To update and improve existing models, there is an urgent need for good quality systematically gathered data about practices of contemporary youth work, including strategies, values and processes.

In this investigation, it has become clear that even within BIYW countries, theoretical development has been insular, despite technological changes that ease the sharing of research. More international collaboration is needed to document, understand and share insights into the development of BIYW. One starting point would be through greater international collaboration between youth work research centres and clearinghouses. More ambitiously, international collaboration on empirical investigation of current youth work practice, nationally and internationally, in BIYW countries and beyond, would assist model development. This could be used to map how practice has changed and to understand youth workers' perceptions of these changes. A pilot project recently completed by the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (Griffin and Lutterall, 2011) began this process in a small way in Australia, but further work is required. A high quality study would require development of a rigorous grounded theory methodology, which could be used to systematically extract themes from collected data, and to develop youth work theory.

International collaboration beyond the traditional BIYW countries would be beneficial because it would enable a better understanding of alternative potential forms youth work might (legitimately) take. Such collaboration might include not only European youth work, through the Council of Europe (European Youth Forum, 2008), but also youth work in the United States, through the Next Generation Youth Work Coalition, in Asia, including Singapore, through Youthwork Singapore, and youth work in Hong Kong, and in Africa, especially South Africa.

Secondly, conceptual investigation could re-examine the usefulness and applicability of established descriptors within youth work models. The descriptors coined by Butters and Newell have been used relatively uncritically in many subsequent models of practice. This is not always helpful. For example, in youth work the term 'Character Building' is generally used pejoratively to describe strategies of social indoctrination to produce conservative social conformity. This usage is peculiar to the youth work field, and would not be understood in other disciplines. For example, in some parts of education influenced by virtue ethics, character building is understood very differently.

The youth work usage of Character Building is also problematic because it aligns the strategy of socialisation/ social indoctrination, which can be used within any system of political values (conservative, liberal, socialist, environmentalist or feminist) with a singular (conservative) set of political values. This confounds the strategy, with its purpose, and makes it unclear whether the objection is to the method (socialisation, social indoctrination) or the outcome (social conformity), or to both.

Thirdly, in some countries, work is still needed to examine and articulate boundaries between youth work and other professions, especially as boundaries have become more fluid. Model-development provides a method to delineate the place youth work occupies within an array of social, educational, community, health, welfare, psychological, political, religious, and leisure services and provision. The diagram produced by Wylie (2006, cited in McKee, et al, 2010) provides a useful starting point.

Finally, there is an urgent need for models to promote on-going debate about the curriculum for youth work education and training. The motivation for Butters and Newell to develop their model of youth work was inspired by this need, even though their model was not ultimately successful. Other models (Smith; Hurley and Treacy; Cooper and White) addressed training as a secondary purpose of their model and touch upon the knowledge and skills youth workers require for different types of work. However, this is only part of the picture, because the future curriculum for youth work education and training will need to be able to defend its curriculum purposes, content and its processes, as Ord (2008) argues, and these do not fit easily with prevailing Vocational and Higher education policy. To address the need for a renewed curriculum in youth work higher education the Australian Learning and Teaching Council recently funded a comprehensive review and renewal of the Australian youth work higher education curriculum, which is currently in progress (Cooper et al, 2010).

In conclusion, this article has identified how youth work models can contribute to the future development of youth work in the twenty-first century, and which of the older models provide a useful starting point for future development. Existing models need updating urgently, and multiple models will be required. The next step is for youth workers in all roles to re-engage with systematic observation of their own practice, with critical reflection, and with thoughtful reading in a range of disciplines to give life to new models. Such processes will develop and re-invigorate both practice methods and models, and will enable the relevance of youth work to be maintained and communicated. If this occurs, youth work may survive, and even thrive, as a useful and distinct form of practice in the twenty-first century.

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THINKING SPACE



Reflective Practice Meets Youth Work Supervision

Margo Herman

Abstract:

Supervisors are essential to nurturing organizational and employee success in the field of youth work. Supervisors who take the time to incorporate a reflective practice and critical inquiry approach to supervision may deepen positive change in their youth work practice as well as the relationship with those they supervise. This article identifies the concepts of reflective practice, critical inquiry and action research, then proposes a framework for Reflective Supervisory Practice in a youth work context, and analyzes the benefits of this approach. The framework was developed during a year long National Afterschool Matters Practitioner Fellowship in the U.S. in 2010.

Key words: Reflective Practice, Youth Work Supervision, Action Research, Critical Inquiry, Leadership Skills in Youth Work.

SUPERVISING YOUTH workers is a challenging, demanding job within a complex field of work. Supervisors who take the time to incorporate a reflective practice and action research approach to supervision of youth workers can deepen the impact of their work. This article offers insights into the value of linking reflection, critical inquiry and action research with supervision practices and proposes a practical framework for youth work supervisors to consider for supporting youth work staff. The framework is intended to percolate some new perspectives for youth work supervisors to consider since there is little applied research or literature available about this subject.

McNamara, Lawley and Towler (2007-08: 81) note that supervision is a powerful tool for addressing youth worker stresses, providing potential to assist organizations in valuing staff and helping them keep focus on the young people at the heart of the youth work enterprise. In the United States, the current thinking about youth worker preparation does little to ensure that staff have the

supervision and support to handle the complexity of their jobs. In contrast to other professions, ‘... youth workers are too frequently recruited quickly and “dropped” into situations without adequate preparation or supervision’ (Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2008: 11). Christian and Kitto (1987) look at the history of supervision and emphasize the need for it in youth work but state that it is often not well established. They define supervision as both a working practice and a relationship where advice is not given but the worker is enabled to explore their situation and reach their own decisions. In her comprehensive book that covers all aspects of supervision within a youth work context, Tash (1967) identifies several phases of the supervisory relationship ranging from ‘getting to know each other’, to a short phase of ‘dependency’, to a time where the worker is able to reflect and problem-solve independently without supervision. In the US literature, Kadushin and Harkness (2002) emphasize the importance of supervision in social work. They outline the supervisor’s role as ‘administrative, educational and supportive functions in interaction with the supervisee in the context of a positive relationship’ (2002: 23). Kadushin and Harkness provide an overview of these administrative, educational and supportive processes as well as outlining the potential advantages and problems to the supervisor/supervisee relationship. They stress the importance of the supervisor’s role in delivering the best service to clients although having no direct contact with them. This article draws on the basic principles of supervision and develops the assertion that supervisors who blend and extend knowledge and skills about personnel management with knowledge and skills about critical inquiry and reflective practice will offer a perspective instrumental to empowering their staff.

