

# YOUTH & POLICY

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**The state of youth work in austerity England – reclaiming the ability to ‘care’**

**Against role models. Tracing the histories of manliness in youth work. The cultural capital of respectable masculinity**

**Beyond Rhetoric: Asserting the importance of professional ethics and values in the training of Youth Support Workers in challenging times**

**Who Dunnit? Gangs, Joint Enterprise, Bad Character and Duress**

**‘The voluntary organisation forms ... a unique feature of the British way of life’: One voluntary organisation’s response to the birth of the Youth Service**

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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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# The state of youth work in austerity England – reclaiming the ability to ‘care’

Gill Hughes, Charlie Cooper, Sinéad Gormally and Julie Rippingale

## Abstract

*This article draws on the narratives of community and youth workers who attended a meeting held with the authors to examine the neoliberal restructuring of social policy and the subsequent impact on practice. The article contends that community and youth workers navigate a system which portrays young people as problematic. This jars with their value base and practice, which views young people as having potential. The erosion of care within global and local neoliberal regimes privileges performance measures over working with people. The article examines the mirrored experiences of community and youth workers and those they engage with – both encountering feelings of disempowerment, caught in the bind of a ‘double jeopardy’, a construct which highlights service users needing to feel cared about and workers wanting to care. The austerity cuts applied by the neoliberal regime impede this relational process through decreased resources, which in turn means that time is taken up with monitoring and evaluating funded outcomes, eating into time of the actual work of ‘what needs to be done’. Community and youth workers have little space to discuss and engage with the feelings they experience as a result of the incongruent nature of their increasingly bureaucratised role which conflicts with working towards enhancing young people’s quality of life. They expressed a need to find spaces of safety to articulate feelings and explore ‘what is to be done’, working communally with academic partners to reflect, but also to regain confidence sapped by the brutalising neoliberal regime.*

**Key words:** care, community and youth work, double jeopardy, globalisation, neoliberalism, strategies of resistance

## Background

THIS ARTICLE examines issues raised by community and youth work practitioners from the North of England concerning the challenges they face in the context of continuing neoliberal social policy restructuring. These issues emerged during a meeting between the authors and practitioners in the field, held in late 2013, a time of austerity. The issues raised were primarily centred on the increased marketisation of the profession (Russell et al, 2010), demoralising cuts, a reduced capacity to voice opinion, and a distinct lack of confidence to challenge the imposed neoliberal order. We will argue that the erosion of resources and commitment to the profession

under neoliberalism has led to the mirroring of youth workers' experience with that of the young people they seek to assist – albeit from different perspectives. Moreover, the ability of workers to deliver their services with care is constrained by the pressures imposed, with increased time taken on administrative responsibilities over 'being with' people to develop relational connections. We highlight how these developments are now being recognised globally in terms of a 'crisis' of 'double jeopardy' for both recipients of caring services, increasingly deprived of the basic resources for survival, and providers, increasingly denied the autonomy needed to care effectively (Abramovitz and Zelnick, 2010).

## The impact of neoliberal globalisation on the ability to 'care'

Fundamental to neoliberal globalisation is the emphasis of free-market capitalism, on 'free capital movements, monetarism and a minimal state that does not accept responsibility for correcting income inequalities or managing serious externalities' (Held and McGrew, 2007: 188-189). Essentially, neoliberal globalisation is exacerbating poverty and human suffering (Bello, 2002). Moreover, 'Young people, more than any other age group, have been adversely affected by developments relating to globalization' (DESA, 2005: iii). Whilst there has been significant research into the impact of neoliberal globalisation on human suffering (for instance: Klein, 2007; Hardt and Negri, 2005; Pilger, 2001), less has been revealed about its impact on welfare service providers. This lacuna in the literature inspired Abramovitz and Zelnick (2010) to conduct a cross-national comparative study of the effects of two pieces of neoliberal social policy reform in different national contexts – the Welfare Reform bill in the US and measures to impose fiscal deficit reduction and trade liberalisation in South Africa, both introduced in 1996. These measures led to significant cutbacks in government spending which had a profound impact on 'caring' in both countries. Not only has the wellbeing of service users been undermined – deprived of basic resources needed for survival – but so too has the ability of service providers to care because of a lack of time and resources (Abramovitz and Zelnick, 2010).

Abramovitz and Zelnick's research study identified that, following the reforms in the US, those practitioners whose work required a caring approach faced increasing demands and pressures, and their work became more intense – largely due to an increase in paperwork and performance-related reporting. There was an increased focus on meeting basic needs rather than 'higher' psychological and/or emotional needs. There was also a sense that care workers felt a loss of control over their work – less time, less resources and less professional autonomy. Managers were found to be less co-operative and supportive, and ruder. Care workers also expressed ethical dilemmas, particularly in relation to the pressure to honour government rules as against honouring their own professional values and commitments. They felt helpless and lacked the ability to help their clients. There was a sense that government no longer supported, nor were interested in, the work they were doing. There was also fear of reprisals for expressing misgivings about the direction of welfare reform, tempering dissent and opposition to government policies. Demoralisation, stress and burn out

were increasing, leading to a loss of compassion and care for clients. In South Africa, neoliberal restructuring and cutbacks coincided with rising levels of illness, unemployment, poverty and inequality, placing additional pressure on service provision (especially around HIV and AIDS). This led to staff shortages because of low pay and increased pressures, resulting in further stress and reductions in levels of care. The pressures intensified due to resource shortages – especially equipment and space for health care. There was a discernible lack of government support and action in relation to HIV and AIDS, with President Mbeki at the time stating his doubts that HIV caused AIDS and failing to develop an effective national AIDS policy. Whilst the situation in South Africa was more extreme, it is clear how neoliberalism's pro-market and anti-state policy changes were creating a 'double jeopardy' in which care workers as well as patients and clients were adversely affected (Abramovitz and Zelnick 2010).

## Austerity bites – the local context

The context for youth work in contemporary times, particularly in Northern England, is a brutalised one, largely as a consequence of three decades of neoliberalism. Social policy reforms since the 1980s have led to: increased deindustrialisation and the dismantling of social protections; public sector cuts and privatisations; the rise of the new managerialism; the erosion of 'care' in all areas of welfare organising; and widening inequalities and social tensions (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). The wellbeing of young people in particular has declined throughout this period (Unicef, 2007), and we have experienced a shift from a welfare state to a punishing state (Giroux, 2013) with the criminalisation of social problems (Rodger, 2008).