Although the literature on critical inquiry does not specifically address youth work, evidence exists that habits of reflection and inquiry contribute to quality practice in teaching. Critical inquiry as described by Cochrane-Smith and Lytle (2001) suggest an inquiry approach to teaching where novices and experts co-create learning and teaching by merging their perspective through collaborative analysis. When teachers and students engage through inquiry, a mutual form of knowledge evolves. The culture of inquiry allows assumptions and common practices to be questioned, data collection defined, and alternatives considered (Cochrane-Smith, 2001: 53-54). Underlying assumptions are challenged and valued in this approach.

Reflective practice invites supervisors to explore difficult or unique youth work experiences with surprise, puzzlement, or positive confusion. As they reflect on the phenomenon before them, they may choose to think through and carry out an experiment which generates both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation (Schön, 1983: 68). When this kind of reflective practice is combined with the previously stated approach to inquiry, the potential for a deeper understanding of youth work issues holds promise for new perspectives to emerge.

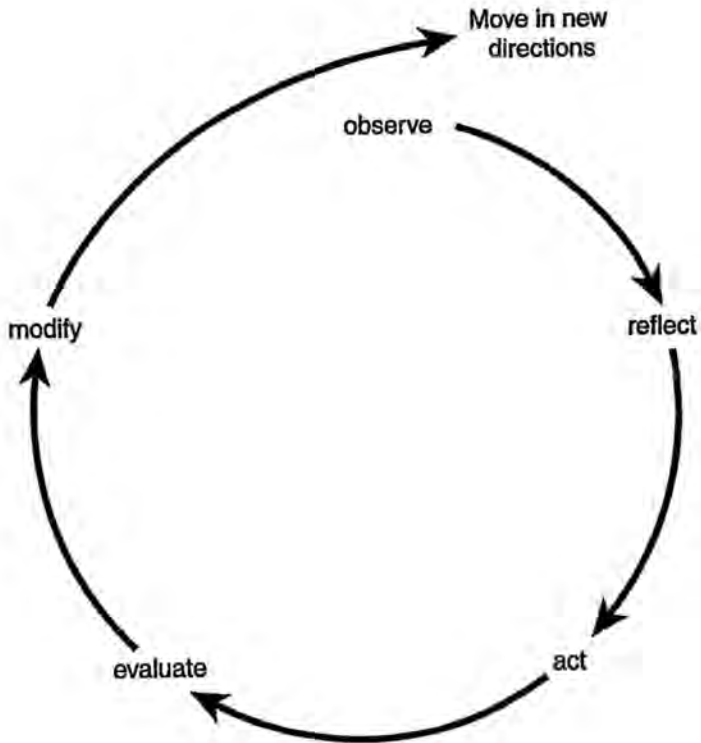
Supervisors who choose a mode of inquiry, invite and engage with supervisees to understand issues and explore assumptions. They may add in tools of action research to enable the team to

actually investigate and evaluate their work, and create new possibilities for action. Those who engage in action research ask;

What am I doing? What do I need to improve? How do I improve it?' Their accounts of practice show how they are trying to improve their own learning and influence the learning of others. These accounts come to stand as their own practical theories of practice, from which others can learn if they wish (McNiff, 2006: 7).

This combination of reflection, critical inquiry and action research becomes powerful. There is momentum in the youth work field to infuse the preparation and practice of youth workers with reflection and inquiry in the belief that these will strengthen the knowledge base, improve practice and broaden the voices that inform policy (Hill, 2009). Using the critical tensions and questions within youth work practice in a reflective inquiry context can help illuminate new approaches to supervision .

The proposed *Framework for Reflective Supervisory Practice* (Figure 2) was crafted using these reflective inquiry tools as I participated in the *National After School Matters Practitioner Fellowship* in 2009-2010. The fellowship is based on goals for afterschool professionals to 'support a community of practitioners to study effective practices...and disseminate and share program improvement strategies' (Hill, 2009: 47). As afterschool professionals in the fellowship engaged in conversations about reflective practice and critical inquiry, I had the opportunity to indirectly observe the potential for youth work supervisors to transform relationships between supervisors and supervisees by using these tools. Although the fellowship experience did not provide a classic research context, it did provide the opportunity to collect qualitative stories from youth work supervisors about dilemmas where a reflective practice approach might enhance the process of supervision. These supervisors had a desire to transform some of the challenges of supervising by reflectively identifying and responding to issues without anticipating or prescribing outcomes. They encouraged an enhanced involvement and shared perspective between supervisors and supervisees to ultimately impact young people. This approach can be transformative and provide a fertile launching ground for dynamic application of McNiff's Action Reflection cycle (Figure 1) (McNiff, 2006: 8,9).

Figure 1: McNiff Action Reflection Cycle

This cycle promotes moving in new directions by building upon investigation and observations to reach new actions. The steps include:

- **observing** what is going on,
- **identifying** a concern,
- **reflecting** to move forward with a given concern,
- **taking action** to try out a new way,
- **evaluating** data about what is happening, and
- **modifying** the plan as a result of what is discovered.

With both critical inquiry and reflective practice infused in this action-reflection cycle, the framework (Figure 2) begins to unfold. Critical inquiry encourages supervisors and supervisees to construct joint knowledge about day to day events, norms and practices; reflection allows for puzzlement; confusion and uncertainty are condoned as a means to enhance mutual understanding. As stated earlier, the combination becomes powerful.

A Framework for Reflective Supervisory Practice

The Framework (figure 2) was developed with qualitative input from three groups of youth work supervisors to improve practices and advance knowledge for youth work. Group one comprised youth work supervisors who participated in focus groups in 2009 to provide input for a University of MN Center for Youth Development workshop called Leadership Matters (n=19). Group two involved Afterschool Matters Practitioner Fellowship participants who were learning and applying reflective practice and critical inquiry skills in 2010 (n=11). Group three consisted of youth work supervisors who registered as Leadership Matters workshop participants in 2010 (n=22).

The Framework encourages reflection through action research with the intent to improve practices and to advance knowledge about how things can be done and why (McNiff, 2006:8). The concepts of reflective practice blended with qualitative data (stories and experiences) from the above sample lead to the five sequential steps identified in Figure 2 Framework for Reflective Supervisory Practice. The value of this approach lies in the fact that frameworks for youth work supervisors to consider for bringing reflective practice to their specific work context are scarce.