In addition, the dominant narrative of social problems is that they are increasingly interpreted as a dysfunction of the individual, with setbacks perceived as personal inadequacy rather than a structural dysfunction of the contemporary social order (Giroux, 2013). An illustration of this can be found in NatCen's interim evaluation of the National Citizen Service (NCS) which included a question on whether the participants agreed with the statement: 'If someone is not a success in their own life it's their own fault'. The proportion of young people agreeing with the statement increased after they had participated in the NCS social action project – interpreted by NatCen as 'encouraging' (cited in Davies, 2013: 11). So one sign of success of the NCS is getting more young people to blame individuals for their 'failings' – leaving the brutalising context of many young people's lives in austerity England beyond scrutiny. This current discourse was conspicuous in the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne's speech at the 2012 Conservative party conference where he drew on a juxtaposition of 'strivers versus shirkers'. This speaks to both Charles Murray's (1996) 'underclass' thesis from the 1980s and the Poor Laws of the 1880s, where people were positioned in the binary of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor, the latter blamed for their poverty and for lacking the inclination to work, despite each of these eras sharing unemployment as a dominant issue. Presently, 18.6 per cent of 18-24 year-olds are unemployed as shown by figures in early 2014 (Savage, 2014). Young people, like people who are generally unemployed, are viewed



as modernity's 'outcasts', living 'wasted lives' (Bauman, 2004).

'Youth work' as defined by the In Defence of Youth Work campaign (IDYW, 2009) is where young people freely engage in universal open-access facilities offering informal education opportunities, addressing issues based on their own perceived concerns and interests. It is a distinct way of working where relationships amongst young people, and between young people and adults, are rooted in mutual respect and trust (Davies, 2010). The space to work in this way is becoming more restricted. Instead, now, there is an increasing policy emphasis on targeted, intensive interventions, shaped by a 'deficit' model of youth which has become normalised through the language required of practitioners to support (increasingly competitive) funding bids. Such difficulties have been depoliticised and pathologised. Jeffs and Smith (1999) identify this position as occurring when youth workers find themselves operating with a 'Janus-Face', with one face forced to subjugate young people and their communities through the discourse of 'neets', 'troubled' or 'risky' in order to gain funding. Again, this is a discourse resonant of Murray's (1996) 'underclass'. This problematising of behaviour is a tool to attract money; however, this funding is generally for correctives to transform 'unruly selves' (Lawler, 2014). Simultaneously, the other face engages in seeing the potential of young people – replacing the 'underclass' discourse with that of 'empowerment'. It has become increasingly necessary for youth workers to become flexible with the funding authorities' rules to meet young people's needs, adhering to the criteria but doing so in ways that suit young people. This dialectical approach adds an additional burden to the already pressurised role of youth workers, firstly, in having to seek funding to meet needs and, secondly, in balancing the binary of pathologising young people as the 'problem' to acquire funding but to work with their 'potential' in empowering ways. This pressure can lead to community and youth work managers being consumed by institutionalised normative practices more in harmony with the requirements of an increasingly punitive state than those articulated by young people themselves. Over time these practices can appear legitimate, superior and natural, an unquestioned rationality perhaps. This calls into play Bourdieu's use of doxa, where something is presented as self-evident, as natural, rational and accepted 'as is' but, in effect, represents the exercise of 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu, 1992; Cooper, 2011).

## Mirrored oppression – youth workers at risk

The issues for practitioners arguably mirror the experiences of young people – the notion of disempowerment can be equally attributed to the providers and recipients of community and youth work services (consistent with the notion of double jeopardy). In addition, the lack of voice and reduction in confidence, together with a need to feel connected, are also shared experiences. The narratives offered by practitioners in the field fall in line with the context described above, adding evidence to how the restrictive neoliberal social policy regime hampers the ontological practices of engagement, constraining the services offered to young people. For many youth workers, the strong ethos and values of their work drives them to attempt to retain high levels of connection.

However, in maintaining such levels, this can place the worker at risk of ‘burnout’ through self sacrifice, effectively privileging care for others over care for the self (Foucault, 1990). Youth workers may seek to facilitate empowerment, yet at the same time feel a sense of disconnection and powerlessness in doing value-based, radical youth work, distracted by the neoliberal regime which requires ‘bean-counters’ as opposed to people who resist oppression and tackle inequalities through a socially-just driven agenda. Analytically, the disempowered are attempting to empower the disempowered, spiralling through layers from government to managers to practitioners to young people, undermining youth work practice and having a detrimental impact on the confidence and wellbeing of the workers.

A clear and common call from the practitioners was a space to provide an opportunity to share feelings and experiences; to build recognition and to provide a sense of ‘community’ and solidarity, something that is increasingly difficult within the current climate. Batsleer (2010) notes that current youth work practice is predicated on providing a ‘safe space’ for young people, but this is as equally necessary for youth workers themselves. However, there are few opportunities for practitioners to create time and freedom to identify issues and discuss ‘what is to be done’. Having this space to connect is crucial for effective youth work but, more importantly, it creates opportunities to address the wellbeing of the workers as a preventative to the risk of burnout, which in turn enables them to continue to deliver services. This is something that seems to be missing in many professions, but in particular in the community and youth work field – that is, the space ‘to be’.

The importance of finding the time and place to examine current issues links with Kincheloe and Barry’s view of research where they draw attention to the influence of power: ‘Not all parties or all advocates of particular marginalised lived experiences are allowed to sit at the table of official meaning-making’ (Kincheloe and Barry, 2004: 11). The absence of a voice within strategic policy decision-making results in a diminished understanding of what community and youth work is and thus its value to society is often marginalised around the ‘table of official meaning-making’. Given providing opportunity for ‘voice’ is a fundamental tenet of youth work practice (Gormally and Coburn, 2013), it is concerning that the same opportunities are not afforded to practitioners. In addition, the precariousness of provision results in a fear to speak out and take risks; again, emulating the experience of many young service users. There is a palpable feeling of a lack of ‘confidence’ to challenge issues which impact the ethos of youth work, together with increasing individualised practice which hinders access to collective ways of working and mutual support, collegiality and a unified voice in speaking out.

The ‘performativity culture’ (Ball, 1998; 2012; 2013) of targets, monitoring regimes and bidding processes ensures that time is taken up with form filling and bids for funds which pit community and youth work projects with the same ambitions against each other, leading to the fragmentation of welfare. An important issue raised is the need to pursue more appropriate welfare outcomes.

If performance indicators have to be used then they need to be realistic and appropriate. The indicators should be developed ‘with’ those involved – the young people and the youth workers – to ensure that measurement is meaningful and achievable, and capable of meeting needs as opposed to ticking boxes.

## Commissioning work in the dark – what shall we measure?

It was not uncommon to hear community and youth work practitioners refer to how some commissioners and decision-makers do not understand young people’s needs, leading to misrecognition of youth work, its values, quality and relevance. This also feeds into questioning the need for community and youth work and indeed anecdotes abound on the closure of whole services in some areas of the country and privatisations of other parts (see ‘Choose Youth campaign’ at <http://www.chooseyouth.org/campaigns/our-campaigns>, accessed 4th March 2014). Despite this, those services still in existence are increasingly under pressure to demonstrate their ability to prevent ‘risk taking’. The underlying values of building rapport, trust and promoting consciousness raising are in danger of losing their importance, despite practitioners’ knowledge that time is essential to facilitate practices which build relationality and which allow trust to develop. Moreover, these devalued elements allow a philosophy of ‘working with’ young people to emerge – not ‘doing to’ – which also draws attention to the power relations which are all so important in developing this mutual relational encounter. This process of connection allows workers to identify needs and facilitate prevention, ameliorating the possibility of risks – the same risks which trouble those developing interventions to contain ‘problem youth’. The lack of understanding of the profession leads to the development of performance indicators which are turgidly constructed and time consuming, and have little resonance with the practice of youth work. Class-based judgements on what is normative underpin the criteria by which the targets are measured and formulate a certain view of what young people should ‘be’ and what youth workers should ‘do’.

When funding is made available it is generally aimed at ‘fixing’ a social issue judged to occupy the lifeworld of young people. Behavioural economics has taken root in government with an underpinning psychological rationality for encouraging a ‘responsibilising’ of people to care for themselves and others within a context of a small state. The government’s Behavioural Insights Team is a worrying notion in itself but the news that it will partner private business adds a whole other dimension: imagine large supermarkets bidding to tell people, more than they already do, how to live their lives and that they have something to sell that will help achieve it.

*[A] government unit aimed at ‘nudging’ people into making better life choices is to become a profit-making business. The Behavioural Insights Team – known as the ‘nudge unit’ – will join with a commercial partner and become the first policy unit to be spun out of Whitehall. It finds ways of ‘nudging’ people to make better choices themselves, rather than through state*

intervention. (BBC, 2013)

This way of thinking sits with Foucault's discourse of governmentality where he explicates the processes by which governing is both by the state and for the state, guided by ideological rationality which informs policy and practice, and which appears 'commonsense':

*Foucault coins the concept of 'governmentality' as a 'guideline' for the analysis he offers by way of historical reconstructions embracing a period starting from Ancient Greece through to modern neo-liberalism (Foucault 1997b, p.67). The semantic linking of governing ('gouverner') and modes of thought ('mentalité') indicates that it is not possible to study the technologies of power without an analysis of the political rationality underpinning them. ... In addition to the management by the state or the administration, 'government' also signified problems of self-control, guidance for the family and for children, management of the household, directing the soul, etc. For this reason, Foucault defines government as conduct, or, more precisely, as 'the conduct of conduct' and thus as a term which ranges from 'governing the self' to 'governing others'. (Lemke, 2000: 2)*

It is the self evidence which underpins the unquestioning acceptance of self and others in need of control which poses a problem – government must have the wellbeing of its populace at heart. Within this framework youth workers are charged with adapting to ways of working which are in contrast to their values, guiding young people to be entrepreneurial in making a 'self' that is acceptable and conforms to a normative ideal; a fiscally-active citizen of the future, desired, and 'nudged' by the government and youth work interventions. The will to challenge the policy shift is something which instils fear in a climate of insecurity. Youth workers are caught in a bind – they want to do the best for the young people that they work with whilst, at the same time, wanting to retain the very employment that allows them to do this and maintain funding to the projects that underpin the provision. Yet the requirements of the funding may jar with the core of their value system, producing incongruence which troubles their processes of reflexivity. A solution identified through discussions between the authors of this article and community and youth workers is for the University to provide the space for practitioners to come together and join with academics (some of whom are also practitioners) to examine 'what can be done?'

## Moving forward collectively

Returning to the analysis of Abramovitz and Zelnick (2010), we can identify within it important lessons for future possibilities and strategies of resistance. Whilst the double jeopardy they identified created significant hardships, they also identified opportunities for new social movements to appear. As they argue, 'the similar experiences of both vulnerable client/patient populations and care workers resulted in "double jeopardy", revealing intimate links between providers and the people they serve' (Abramovitz and Zelnick, 2010: 112). Through these links, potential exists for

the emergence of strategies of resistance to neoliberal domination.

*A NYC [New York City] human service worker explained that welfare reform acted as a wake-up call, shaking complacent workers. ... 'Welfare reform has brought us back to the mission to advocate for the rights of the client we are serving'. (Abramovitz and Zelnick, 2010: 112)*

Mobilising shared interests around a common campaign for change offers genuine possibilities for generating a coherent challenge to the contemporary neoliberal order.

*The shared interests of care workers and the people they care for in the 'fight back' against neoliberalism suggest the potential for aligning care workers' health and safety with client/patient needs in public policy formation. The health and safety of care workers in the global economy is an important dimension for evaluating public policies and envisioning better ones. (Abramovitz and Zelnick, 2010: 113)*

Abramovitz and Zelnick's analysis is a crucial one for it signposts future directions for generating strategies of resistance built around the common interests and shared values of community and youth work organisations, and the communities and young people they work with who are similarly affected by austerity cuts. It offers a potential strategy for aligning community and youth workers with users in evaluating neoliberal social policies and envisioning better ones.

The support needs of young people today are unprecedented. As alluded to at the start of this article, youth unemployment is considerable – indeed, at a record high and three times higher than for adults. Furthermore, 2.1million 16-to 24-year-olds were living in poverty in 2011, many from minority ethnic groups and with disabilities; childhood poverty continues into adulthood and is linked to lower educational attainment, higher unemployment and low earnings (Telfer, 2013). The need for a radical response is therefore paramount. As Giroux argues, under neoliberalism:

*Society no longer makes any claims in the name of the social or collective insurance policies for future generations ... Debt, joblessness, insecurity, and hopelessness are the defining features of a generation that has been abandoned by its market-obsessed, turn-a-quick profit elders. (Giroux, 2013: 136)*

Whilst Giroux is reflecting on the North American context, his observations mirror what is happening in England. There is a pressing need to reverse this development if we are to restore hope and prospects to young people's lives and youth work practice. And it is becoming increasingly clear that universities are perhaps one of the few safe places remaining where possibilities exist for generating counter strategies to the neoliberal social order, and where Foucault's comments on the role of the 'specific intellectual' in times of escalating oppression might be applied (Beckmann and

Cooper, 2005). As Giroux argues, academics ‘must join with ... youths in taking up the challenge of developing a politics and pedagogy that can serve and actualize a democratic notion of the social’ (Giroux, 2013: 140). For the University is perhaps:

*... one of the few public spheres left that can provide the educational conditions for ... community members to occupy a space of dialogue and unmitigated questioning, imagine different futures, ... engage in coalition-building, and develop a language of critique and possibility that makes visible the urgency of a politics necessary to address important social issues and contribute to the quality of public life and the common good. (Giroux, 2013: 134)*