FIGURE 2: Framework for Reflective Supervisory Practice

Suggested Approaches to Reflective Practice in a Youth Work Supervision Context

1: *Assess and analyze youth work practice outside of your own organization* by reading field research, seeking practitioner stories, and connecting with a peer network. 2: *Conduct data collection* by applying qualitative data and action research tools through intentionally observing staff over a course of time; and interviewing staff to create an enhanced openness and understanding about the dilemmas, tensions and stresses experienced by youth work staff. 3: *Identify themes and reflect upon the issues* that emerge from the analysis and research to illuminate issues to be addressed with staff. 4: *Incorporate the issues and themes identified into staff interactions* such as staff meetings, one-on-one meetings, or learning circles for internal staff development. 5: *Coach and mentor staff individually* discussing and strategizing based on the themes, dilemmas and issues that emerge.

Approach 1: Assess and analyze youth work practice outside of your organization by reading field research, seeking practitioner stories, and connecting with a peer network.

There is value in discovering research and practitioner stories from the broader field of youth development to foster ideas that elevate a supervisor's viewpoint above the day to day busyness. Youth work journals and newsletters are more frequently featuring supervisory practices within

youth work organizations. National and international youth work sources such as Harvard Family Research and Forum for Youth Investment have recently published journal articles on the subject. These types of publication keep researchers and practitioners on the forefront of the youth work field through the sharing of practitioner stories.

As an example, a recent article entitled *Shining A Light on Supervision* (Wilson-Ahlstrom, Yohalem, and Craig, 2010) features exemplary youth work supervision practices. The authors observe:

We are poised to learn a lot in the coming years about how to strengthen on-the-job supports for youth workers in ways that improve practice and reduce turnover. This is a very positive development.... When we compared satisfied youth workers with their dissatisfied peers, only one significant difference emerges in their profiles: satisfied workers were more likely to report getting the feedback they needed to do their job.... Some differences in practice may come down to whether someone is fortunate to have a good supervisor (Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010: 1-2).

Taking time to seek out practice stories deepens the perspective of youth work supervisors and brings forth a new understanding melded with academic learning about effective supervision. There is value in the collective knowledge of novice and expert, academic and practitioner collaborating to inform youth work practice. Formal knowledge (scholars) and practical knowledge (practitioners) can build 'local knowledge' collaboratively (Cochrane-Smith, 2001: 51). Drawing attention to the blending of field research and practitioner stories may change the way we regard and provide professional development in youth work supervision.

Approach 2: Conduct data collection; learn and apply qualitative analysis and action research inquiry tools.

Collecting qualitative data is helpful to spark new action strategies within an organization. As in many areas of research, the youth work profession is acknowledging the value of qualitative data drawn from fieldwork; this kind of data helps to bridge research into practice and vice versa. Qualitative methods encourage gathering multiple data sources as an observer collecting field notes from open ended interviews, direct observations, and written documents. The data for qualitative analysis typically comes from fieldwork where the researcher makes firsthand observations of activities and interactions (Patton, 1990: 10).

This approach illuminates issues and concerns based on the observations and interviews. The collection of this type of data typically involves recording observations of youth and youth workers in action, and interviewing staff about the interactions and dynamics of day-to-day work with

youth. The issues that emerge from the collected data form part of the action reflection cycle that creates potential for practice changes. Looking back at collective observation notes and interviews over an extended period of time helps illuminate the issues and dilemmas. There is importance in viewing the observations from a macro level, beyond a particular incident or crisis. This requires standing back and regarding the data from a broader perspective and context. As Ron Heifetz teaches in his leadership classes at Harvard:

Imagine...you are on a dance floor, swept up in the dance, an active participant in a complex scene. There are some things about the dance that you will only know by actually dancing. But if you move to the balcony for awhile, you can see things that you can never discover on the dance floor – the larger pattern of interactions of which you are a part. You gain perspective and can make new choices (Parks, 2005: 50).

There are many types of interviews and ways of observing. Casual observations recorded over a period of weeks and months without much focus on analyzing the meaning at the time can be valuable when viewed collectively with higher level balcony perspective that helps identify themes and issues. Recording observations regularly over the course of time (three months, six months, whatever time frame is useful), allows for quick and unobtrusive entries to be made that can be analyzed farther down the road at the end of the observation course. There is no need to spend too much time analyzing as you record the entries; the issues will emerge within. The quality of the information obtained during an interview is largely dependent upon the interviewer (Patton, 1982: 161). How you ask questions is essential to the quality of answers. The skill of creating truly open ended questions that minimize the imposition of predetermined responses when gathering input is an essential skill for supervisors to develop. Interview responses can provide effective data for mining tensions that allow reaching beyond the usual perspective on issues. Thoughtful questions can lead to further pondering that provide ‘a grow light’ for setting forth new thinking (Hubbard, 1991: 34). Supervisors can benefit from these thoughtful questions if they allow the reflective space for them to emerge fully.

Approach 3: Identify themes and reflect upon the issues that emerge from action research and use this information to illuminate issues to be addressed with staff.

This is the crux of it all – crafting the key reflection points. The reflecting stage of the McNiff action-reflection cycle is essential to this framework. Taking the time to stand back and define issues beyond daily staff incidents will bring a more collective and reflective focus to the challenges of youth work practice. The action research cycle provides a method for youth work supervisors to investigate, evaluate, create and take new action (Figure 1, McNiff, 2006: 9).

Multiple sources of data can be viewed broadly. Consider a wide cast for what is regarded as

potential data: interview notes, observations, self reflection notes, research by others in the field, focus group notes, workshop evaluation notes, transcripts, case studies, journal entries (from staff, students, parents, self), phone conversation notes, emails, texts, performance evaluations, student work – written and artistic, assessment results, photos. Each of these has the potential to enhance the perspective when identifying broader themes.

Identifying emerging themes is a way of making sense of the data gathered. ‘Looking for themes in written material typically involves pawing through texts and marking them up with different colored pens’ (Ryan, 1985:88). Themes emerge as a search for similarities, differences, and repetitions is conducted. The voluminous raw data in field notes can be organized into readable narrative description with major themes, categories and case examples extracted through analysis of the notes. This analysis can be viewed as interviewing the collection of data acquired, and allowing for new perspectives to emerge.