This dialogue needs to start by addressing the fear expressed by community and youth workers about speaking out – a problem that has been identified throughout most areas of public life and welfare organising under neoliberalism (Abramovitz and Zelnick, 2010; Mathieson, 2013). The University offers possibilities for providing a safe space for practitioners to discuss and debate issues of concern freely, and to build their confidence through engaging collectively in a community and youth work coalition of shared interests at a distance from the day-to-dayness of work’s trials and tribulations. University engagement with its locale is crucially important. This is something that universities motivated to engage can deliver; it provides an opportunity for praxis – placing practice within a theoretically-informed context, bringing to life concerns, sharing empirical evidence, and allowing for collective recognition to strengthen resistance to the powerful ‘regimes of truth’ (Foucault, 1988a: 131) which come in the guise of policy to tackle ‘disaffected young people’. The feeling expressed by many practitioners in the meeting with the authors of this article is that the University engenders a level of authority and expertise from its externality and immersion in research which affords an opportunity to recite the opinions of practitioners, which have fallen on deaf ears, but are somehow then revealed as ‘expertise’ when hailed from academia. Care must be taken when privileged with such confidence – as academics, we would not want to adopt a colonial role, advocating what should be without reference to the sector and its young people. This could be read as academics pronouncing from their ‘Ivory Tower’. So any review or critique offered needs to be in partnership, a ‘working with’ process – which meetings such as ours could generate – identifying areas to problematize in unison.

The impact of the current policy context described above could be described as ‘dangerous’, and more recognition is needed to allow community and youth workers to break out from measuring outcomes to examine what can be done:

*My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper – and pessimistic activism. I think that the ethico-political choice we have to make every day is to determine which is the main danger. (Foucault, 1983: 231-232)*

By coming together in a collective space, community and youth workers ‘have something to do’; they can ‘determine which is the main danger’ and act on this. This might form the basis of working with young people to determine a City Plan, and could certainly enhance connectedness through bridging networks to mobilise strength in numbers for practitioners and for young people. This in turn can lead to Freire’s (2005) consciousness raising, enabling again both practitioners and young people to recognise the wider context and the constraints they face, but also the opportunities that might be drawn on. This chimes with Foucault’s ambition to facilitate a process whereby people can offset constraints and see that power is available for the will to challenge:

*My role – and that is too emphatic a word – is to show people that they are much freer than they feel, that people accept as truth, as evidence, some themes which have been built up at a certain moment during history, and that this so-called evidence can be criticized and destroyed.* (Foucault 1988b: 10)

Sometimes the day-to-dayness in troubled times can draw attention to the immediacy of survival – working with young people navigating complexity – requiring a short-sighted lens. In contrast, Foucault’s contention of people being ‘freer’ than they think is something that the University might catalyse through the offer of a safe space to contemplate futures and different ways of being to maximise access to power and resources. It certainly fits with the idea of possibilities and strategies of resistance generated by the coming together of practitioners and ‘clients’, as posed above by Abramovitz and Zelnick (2010).

The University could assist with a further issue identified by youth workers, which is the lack of time to find information for bids or research to justify the worth of their provision. A request was made for the University to provide academic underpinnings, data and comparators – in short, the theory and empirical evidence that community and youth workers do not have the capacity to identify in their day-to-day work when they are attempting to provide services for young people under the veil of monitoring. It was also suggested that the University could provide critical research into community and youth work issues and practice to challenge the status quo or the rationalities presented by governments to justify the next big initiative; what Ball (2013: 3) refers to as ‘policy overload’ or, citing Dunleavy and O’Leary (1987), ‘hyperactivism’, which seeks to ‘fix’ young people and tie workers to more targets. In his own recent analysis of youth work in a changing policy landscape in England, Bernard Davies (2013) alludes to a number of policy responses that have been debated in recent times. Amongst these is the potential for engaging with the new Institute for Youth Work, as a means of generating a stronger voice for youth work to influence policy developments, and with youth work campaigns such as Choose Youth or IDYW. There are also those who argue the need to rethink the nature of youth work in contemporary times and who question whether or not the IDYW definition is, perhaps, too precious in a time of austerity. Should we, in fact, be more pragmatic and consider whether targeted youth work is such a problem? Youth work has, after all, always been a contested practice (Davies, 2013).

## Conclusions

The challenges of working with young people within the current policy climate of cuts to benefits, increased homelessness and rising support needs, but with reduced resources, is difficult enough. But to do so within a demoralised and shrinking field of practice shaped by neoliberalism only adds to the problem. As we have seen from this analysis, there is an urgent need to address these developments if the aspirations of young people and communities in both the ‘developed’ world and ‘developing’ world are to be met. Neoliberalism has undermined the wellbeing of service users and service providers wherever it has applied its social policy prescriptions. The work of Abramovitz and Zelnick (2010) in particular provides evidence of the destructive power of neoliberalism in terms of increased stress, the decreased capacity of care providers to care, and the reduced wellbeing of communities, individuals and families.

However, at the same time, Abramovitz and Zelnick (2010) offer a signpost for potential future directions. Alongside some of the more pragmatic suggestions emerging from the dialogue between practitioners in the field and the authors of this article – such as regular meetings to debate issues – there is potential to generate a new social movement around the shared interests and values of critical academics, community and youth work practitioners, and young people themselves. This movement could provide fertile ground for generating a new language and new ways of thinking about how to measure the worth of community and youth work, and what it really means to ‘care’. This would include generating a counter discourse to that which pedals a deficit model of youth and youth workers, both similarly pathologised for failing to successfully embrace the challenges presented by market fundamentalism. It would include generating new measures of success in community and youth work, where ‘caring’ is reinstated as a central ambition in preference to cost-benefit, and where practices that decontextualise and homogenise young people and their communities’ needs are resisted. There is a need to contest depictions of youth workers as obstacles when they seek to challenge the powers that be and to recognise that they have a valuable contribution to make from the field to ensure young people are properly catered for. Achieving this will require the establishment of a safe place where community and youth work practitioners can come together, along with academics and young people, and debate freely alternative possibilities for a community and youth work praxis that offers genuine prospects for positively transforming young people’s lives and imagines new ways of working. Through coming together and building alliances, and in turn generating the confidence to speak out and take risks again, such collective endeavour will hopefully create an atmosphere of ‘can do’ and spark ideas, share good practice, and find ways of making young people visible and practitioners’ contributions recognised for their value.



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# Against role models. Tracing the histories of manliness in youth work. The cultural capital of respectable masculinity

Janet Batsleer

## Abstract

*The article documents the powerful account that there is 'a lack of male role models' for boys, and gives examples of current youth work based responses to this. It seeks to situate this view historically as a strong rhetorical trope of youth work which divides the 'rough' from the 'respectable' through an emphasis on competitive sport, discipline and adventure. It discusses the history of boys' clubs in the UK and their significance in the development of approaches to masculinity. It considers the role of Evangelicalism and Muscular Christianity in youth work both historically and in the present; and explores how feminism and homophobia are negotiated in the reaffirmation of masculinity. The article investigates questions of secular accounts of fitness and the place of love in practice. It ends by naming some tensions in the re-emerging constructions of 'respectable' masculinity, with a view to opening up space for dialogue and conversation about the complex and contradictory orientations of both secular and Christian youth work in practice.*

**Key words:** Role models, masculinity, youth work practice.

THE ACCEPTANCE that youth workers can and should be role models seems to be a taken for granted aspect of current professional common sense. But it contains a number of assumptions that are open to question. This article pulls at a number of threads in the histories of youth work. It seeks to attend more closely to a 'structure of feeling' (Williams, 1977) concerning masculinity. In debates about the current state of youth work it is insufficient to attend only to the re-organisation of funding and governance. Even residual structures of feeling, such as that analysed here, can exercise new influence depending on the balance of power. Drawing on a number of sources – including some initial interviews with practitioners conducted between May and July 2012 (n=7) – I explore the part played by youth work historically and in the present in the channelling of forms of respectable masculinity. The revalidation of respectable masculinities and their potential cultural capital occurs at the cost of 'symbolic violence' to other masculinities. Thus national Youth organisations (co-ordinated by NYCVS) distanced themselves from young people who took part in riots in the summer of 2011 in the UK, proclaiming 'Not in My Name' on Facebook. It also occurs at the cost of marginalising, even abandoning any attempts at critical informal education

or any critique of existing social inequalities. It may make it easier to mourn the loss of symbolic (and actual) fathers but it makes it harder to mourn and be enraged at the loss of hope for social justice and social transformation.

The article first documents the powerful account that there is ‘a lack of male role models’ for boys, and gives examples of current youth work based responses to this. It does not engage directly in a critique of this view but rather discusses briefly the history of boys’ clubs in the UK and their significance in the development of approaches to masculinity. It considers the role of Evangelicalism and Muscular Christianity in youth work both historically and in the present; and finally returns to questions of the militarisation of masculinity and the question of the place of love in practice. It ends by naming some tensions in the re-emerging claims of ‘respectable’ masculinity, with a view to opening up space for dialogue and conversation about the complex and contradictory orientations of youth work in practice.

## Lack of male role models

It is widely suggested that one of the chief problems facing young men in the poorest communities, and particularly black young men, is the absence of role models, and, underlying this state of affairs, the absence of their fathers.

Press reports on mentoring projects, usually staffed by youth workers, abound. (Using the LexisLibrary search engine and the search terms ‘youth work’ and ‘male role models’ revealed 52 examples in the UK Broadsheet press between summer 2011 and summer 2012). The headline and caption of a report for a Brighton-based charity ‘A Band of Brothers’ in which mentors undergo a rigorous training in a ‘rites of passage’ approach (*Guardian*, 27th March 2012) was: ‘Boys don’t suddenly become men at 18 – a mentoring project that builds bonds between young men and older male role models is steadyding the rocky road to adulthood’. This report on ‘Band of Brothers’, with its reference to the war-time play/film *Henry V* (‘we happy few, we band of brothers’), captures in a few brief words some elements of the masculinity that it is feared are being lost. In the very name of the project, there is a sense of belonging, and, subliminally, of patriotic belonging.

The reference to ‘rites of passage’ echoes the primitivism and ‘woodcraft’ which informed earlier youth movements. Engaged with ideas of ‘recapitulation’ in development, whereby the development of the (human?) race was seen to be recapitulated in the stages of development of the child, ‘bushcraft’ of various kinds seemed accordingly to fit naturally with the interests of the growing boy (Springhall, 1977: 111). Such a ‘turn to the wild’ is a recurring theme in the formation of respectable manliness. It has to be acknowledged but then abandoned if a boy is to become a respectable man and not one of the roughs.

The head teacher of the new Boxing Academy (set up for 40 pupils in Hackney and Haringey) was

reported by the *Independent* as saying:

*For some of the kids here this will be the first time they've ever had a positive male role model in their lives, a role model who will get them in on time and push them out of bed if they need to (Independent, 17th November 2011).*

The disciplining of the unruly and energetic body of the working-class boy, through sport (with its rule-bound ethic of fair play) and especially boxing, also has a long pedigree, with the first boxing clubs in inner city areas being established from the mid-nineteenth century onwards as part of boys' clubs, most often with links to public schools.

Emeka Egbuonu's book *Consequences: Breaking the Negative Cycle* is based on his own experience both as a gang member and as a graduate of the London Mayor's mentoring courses for black boys. He is a youth worker at The Crib in Hackney. In an article in the *Guardian* (20th September, 2011) he said:

*There is a slavish devotion to musicians and sports stars as role models, set against a lack of ambition in more achievable arenas. There is a risk of being groomed for gangs at an age at which every-one wants instant financial gratification.*

The anti-role models of criminal gangs, with the appeal of instant gratification, are set against a masculine discipline of work and sport and the deferred gratification or militarism and glory. In these terms, the work of The Prince's Trust, Outward Bound, Brathay and One-to-One programmes regularly figure strongly in reporting of the youth work offer which is constructed as the positive alternative to gang involvement. Following the riots of 2011, news reports focussed predictably on this theme. Clasford Stirling, a veteran youth worker who runs the football club on the Broadwater Farm estate was widely cited as saying 'There's been an erosion of authority for a long time.' (The *Guardian* August 11th, 2011). which chimed with the views of his local MP David Lammy who in 2009 set up the All-Party group on Fatherhood. Lammy was cited frequently in press reports during this period and in an article in the *Guardian* (August 11th 2011) he is reported as saying:

*In areas like mine, we know that 59% of black Caribbean children are looked after by a lone parent. There is none of the basic starting presumption of two adults who want to start a family, raise children together, love them, nourish them and lead them to full independence. The parents are not married and the children have come, frankly, out of casual sex; the father isn't present and isn't expected to be. There aren't networks of extended families to make up for it. We are seeing huge consequences of the lack of male role models in young men's lives. How do you find your masculinity in the absence of role models: through hip-hop, through gang culture, through peer groups. Teenagers are in school till 3.30 then MTV, the internet, Facebook kicks in with a set of values that comes with it.*

The idea of the role-model has become part of the widespread common-sense of professional youth and community work practice. It is a powerful vehicle for the ‘trading’ of cultural capital, appearing at once to confirm the cultural capital of the youth worker and infer a degree of legitimacy and power in practice where there may in fact be very little. At a time in which the employment status, pay, security and influence of youth workers are under attack, the claim to be ‘role models’ may offer some symbolic sense of being part of a wider game, a game in which respectable forms of both masculinity and femininity can be affirmed. The idea of role-modelling has been mobilised in relation to mentoring projects (Colley, 2003) where docility in relationship is sought as the vehicle for achieving employability and other social goals such as a reduction in anti-social behaviour. Attempts to alter the dispositions of both mentors and mentees as idealised role models of employability and social conformity lead in the end to anxiety and disillusionment and little tangible benefit. Rooted in social learning theory of a rather mechanistic kind, role-modelling as a basis for practice enables a further neglect of the role of structural disempowerment in young people’s lives, promoting an individualistic model of empowerment largely devoid of any wider critical consciousness.