Youth work supervisors who continually collect and synthesize data, putting these tools into practice to illuminate findings that help to understand the complex practice of youth work will perpetuate the action – reflection cycle with new data for new reflections and potential for new action.

Approach 4: Incorporate the issues identified into staff interactions such as staff meetings, one-on-one meetings, or learning circles for internal staff development.

Choosing what to do with what arises from the first three approaches is an essential step within this framework. Decide how to share the findings on multiple levels. With staff, perhaps incorporate new insights into staff meetings, learning circles, one-on-one staff interactions. Also consider sharing stories with other youth work supervisors and peers from other youth work organizations through newsletters, blogs or journal articles as a way to share knowledge with the broader youth work field.

On a staff meeting level, one time-efficient suggestion is to let staff bring an issue or dilemma to the work team to seek added perspective without taking time for discussion. Allowing 10 minutes for a team member to define an issue and ask for briefly stated perspectives about the issue (one minute per person to respond to the issue) is a way to empower staff to bring forward some of the challenges they are facing. Once they hear the brief responses, they can choose which ones to pursue outside the meeting. This kind of approach can help to deepen common perspective amongst staff and bring a mutual investment in defining future action. More in-depth staff discussion on identified issues can subsequently generate specific action strategies that both supervisors and supervisees support.

In keeping with the action reflection cycle (figure 1), it is helpful to plan some ways to evaluate new

action strategies that emerge, assessing whether they are working well or need to be modified. This step closes the loop for the cycle as moving to new directions leads back into the next observation stage.

On a peer level, monthly or quarterly learning circles can be effective ways to enrich learning and reflection with other supervisors. This kind of network can be immensely valuable to supervisors gaining support and insight from peers.

Approach 5: Coach and mentor staff individually, to discuss and strategize about the themes, dilemmas and issues that emerge.

As new strategies are brought to staff to implement, they need support for knowing why, when, and how to implement new strategies. Supervisors acting as a coach and/or mentor are essential to implementing successful new ideas. Once supervisors learn and practice action reflection, they can coach employees how to also be reflective and to identify themes in youth work practice. In this kind of coaching relationship the action reflection cycle that incorporates critical inquiry and reflection can deepen the supervisor/supervisee relationship, bridging the common understanding on issues and dilemmas.

There are a number of ways to support staff in this capacity including trying out some new internal professional development ideas such as ‘mentoring programs and offering on-going informal resources such as newsletters, on-line discussion boards, and “brown bag” lunches for staff members to share ideas and expertise’ (Bowie and Bronte-Tinkew, 2006: 1). Supervisors can empower employees through these strategies.

Benefits of the Framework for Reflective Supervisory Practice

One of the consistent challenges internationally for the youth work field is to bridge theory and practice. In the context of youth work supervision, the *Framework for Reflective Supervisory Practice* is one avenue for approaching this challenge. This Framework was crafted as a specific project for the *National Afterschool Matters Practitioner Fellowship* in the United States to explore the application of research to reflection and critical inquiry theory for youth work supervisors. On a practice level and on a broader field level, the framework encourages a strategic and proactive approach where supervisors reflectively derive perspective about day to day events, norms and practices based on academic learning, qualitative data, and supervisee perception. Benefits of this approach are multi-faceted, but the key practice benefit for supervisors is enhancing rapport with staff and building a solid base for engaging in a continual cycle for defining meaningful mutual perspective about the issues within the organization. Long term implications for the organization

are significant as the framework helps illuminate complex issues over time.

Supervisors who are committed to an action reflection approach (continually collecting and synthesizing data, identifying themes and issues, and coaching/mentoring their staff) will provide their youth work team and their organization with a more in-depth and focused perspective on youth work. Taking the time to implement this framework is undoubtedly a challenge, but when investing the time, energy and sustained commitment produces results, the return on investment unfolds. As noted earlier by Wilson-Ahlstrom (2008), the difference in practice may come down to whether youth workers are fortunate to have a good supervisor. As supervisors engage with supervisees to understand issues based in qualitative data, as well as inquiry and reflection, the tools of action research enable the team to be more systematically responsive to issues.

For the youth work field, the issues and dilemmas that are illuminated through this approach inform the broader community about the complexity and interdisciplinary nature of youth work, as well as the critical role of youth work supervision in shaping the field. By blending field research knowledge with practitioner stories, a deepened understanding emerges. As Cochrane-Smith (2001: 51) conveys, the formal knowledge from scholars and practical knowledge from practitioners can build 'local knowledge' collaboratively. This blended knowledge changes the way the field regards youth work supervision and supporting youth workers. From the field level, the action reflection cycle perpetuates the exploration of new directions for youth work. Complex issues unfold with unique perspective and help shape action research questions to be explored at an academic and at a practice level.

The *Framework for Reflective Supervisory Practice* provides one approach for developing a deeper understanding of issues in youth work supervision by enhancing the blending of theory and practice. The enhanced knowledge that emerges from this blending of theory and practice may ultimately advance the impact of youth work supervision.

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Reviews

Carolyn Davies and Harriet Ward

Safeguarding Children Across Services: Messages from Research

Jessica Kingsley Publishers 2011

ISBN 978 1 84905 237 5

£19.99 (pbk) or free download

pp. 224

William McGovern

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN Across Services brings together findings from 15 research studies and discusses the identification of abuse and neglect, methods of prevention, and interventions for families with additional or complex needs. The authors argue that the book offers a critical account of policy, systems and practice and is essential in providing guidance in relation to safeguarding children for policy makers, social workers, professionals in health care and the family justice system as well as others working with children.

This is a good book, which I found easy to read. It left me with no doubt that it will be included as an essential reading text in a number of undergraduate module handbooks in Substance Use, Safeguarding, Early Years, Social Work and Youth Work. The content is interesting, informative and free from jargon, and the subsections of the text allow the reader to meander through, gleaning a general understanding of the content with little difficulty. The book is well presented and each of the chapters has a synopsis of what the following section covers and ends with a text box of key findings.

Chapter one has sub sections summarising the research studies which were used to inform the content of the book, outlining the strengths and weaknesses of the approach used, and listing training manuals which have been developed from the evidence collated. This approach and the book layout presents the reader, be they undergraduate student or practitioner, with the opportunity to follow and explore their interests, take responsibility for their own learning and take theoretical guidance when needed.

Like many others I am often drawn to the sections of publications which focus on cause and effect, identification and initial response, on this occasion to safeguarding concerns. Given the strong methodological approach of peer review used to conclude and collate findings from the research review, I worry that the authors may have leaned towards problematising certain aspects

of behaviour which are often associated with safeguarding issues. The sections on substance use and domestic abuse in Chapter two are well written, focused and referenced; however, these sections only contain a list of risk factors and catalogue of adverse facts that surround the concept of safeguarding, substance use or violence. It would have been more insightful with reference to substance use to have had a small review of the literature and evidence base which suggests that becoming pregnant, having a child or seeking to avoid the ultimate nadirs associated with the removal of children can be viewed as resilience factors in their own right and are associated with the cessation of substance use (Finfeld, 2000).

There is a section in Chapter Five, Specific Interventions for Children and Families, which discusses the engagement of families; this too is flagged up in the maltreatment of children section. This section could also be strengthened by a short synopsis of the work undertaken to promote strength based self-help approaches and new directions in welfare policy (Folgheraiter and Pasini, 2009). In discussing the issue of domestic violence the authors correctly drive us to develop an understanding of the concept as multi-faceted and that further research is needed to develop an evidence base for work with violent perpetrators. I agree this is the case but struggle with the fact that despite referencing from systematic reviews the theoretical concepts of perpetrators interventions such as psycho-educational, cognitive behavioural and therapeutic groups (Babcock et al, 2004) have not been included. Given the spirit of the publication it would have been great to have been signposted to further work and theoretical concepts which would allow for further learning.

The points raised above should not detract anyone from considering reading this book. The reading list and citation of work including the appendices of research findings provide an excellent resource. In building a model for 'Services Around the Child' or 'Services Around the Family' even the most experienced practitioner would benefit from reading the key messages whilst considering the subsections on leading, management and the role of finance in safeguarding. Finally, the authors bring our attention to a number of key concluding issues. However, it is not the findings that bring new knowledge to the field, although a more in depth look at the role of GPs in safeguarding would be welcomed. Putting my own areas of academic interest to one side for a moment I would suggest that it is the process by which the authors have come to these conclusions which are the strengths of this publication and the way in which they present their views and findings which will benefit those with the sense to read it.

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Feminist Webs

The Exciting Life of Being a Woman: A Handbook for Women and Girls

Hammeron Press 2012

ISBN: 978-0-9564507-2-2

£10 (pbk)

pp. 251

Tania de St Croix

OVER THE LAST few years I have been excited to hear on occasion about the work of Feminist Webs, the collective or movement (or web?) of young women, youth workers and academics based mainly in North-West England. These girls and women have reminded us that young women's work is as valuable as ever, and that being feminist and politically engaged is an important aspect of being a youth worker that should not be hidden. In the recent past Feminist Webs has been creative in its production of original and interesting posters and postcards as well as web-based resources which I have often used when planning girls' work activities, chuckling at one of their slogans, 'Done hair and nails: now what?' Bearing in mind the proud history of feminist publishing (and my own old-fashioned preferences) I was delighted to find out that Feminist Webs have now published a 'proper' full-length book!

This attractive book has a zine-like presentation, with a mixture of cartoons, material from the historical archive and from Feminist Webs events, longer pieces of writing, poems, illustrations, activity ideas and spaces for the reader to do their own writing or art work. Inspired and partly funded by a heritage project it includes contributors' narratives of personal histories, from involvement at Greenham Common to starting a girls group or becoming a feminist. More recent histories or her-stories are included from the younger women involved. The historical aspects are accessible and relevant, and there are also less obviously heritage-related sections such as self defence and 'how to repair a bike puncture'.

Having been involved in a small way in less ambitious collective writing projects with fellow

youth workers and young people, I can imagine how much work must have been involved in putting this impressive book together. At times the layout is a little rough around the edges and there are a few places where words seem to have fallen off the page, but this does not detract in any way. In fact I liked the slightly home-made quality, as an antidote to over-produced reports that look nice but don't say anything new. More importantly, the book is inspiring and impressive in its ability to make political and historical ideas palatable and accessible without dodging their complexity. Where there are debates and disagreements within feminism, these tend to be discussed and explored rather than glossed over. This openness and honesty strengthens rather than diminishes its impact.

Running throughout the book are examples of women 'whose resilience inspires us', with useful information and lovely hand-drawn illustrations celebrating a diverse array of women from a variety of cultures and parts of the world, challenging the idea of feminism as predominantly white and middle-class. These 'spirit women' are held up as inspirations, which is perhaps why they seem to be described in wholly positive terms. There is clearly a value to celebrating the achievements of women who have so often been left out of the stories of history, arts and politics, but I would have liked to see a discussion on the pros and cons of the uncritical celebration of certain individuals. I should also admit to some cynicism over the word resilience which seems to crop up too often as a buzzword in recent policy; however, like all of the concepts in this book the word 'resilience' is used here with a more radical edge.

I haven't yet had a chance to share this book with friends, colleagues and young women, and it will be interesting to hear how it is received by people who have not previously come into contact with feminist ideas. I can particularly imagine it being loved by bookish young women, and by youth workers who find academic books difficult to relate to practice but 'activity tool kits' too formulaic and uncritical. The format, illustrations and activity ideas make it easy to dip in and out of, but I found reading it from cover to cover was also rewarding. It is easy to read without being simplistic and I read it word for word, enjoying, learning and contemplating.

As pointed out in the book, we can all be part of Feminist Webs: 'You don't need to "join". Just set yourself up and go for it!' (p.8). This book will support and inspire anyone who already works with young women or wants to; any young woman who is looking for an alternative to 'girly' magazines and 'chick lit'; and anyone who is even vaguely interested in finding out more about feminism. It is available from the independent publisher Hammeron (or from Amazon, if you must). *The Exciting Life of Being a Woman* would make a great present for any young woman or youth worker, and should be in every library and youth centre.

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Carolyn Jackson, Carrie Paetcher and Emma Renold (eds.)

Girls in Education 3-16: Continuing Concerns, New Agendas

Open University Press 2010

ISBN: 9780335235629

£24.99 (pbk)

pp. 256

Ali Hanbury

THIS COLLECTION offers teachers, school staff and informal/community educators fifteen chapters split into three helpful sections: 'Girls and academic achievement'; 'Girls' experiences in the schooling system'; and, 'Relationships between girls' out-of-school experiences and school life'. Published in 2010 it provides a snap-shot in time and place at a retrospectively important juncture in British politics being closely followed by a change from a Labour Government to a Conservative-led coalition Government.