## Boys’ Clubs and Muscular Christianity

The re-iteration of a new crisis of masculinity framed as a crisis of ‘youth’ draws on a repertoire which can be traced back to the nineteenth century Evangelical Christian roots of youth work and to the characteristic tropes of Muscular Christianity (Hall, 1994). From this source many long established organisations for boys drew their inspiration – the Boys Brigade, the Church Lads Brigade and the boys’ clubs especially – and the channels and flows of both ideas and affect from these sources are not yet dry. Historically, concern for the working boy was associated with fear of him and with concerns to build the unity of the nation and to serve the Empire.

The *locus classicus* for the expression of the values of Muscular Christianity is the novel Tom Brown’s Schooldays by Thomas Hughes. Based on the author’s experience of Rugby School it conveys the values of the new public school education, which emerged in the mid-Victorian period and which expanded from the traditional curriculum of Latin and Greek to embrace physical development, sport and comradeship for boys alongside concern for their spiritual and intellectual development as Christians. Thus physical fitness and sport were linked to spiritual challenge and bullying was challenged by the establishment of a proper sense of legitimate hierarchy, authority and discipline. By the early twentieth century, discipline had come to be almost co-terminous with military discipline and all of these elements were linked with both manliness and Christianity (Springhall, 1977).

According to Eagar (1953), the mid-twentieth century chronicler of the boys’ club movement, many saw in the scope and vigour of philanthropy sure evidence of the truth of evangelical religion. Other countries left social salvage to religious orders. Protestant England invoked not

only the charitable gifts of the laity but their active participation in good works. The people who set up the boys' clubs were laymen and women with a powerful personal faith which created a social movement in the cities responding to the condition of 'the working boy'. This movement occurred in the context of the widespread contestations concerning the purposes and directions of education. It drew on the belief that the purpose of education was to equip a man 'to serve God and glorify him for ever'. From this theme came the formula: 'fitness of Body, Mind and Spirit' as an expression of the purpose and aim of boys' clubs. 'Fitness' referred to a 'fitness' to the purpose of God's service and glorification. The idea of 'fitness of body mind and spirit' was directly transmitted to the boys' club movement by public school men. Within the boys' club movement, the ideal of 'fitness' came to contain also 'the soldierly impulse': promoting the virtues of loyalty, courage, endurance and discipline and supporting 'virile recreation.' Military drill was introduced into the boys' clubs after the Franco-Prussian War (with the more scientific Swedish drill of the kind still used as the basis for 'whole body workouts' being thought at first as only suitable for girls). Camping holidays (imitative of the military camp) and camping weekends were introduced from the late 1870s in Manchester. Finally, the movement was strongly associated with temperance and the campaign against alcohol. 'Their object', said Eagar, 'was never the negative one of taking boys off the streets but to find means whereby boys and girls could be attracted from the streets to be taught, influenced and encouraged to lead the good life' (Eagar, 1953: 360). Within Evangelical Christianity there has long been a tension between its personal individualist emphasis on 'the heart' and the social movements (such as the anti-slavery movement) which emerged from it. As a result of the strongly personal emphasis, the 'good life' was and is usually defined against 'personal vices' such as those associated with alcohol and crime, yet the movement always had an element in which questions of the 'common good' and attention to the conditions of life of 'the working-boy' came inescapably to the fore.

Over time some of the boys' clubs developed a strongly democratic ethos with an emphasis on the self-regulation necessary for democratic participation and with a strong resonance with the culture of the 'respectable' working-class. This movement from regulation: 'keeping them out of trouble' to self-regulation is also consonant with the emphasis on the 'inner life' of Evangelical Christianity. The following extracts from *Principles and Aims of the Boys' Club Movement* (1930) exemplify this move to an emphasis on self-regulation and the link with democracy and citizenship very clearly:

*The special quality of club discipline is, in fact, that it is the ordinary discipline of social life. It rests on sanction of common consent. It is not imposed by authority; it comes from within rather than from without. It is democratic in essence because only by discipline of a democratic kind can the club convince its members that the club is their club, existing for them and demanding a loyalty to itself and to all their fellow members ...*

*Something more however is required for the leader of a Boys' Club than natural sympathy*



*with boys. He must have a clear understanding of the aim of the movement, and must study how to make his own club not merely a group of boys attached to himself but a self-governing body with a character of its own able to foster the independent character of each of its members. The right kind of leader in a Boys' Club is a man who remembers that he himself as a boy gladly followed the lead of men he liked and admired and that the finest influences in his own life have been those which taught him to judge things for himself, to be critical of catch-words and to resist mass suggestion (NABC, 1930: 5).*

This 'democratic turn' in the boys' club movement has been well-documented by Melanie Tebbutt in her account of the work of James Butterworth and Basil Henriques, where she suggests that the movement was united by a belief in the spirit for adventure and the unharnessed power of masculinity (Tebbutt, 2011).

The emphases of the boys' club movement have re-emerged (albeit in secularised form) in the youth work of today which seeks to create 'positive male role models.' Calls for male role models habitually reference adventure and sport and discipline, elements of a residual structure of feeling which I am suggesting has powerfully re-emerged. The potential of militarism to transform 'rough' into 'respectable' masculinity is also re-emerging, whether in the support for Cadets or in proposals for military academies in 'riot-torn areas of our cities.'

Firstly, sport is seen as essential to respectable masculinity, enabling co-operation through team games, the harnessing of competitive instincts and the positive use of adolescent energies. C.E.B. Russell, one of the founders of the Working Lads' Clubs, developed a curriculum of wrestling (stating: 'the natural instinct of every healthy young male is to put his fellow on the floor') and boxing, fencing with foils, weightlifting, miniature shooting, and gymnastics. Such activities became staples of the clubs and their curriculum (Eagar, 1953). In the interviews I undertook in 2012, sport remained a staple of youth workers' engagement with young men:

*Sport's always popular. They want to do football; basketball; we've usually got a league running of some sort. Sometimes they want to do more extreme activities. Yeh, I think sports always good...zorbng,whatever (Interview 2, Youth Worker, 2012).*

*We set up a boxing club for the Roma kids. That boxing club's been in the area since my dad went there (Interview 3, Youth Worker, 2012).*

Secondly, discipline is strongly linked to employability, the work discipline created by Calvinism and capitalism. In a context of real struggles to find employment in a period when young people in the poorest communities are experiencing very high unemployment levels compared to other generations and also those of a higher socio-economic status (Allen and Ainsley, 2012), the disciplines offered through youth work appear as an attempt to salvage the work ethic as part of

respectable masculinity:

*some of the next generation that are coming through now they get a lot of handme's so it's a weird concept that you have to drill into them: they get a lot handed to them, so they don't come in till lunch time and they know nothing's going to happen, whatever behaviour they exhibit...I know he knows all the rules. He thinks it's a rite of passage going through all the projects: where are you going to be in five years 'on the hustle': I go 'what does that mean?' and I don't think he knows (Interview 4, Youth Worker, 2012).*