Perhaps it was a conscious political decision from the editors and / or perhaps it is a reflection of the gendered nature of educators and researcher positions of women within this 'caring profession' that resulted in a collection of female-only contributors. Whichever, the editors open this book by setting a political context and they emphasise the importance of political awareness and engagement from education professionals as critical practitioners. Using a wealth of empirical work they highlight the problematic position of girls and young women in the education system today; caught between being represented in large-scale data sets as achieving higher G.C.S.E. results than boys and young men which has resulted in a 'poor boy discourse' and being sexually and racially 'Othered'.

As a youth and community worker I was pleased to see the space afforded to out-of-school experiences and found Fin Cullen's chapter 'I was kinda paralytic': pleasure, peril and teenage girls' drinking stories' a positive nod in the direction of multi-disciplinarity. I would recommend taking the time to read Fin's section of the contributors' descriptions for an honest and playful insight into her personal-professional trajectory!

Having been rallied by the political rhetoric in the opening chapter I was left to feel down-hearted and pessimistic with some of the insights offered in much of the book with stark revelation into, for example, ways in which girls and young women are utilised as functional aids to help increase boys and young men's achievement and temper their troublesome behaviour, highlighted by Jannette Elwood in Chapter two.

We are also provided with examples of the social, cultural and sexual terrain negotiated by young women and the problematising and politicising of their experiences and behaviour. For example

Shain's chapter 'Refusing to integrate? Asian girls, achievement and the experience of schooling' highlights stereotyping and homogeneity as Othering practices within school settings, used by Asian girls as well as non-Asian girls and school staff.

Jessica Ringrose's chapter 'Sluts, whores, fat slags and playboy bunnies: Teen girls' negotiations of "sexy" on social networking sites and at school' develops from these problematic subject positions and shows how social networking is an important feature of young people's lives. This creates a difficult area for school staff and other young people's professionals in addressing 'pornified' culture in the 'virtual' world which affects every-day school relations and sexual power play between young people.

I was pleased to see space given to exploring the myriad of social, cultural and classed positions which prove to be significant areas of struggle, consciousness and often invisible areas of analysis in the wider agendas of education policy which focuses upon league tables and attainment rates. More examples and 'stories from the field' of gender equity schemes-of-work and links to resources would have added to this book, becoming a practical aid as well as a politically and research focussed insight. This is something which many time-strapped and curriculum-dependent educators would welcome.

There are tensions explored here between the neo-liberal discourses used in the education system which promote hard work, individual grades and targets with academic achievement and the homogeneity of policies and curriculum which view grades C and above as the one-size-fits-all results that all students should be aiming for to open up choices for further study.

Once again, this collection reminds readers of the highly political role we have as educators be that in early years, statutory education, further and higher education or indeed youth and community/informal education settings. It gave me an opportunity to reflect and question some of the targets placed upon youth and community workers to reach specific accredited outcomes regardless of the individual needs of the children and young people we work with.

Let us not forget that despite girls and young women achieving academically higher levels than boys and young men (which Becky Francis helpfully challenges and unpacks) this trend is not the case for all girls and young women, shedding light on a classed and 'raced' educational system. And let us remember that these gendered trends of achievement are not converted into representation in the workplace and in rates of pay in adult life.

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Blair McPherson

People Management in a Harsh Financial Climate

Russell House Publishing Ltd 2010

ISBN 978-1-905541-63-8

£25.00 (pbk)

pp. 86

Lesley Buckland

THIS BOOK FOCUSES on finding cost effective ways to develop managers, many of whom will be facing job insecurity, so that they can increase ‘output’ and still pursue ‘high standards’ whilst under increased pressure (p. v). That in itself is an ambitious task: how do you keep people motivated and interested in what they are doing when they are being squeezed from all sides? This manual appears to be designed as an alternative to sending managers on training courses or further professional development routes whilst equipping them with the skills the organisation requires in this current climate. Clearly there are great financial incentives to using this approach. The format is accessible for the manager who may not have much time, comprising of a number of activities and questions to consider preceded by an introductory statement or theory on the issue.

The book was one of the usual spiral bound Russell House manuals, and quickly fell apart with pages falling out. I wondered whether they were trying to cut costs too! At £25.00 I would not consider this good value for money (the pdf is £229.13, including VAT and can be used across an organisation). There were no real ground breaking ideas on people management that the social worker, youth worker or housing worker wouldn’t have gleaned in their training and professional development. This author seemed to merely echo his experience in the current field and amplify the current political rhetoric.

Although the title of this book suggests that it is all about developing people, I felt it started from a very negative perspective. The introduction ‘Using this manual’ starts from the premise that people are difficult and troublesome to manage. Staff development doesn’t appear until number 6 on the list of issues, way behind such things as ‘tackling absenteeism’ and ‘challenging poor standards of work’. Is this what the author truly believes modern management is all about? Several assumptions were made about the reader, primarily that they would be male. For example, when advising on how you may wish to ‘look the part’ for interviews references to ‘sharp suits and shiny shoes’ and ‘penalty shoot outs’ were abundant (p.xviii). This felt like a retrograde step in putting the ‘man’ back into manager.

The book claimed to be for ‘Anyone involved in developing aspiring managers, supporting new managers or mentoring ambitious managers in the public, voluntary and not-for profit organisations ... principally ... in the people services, including children’s services, adult services, social work,

education, housing, community and justice services' (p. vii). However, it seemed to drift between managers in the public sector and managers in the private sector. McPherson seems to approach this manual from an assumed and unquestioned position that the business model of management is better. (Wasn't it the business model of management that generated this harsh financial climate that we currently find ourselves in?) He suggests that 'doing things differently' would make managers think about how to be a 'corporate manager' (p. xix).

I am not convinced that many of these ideas are grounded in concrete experience or supported by any underpinning philosophy or approach. For example, I couldn't really get a grasp on how McPherson's suggested approach of dipping in and out of training 'when time and opportunity permits' could really work. In a climate where there are evidently increasing pressures to deliver more for less, when are these new managers going to get the time to read this manual, let alone deliver or take part in some of the suggested activities?

After stating from the outset that this manual aimed to equip managers with the skills to be able to deliver 'high standards' in the current financial climate, there was also the suggestion that 'good enough' would have to do. Maybe in the private sector this is acceptable but in children's services, social work and education will 'good enough' really do? When it comes to working with vulnerable people it will not; the public expect and deserve more. The Munro report (HMSO, 2011) emphasizes this consistently with reference to the inquiry into the death of 'Baby P'. The lack of supervision, management support or professional development opportunity allowing critical exploration of practice were all considered to be factors in providing a service that could not work to 'high standards'.