In this they are echoing a long-established trope:

*More than one long-established boys' club can claim that, by teaching law-abiding boys to defend themselves and law-breaking boys to accept the sportsmanship of the boxing-ring they tamed the gangs and made the neighbourhood less unpleasantly romantic. The Scuttlers are gone. The Yoboes call themselves by more sophisticated names (Eagar, 1953: 332).*

Thirdly, an emphasis on adventure and on links to nature, drawing on anthropological accounts of rites of passage seems to be a necessary aspect of respectable masculinity:

*Adventure-based learning activities are one of the most powerful and effective tools for engaging young people here at Salmon. We offer a wide range of adventure activities including climbing, abseiling, high ropes course, bungee trampoline, flying trapeze, mountain biking, kayaking, sailing, skiing and other seasonal events (Salmon Youth Centre 2012).*

*Something was said about 'chilling in the middle of nowhere' and Ray Mears was mentioned (Interview 6, Youth Worker).*

*Some enthusiasts for nature in the raw found BP's woodcraft not esoteric enough. They elaborated the primitive element and developed precious mysticisms, which went with jerkins and long-haired politics – jibbabs and gibberish would be the rude way of putting it. Kibboo Kift and other side shoots have withered away; the only survivor seems to be the Woodcraft Folk, which is bi-sexual, pacifist and co-operative socialist (Eagar, 1953: 331).*

The extent to which this relates to the sense of 'imperial adventure' or of 'boundary-crossing' which the boys' club pioneers experienced in their missions and ventures not 'into darkest Africa' but 'darkest London' is important to consider here. Respectable masculinity would certainly be brave in pursuing its mission to bring light to dark places, and is now perhaps more than ever entrepreneurial in a time when only businessmen will survive.

The boys' club movement was in eclipse by the time of the Albemarle Report (1960), whose

secularising tones focussed on the purpose of youth services as:

*to offer young people in their leisure time opportunities of various kinds, complementary to those of home, formal education and work, to discover and develop their personal resources of mind, body and spirit and thus the better equip themselves to live the life of mature, creative and responsible members of a free society.*

Nevertheless, 'fitness' was still required of young people: no longer 'a fitness to 'serve God and glorify him for ever' but as fitness (at first) to become 'mature creative and responsible members of a free society' and now, in the end, fitness for a labour market that can only offer them 'sole trader' status.

How sport, discipline and adventure came to be associated both with manliness as opposed to womanliness (no Dangerous Book for Girls!) and with forms of 'healthy' Christianity, providing the basis for patriotic service to nation and empire, has been the basis for scholarly studies of muscular Christianity. Disciplining and celebrating bodiliness, competition and also courage among boys, especially working-class boys came to seem to be Christian virtues. This structure of feeling has re-emerged at a time when organisations with their roots in the Evangelical Christian movement are once again strong. The new heterarchies (Ball, 2007) and networks through which youth work is being organised are the vehicles through which the trading up of respectable masculinities occurs and which entrench further the cultural capital emanating from the public schools.

## Evangelicalism in Youth Work now

In aiming to display the continuing power of Evangelical Christianity in youth work organisations, I do not want to suggest a simple unitary narrative. The 'masculinity' historically associated with Muscular Christianity has been secularised and appears without any apparent need for reference to the divine, as I have shown, in many youth work projects which address young men. At the same time Christian themes of love and mutuality have become muted in this secularised discourse (where fear of young men overrides love for them) whilst being present in complex ways in Christian youth work projects.

Youth work in the UK is currently in something of a crisis consequent on the reduction of Local Authority services and the turn to philanthropy and faith communities as a source of developments for 'the Big Society'. There are contradictory forces at play here, since Church-based youth work for example has been a key site for defending JNC Professional Qualifications. Major players in the development of UK youth work now include key Christian figures such as Steve Chalke of Oasis and Faith Works. In community work, Nat Wei, founder of The Shaftsbury Partnership, has been David Cameron's key advisor on The Big Society. The son of a Korean pastor, who,

like the hero of Tom Brown's Schooldays, encountered and resisted bullying at school (albeit a Luton comprehensive) he appears to have developed much of his thinking and practice out of a response to that experience. At the same time, other faith communities, particularly Muslim communities, continue to develop their own youth work programmes, in the face of hostility, negative assumptions about radicalisation and extremism, and exclusion from funding streams which are readily opened to Christian organisations (Khan, 2013).

Once the Youth Service was established within Education Departments of Local Authorities in the post-Albemarle period, Christian-based philanthropic practice was largely sidelined by assumptions about secular public service and a neutral professional expertise in social education. With the demise of this settlement and the accompanying 'privatisation, peripheralisation and philanthropy' (Ball, 2007; Davies, 2010), it is possible to analyse once more the forms of influence from Christian organisations. New forms of governance, patterns of commissioning which are open to 'any willing provider' and networks of influence see certain providers (volunteers; voluntary and Church networks; private companies; academy chains) as good and (in the context of commissioning and competition for a diminished resource) other historic providers as rubbish, most especially Local Authorities and professionally educated and trained youth and community workers.

The Challenge Network, established by a number of partners, including Steve Chalke, founder of Oasis, was appointed as the major provider of the National Citizenship Scheme in November 2010. The Challenge consists of a number of programmes which are offered to teams of sixteen year olds as they leave school and before they move to the college context: the Personal Challenge (a week of residential outdoor education experience); the Team Challenge: a further residential week of Community service) and the Real Challenge (four weeks of fundraising in September, back home, for a chosen charity) and these experiences also form the core of the experience of the National Citizen Service. The offices of The Challenge and Oasis in Westminster Bridge Road, just opposite Lambeth North station, are also shared with Faithworks, The Shaftsbury Partnership, Stop the Traffick. These offices are clearly a significant node in the heterarchies that are changing the governance of education in the network of 'philanthropy, privatisation and peripheralisation' ((Ball, 2007) The Oasis Trust, for example, which began in Youth Work, is now a provider of 19 academies and one private school.