To evidence his assertion that 'good enough' is acceptable, McPherson uses the analogy of the space race, in which Russia being on a very restricted budget opted to put a pencil into space as opposed to the USA which put a man on the moon. Is there this option in public services? What impact will reducing resources for social workers have on their ability to support the most vulnerable? Working with people is a very different context to putting something into space.

There were some interesting aspects to this book. Section Two offered thoughts to consider if as a manager you have to face difficult decisions about making redundancies: should it be a last in, first out approach or should consideration be given to other factors? He also raises noteworthy points in Section Nine with reference to equal opportunities. The most thought-provoking parts for me posed questions around doing more with less, home working, and the end of the traditional team meeting.

I have to question McPherson's conclusion that 'A leader does not bring about change by stating that targets are unrealistic, timescales unreasonable or objectives unachievable. A leader says "yes

we can”” (p. 25). I would argue that a ‘good’ leader also needs to be reflective, paying attention to the current environment, their resources and their expertise. Are the senior management team always right? Have they always got their fingers on the pulse? Do their ideas not deserve critical analysis? Surely, especially in today’s current climate there is a need to do a bit of research first before just agreeing to meet unrealistic demands for example that may prove to be costly as well as ineffective.

Shackleton is widely recognised as one of the greatest leaders of all time, recognised internationally by businesses and world leaders alike (Morrell & Capparell, 2002). Here was a leader who did reflect, research and propose alternatives and still maintain a cohesive and predominantly happy team. He didn’t reach his initial goal, the South Pole, unlike his main competitor, Scott. He changed his goal as he understood the environment he was working in, and as a result he and his team lived to tell the tale. His philosophy is still inspiring managers and leaders across the globe, whereas we all know what happened to Scott’s team. Do we really need a leader to be a ‘yes man’?

This book is fundamentally a series of statements to promote discussion, as an aid to developing managers to be used in individual studies, group sessions, supervision or mentoring. In this capacity it could be of value. In place of professional or academic training as McPherson suggests it might have the potential to be dangerous. As the old saying suggests, ‘A little knowledge is a dangerous thing’. In this harsh financial climate, is this book better than nothing? Possibly, but only if facilitated by an experienced and competent manager rather than as a stand-alone developmental tool. McPherson has some interesting ideas to offer, but these need to be grounded with concrete examples of where they had been used and reports on whether they had worked or not (or at least what the outcomes were). Some case studies would really have illuminated his ideas.

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Judith Milner and Jackie Bateman

Working with Children and Teenagers Using Solution Focused Approaches

Jessica Kingsley 2011

ISBN: 978 1 84905 082 1

£18.99 (pbk)

pp. 176

Claire Crawte

WORKING WITH CHILDREN And Teenagers Using Solution Focused Approaches is both an interesting and practical read, taking the reader through each element of a solution focused intervention in detail. In each chapter there are examples of how Milner and Bateman have used their theory in practice including times where things didn't go so well, which make their ideas all the more real for the practitioner. The book describes how the solution focused method can fit into a variety of situations youth workers may find themselves in. Examples range from working with younger children around such issues as soiling themselves, to teenagers keeping themselves safe, cannabis misuse, and eating disorders.

The authors take us through the main elements of the theory, and use examples to show how they would work in real situations. For example, 'the miracle question' was devised by De Shazer (1988:5) as a useful way of developing goals towards solving problems and is a key element of solution focussed theory. Milner and Bateman add their own slant and recommend using words like 'something wonderful' rather than 'miracle' due to the client group they tend to work with. They take us through follow-up questions that could be used and variations on the miracle question as well as a group example which could be used in youth work settings.

Each chapter gives several case studies to highlight the subject, along with a 'practice activity'. This enables the reader unused to using a solution focussed way of working to experiment with the idea, which I found a really useful tool. Also included are practical and easy-to-use ideas for games. The techniques offered are informed, practical and accessible.

The issues of safeguarding and using solution focussed therapy are referred to throughout the book. It is clear the authors use the method in a variety of settings, and clear examples are given as to how it could be usefully employed throughout the book with some particularly useful worksheets. Also included is a useful risk assessment for young people and children with suicidal thoughts, taken from the set of questions devised by John Hendon (2005).

The chapter on 'Discovering Children's Strengths' continues to deal with the theme that runs throughout solution focused work: the identification and use of the individual's strengths and abilities to deal with the issues they are facing, and how to employ those abilities. The feature of scaling is clearly described, again with plenty of case studies, practical activities and creative applications. Scaling questions are an easy to use, practical and flexible method of enabling people to 'feel' where they are in relation to a variety of issues that may be affecting them.

It was refreshing to have the authors continually asking us to keep in mind that the ‘client’ or young person is the expert in their own lives, that they have the solutions to the issues they face: ‘The expertise of a solution focused worker is in structuring conversations to enable children and their families to locate any knowledge, strengths, skills and abilities which will support them in achieving their hopes and wishes’. For youth workers this concept and way of working is not new. For example, the Federation for Detached Youth Work (FDYW) describes detached youth work as ‘being underpinned by mutual trust and respect and responds to the needs of young people’ (FDYW, 2007). The methods described here seem to marry up with traditional methods of youth work. For youth workers working with young people experiencing personal difficulties this book would be a useful addition to their tool box of resources.

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Claire Crawte has been a detached youth worker since 1994 and is an executive member of the Federation for Detached Youth Work.

Jon Ord (ed)

Critical Issues in Youth Work Management

Taylor and Francis, 2012

ISBN: 0415594340, 9780415594349

£80 (hbk), £21.99 (pbk)

pp. 188

Ian McGimpsey

THE RISE OF ‘managerialism’ in UK public services has long been the subject of important critique and argument, particularly during New Labour’s time in office. *Critical Issues in Youth Work Management*, an edited collection aimed at practising managers and students, has therefore been published in interesting times. The Coalition Government, on the one hand, seems to represent the continuation of a neoliberal policy regime, diversifying supply and enhancing competition in the sector. On the other hand, following the financial crisis and arguably the commitments of economic liberals in both parties of the Coalition, the current Government has stated its intention to move away from a culture of centrally mandated, target-led service delivery. This book explores

the subject of youth work management drawing on literatures of youth work, of public service management more generally, and of critical sociology, and embeds this in a series of critically minded discussions of current issues of policy and practice.

To this end the book is divided into three sections. The first section sets the historical and conceptual ground for the discussion, beginning with a convincing account of the rise of state regulation of youth work culminating in the forms of New Public Management currently deployed in youth work. The following two chapters provide a conceptual framing for the book, first setting out the relationship between a neoliberal policy context and the management of youth work, and second giving an overview of concepts within youth work management itself. This section provides a rich set of resources for the more applied discussions in the remainder of the book, and complex concepts are clearly and accessibly explained.

It is in the use made of these resources in the rest of the book that some limitations become clear, however. In the chapter ‘Theories’ of youth work management, a key move is made to contrast ‘rationalist’ conceptions of management with a ‘postmodern’ perspective. This move is central because, as its authors Roger Harrison and Jon Ord point out, it shifts the frame of the discussion from a rationalist concern for what management practices are most effective, to a concern with ‘how has a discourse of management emerged and what are the effects’ on youth work provision. This move into ‘postmodern’ conceptual territory is, I would argue, welcome in that it opens up important critical perspectives and methodological approaches developed in other fields to interrogate neoliberal policy and its effects. Unfortunately, it is a conceptual shift that is only inconsistently worked through in the analysis of particular youth work management issues in the subsequent two sections.

The second, and largest, section of the book deals with a series of particular ‘critical issues’ within youth work management: the impact of institutional structures and cultures; leadership; planning; evaluation; supervision; centre-based youth work; and detached youth work. The chapters in this section define the particular issue of concern, and provide a useful overview of how it has been thought from multiple perspectives within the youth work literature or other related literatures. They then typically locate the issue within the context of neoliberal policy making, and then attempt to argue for ideas of management practice which are more consistent with youth work values and practices, in some cases offering a sense of how alternatives might be enacted by managers. The combination in these chapters of clearly written conceptual overviews and descriptions of possible alternatives is something its audience are likely to find valuable. Further, these chapters provide a compelling case for the importance of the book itself, repeatedly demonstrating the necessity of critical analysis of youth work management practices with clear reference to a context of neoliberal policy making.

The final section of the book offers accounts of the management of youth work within different sectors of provision, including integrated services, the voluntary sector and faith based provision. This is a section that feels particularly welcome at a time of widespread reform of youth work provision. It also highlights the methodological variety of the chapters in the book. For example, the chapter on integrated services by Davies and Merton draws on their empirical research in local authorities, and is directly followed by a chapter on faith-based provision offering a more philosophically-oriented ethical reflection (though its author draws on personal practical experience). Across the book such variety tends to be a strength, though there are occasions when claims are made by authors without their basis being immediately apparent to the reader.

This is a useful book on an undoubtedly important and timely topic. As political contexts and modes of public service provision change, we might expect management as a technology of regulation and control to change too. In producing analyses of these technologies and their effects, this book makes a vital move to utilise well-developed critical perspectives including postmodern perspectives. Nevertheless, the inconsistency of their application hampers the analyses. My concern is not that the various authors in an edited collection should be conceptually purist; it is that such concepts seem to flicker in and out of the analysis, instead of developing and taking more solid shape. As a result, difficult political questions go unaddressed in the analysis of practice issues. Is it adequate any longer to suggest management styles be developed that are more in line with youth work practice, while leaving alone questions of how disciplinary power within institutions might be productive of youth work manager (youth worker, young person...) subjects and practices? What politics might be effective in such a micropolitical terrain? This valuable book opens up this conceptual territory, and does much else besides. However, there is room to explore more fully the problems that it raises.

Ian McGimpsey, Institute of Education

Jo Broadwood and Nick Fine

From Violence to Resilience – Positive Transformative Programmes to Grow Young Leaders

Jessica Kingsley Press 2011

ISBN: 978-1-84905-183-5

£29.99 (pbk)

pp. 192

Anna Spencer

THIS TOOLKIT BUILDS on the depth of experience of the organisation LEAP Confronting Conflict, providing both the principles and practical stages for developing a transformative

programme as well as offering four different action plans for delivery. The programme emphasises the mutual learning journey of both workers and young people through connecting choices and consequences. Concerned with progression and sustainability, the toolkit presents a holistic, multi-agency approach to embedding support, supervision and evaluation. The toolkit can be used as a full programme or activities in isolation.

Broadwood and Fine believe that some young people ‘need to “turn toward” something else’ and suggest leadership training as an alternative to destructive behaviour. Relationships are presented as key to the success of the work; however a seemingly institutionalised approach to engaging with the participants seems contradictory.

In seeking to be comprehensive the toolkit uses numerous bullet points which lack cohesion at times, and would benefit from a more streamlined and systematic approach. The principles are based on widely accepted good youth work practice with little evidence of innovation. The activities draw extensively on theatre, and are a collection of familiar exercises. The toolkit has relevance for all levels of service delivery, but would be most useful to those who deliver work with young people.

Anna Spencer is a student at Durham University, Project Officer at RYWU NE, and volunteer youth worker within the local community.

Vanessa Rogers

Games and Activities for Exploring Feelings With Children

Jessica Kingsley Publishers 2011

ISBN: 978 1 84905 222 1

£15.99 (pbk)

pp. 128

Anna McTiernan

THIS IS A PRACTICAL toolkit guide aimed at professionals who work with children aged between seven and thirteen years in an informal education setting. This is really a beginner’s step-by-step guide, with the first chapter dealing with basic practices and procedures such as consent forms, anti-oppressive practice and group agreements.

The book includes a mixture of individual and group work activities dealing with a range of issues such as identity, moral obligation, consequences of actions, peer pressure, confidence and decision making. This is a very usable and accessible guide that shows awareness of the barriers sometimes felt by children in learning and expressing themselves and offers useful worksheets and exercises

to explore these issues.

Anna McTiernan is a Community Development Worker in Co. Leitrim, Ireland.

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Youth & Policy Journal was founded in 1982 to offer a critical space for the discussion of youth policy and youth work theory and practice.

The editorial group have subsequently expanded activities to include the organisation of related conferences, research and book publication. Regular activities include the bi-annual 'History of Community and Youth Work' and the 'Thinking Seriously' conferences.

The *Youth & Policy* editorial group works in partnership with a range of local and national voluntary and statutory organisations who have complementary purposes. These have included UK Youth, YMCA, Muslim Youth Council and Durham University.

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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