*It was only in 1939 that the Youth Service was called into existence to recognise national responsibility for the younger citizens of the State. But the necessity for economy has reduced to a modest figure the financial assistance that is given from State funds. The fears or hopes of many that the State would take over youth work, and by its great resources drive out of the field voluntary organisations have proved unfounded. Youth work in the future will continue to rely largely on voluntary helpers and contributions (Cyril, Feb 1953: Preface to Eagar, 1953).*

The new ‘heterarchies’ are not democratically accountable (in contrast to a Local Authority), and the ‘authority’ enshrined in them is more opaque. The withdrawal of the State from youth work appears to many Christian groups as a welcome free-ing from bureaucratic targets and controls and from the ignorance and suspicion which often greeted the work of practitioners who are sometimes the remaining providers of what they themselves define as open-access youth clubs in any given Local Authority area. Many Christian youth workers positively welcome the withdrawal of the State. However, the other side of the ‘freeing up’ from local bureaucratic control is the lack of accountability in the new heterarchies through which power and influence flow relatively free from subjection to democratic control and, as has happened with the provision of children’s homes, is entirely open to exploitation by private for-profit providers. This may very soon become evident in this sector too with the appointment of SERCO as a key provider of National Citizen Service. How these networks operate is illustrated clearly in the following extract from a youth worker interview, describing how he and a number of young people he was working with who were involved in The Big Clean Up were roped into the Conservative Party Conference in Manchester 2011:

*We got told, you can go but you’re not representing (name of organisation). The Conservative MP was liaising with the Conservative Man....we got picked up from ... College...We spoke to...funnily enough he’s a black MP and he’s on all of the youth led ones...He said ‘I used to be a youth worker...pointing at us lot...he likes kids who show respect...he had to interview kids on the stage...another Black lad funnily enough got picked...It was right before Cameron’s big speech...they gave us all the flyers about the National Citizens service and where we were going to sit...he shook hands with every single one of the young people... William Hague can’t communicate with young people...Cameron’s a really good public speaker.... and we watched him deliver his key speech to the nation...Every-one’s clapping ever so enthusiastically after every single word...no-one said to me that you can’t move...in Rugby you just follow the trainer...and there’s a photo of me on Cameron’s shoulder and I’ve tagged it to myself ‘Cameron’s bodyguard’: @Prime Ministers’ bodyguard ...’ (Interview 4, Youth Worker, 2012).*

However, as well as complex ‘structures of governance’ and fluid sets of accountabilities, the complex, divided and various ‘structures of feeling’ present in this stream of youth work practice deserve attention. Significant binaries which seem to structure contemporary Christian youth work include: the ‘urban’ as against the ‘white middle class’ in the Evangelical movement itself; the sense of the ‘ignorance’ of State-based and many secular projects concerning Christianity in contrast with a sense of the abiding presence of small community projects with deep roots in neighbourhoods; linked to this, a concern for process and relationship versus both the imposition of targets and external agendas (from the State) and the ‘poor practices’ of Christians who act coercively, requiring participation in ‘God-slots’. Within the current youth work agenda therefore –despite all its retroactive turning to models rooted strongly in Muscular Christianity – the concern for masculinity may be more present in secular discourses than in Christian ones. Paradoxically,

the ‘trading’ in respectable masculinity moves from the religious to the secular, even as the power of Christian organisations is re-emerging.

## Respectable Masculinity, Feminism and Emasculation

When the discourse of the need for ‘male role models’ is mobilised by Christians, there is a significant sense of threat, to which the assertion of both the lack and the consequent need for ‘male role models’ seems to offer a response. The nature of the threat is quite mobile, but from time to time it is represented as ‘feminism’ with all its (apparently) emasculating powers. Feminism is also sometimes seen as a threat in discussions of work with girls where it is associated with masculinisation or (by extension on the assumption that girls are devoid of sexuality) with ‘sexualisation’. Since Christianity has been seen – following Nietzsche for example – as promoting a ‘slave morality’, a religion of the weak and of women – and remains, doctrinally, a religion of love – the need to address how manliness (with its emphasis on courage, discipline, toughness, adventurousness) can or cannot be thought alongside weakness and love becomes a point of tension in Christian youth work:

*one of the things we reflect on a lot in the office ... or we’ve had conversations ... how a lot of young men quite often can be emasculated and it is increasingly hard for urban young men to find appropriate role models. It would be very interesting if you asked this question to male workers ... do they see themselves as role models? ... a lot of the ways society is set up is to run down young men ... they see it that, the feminist movement that has increased opportunity for young women has done so at the expense of young men ... (Interview 2, Youth Worker, 2012).*

*Most of my friends’ kids when I was at school, their mums were well mums (laughter) if that makes sense they were mums ... if they had a job they had a part time job they did something that meant their kids, they could drop them off at school picked them up at the end of the day, they worked for that time in between and maybe worked three to four days a week not full-time and now I’m seeing young people with mums who are high powered and – no disrespect please don’t get me wrong – there is nothing wrong with that – but the balance is changing with the whole ... well I think the whole feminist movement was an interesting thing cos it was about power not equality though the word equality was often exchanged for power and so what you’ve got now is a balance that is ... unfortunately a lot of lads feel very, very undermined, they feel very emasc ... yeh if that makes sense they feel very emasculated if that makes sense ... there is something about being, if yeh yeh, there is something about ... yeh blokes kinda end up the butt of jokes now...do you know what I mean and more often than not no not more often than not but more regularly now you’ll see a group of girls causing a lad hassle whereas it used to be, if there was a group of lads together ... and how are you dealing with that yourself ... And you know, they look for honesty ... so sometimes blokes can*

*be really macho, or they can try and be really sensitive but what they want is some-one who's kinda real that can talk to them on a really personal level and is happy playing football ... there's a balance ... that shows you don't have to be one extreme or another ... and although we're deemed to be a very open country but if you're deemed to have a more feminine side 'you're gay' and the other end if you're quite a bit laddish and you're happy to get drunk at a weekend and do whatever and there seems to be this urge to be pushed one way or the other and to be able to say young men there is a place in the middle that you can be, you can have a good time with your mates you can do all the things, you know, you can go to the football, you can go out you can go camping you can do all those masculine very stereotypical kind of activities but you know you don't have to be trying to be dominant in a relationship where your girlfriend's some sort of token and you can be kind, you can be sensitive, you can be nice and that doesn't make you gay ... (Interview 3, Youth Worker, 2012).*

These long extracts from interviews with youth workers working in a Christian context show both the struggle to make sense of feminist claims to equality and the ways in which female empowerment seems to be directly undermining of men. It suggests how important a space of distance from the feminine or from gay masculinities remains in this context.

In the nineteenth century and early twentieth century the attributes of manliness were seen to adhere above all to the 'working boy' and there was in some ways a hope that contact with the working boy would revive the virility of middle-class men, enervated by too much book learning.

There was little fear of expression of mutuality and love between boys and men, often expressed as 'brotherly love':

*It is absolutely natural for a young man to be mixed up with boys. It is natural for him to take up their cause, to lay himself alongside their interests, to play the part of an older brother to them. He altogether understands them, he knows their ways and dodges, and has been in all their scrapes. A mother does not know a boy in the least. She has never been a boy (Drummond, in Eagar, 1953: 326).*

Nevertheless, by 1953, Eagar was obliged in the passage accompanying this to make explicit reference to the fear of homosexuality in boys' clubs and the need to be 'alert to the danger of attracting perverts' (Eagar, 1953: 324).

Evangelical Christianity (outside of its own self perception perhaps) is currently widely associated with fundamentalism and a virulent agenda of opposition to and persecution of homosexuality. The male leaders of the past boys' club movement exhibited little fear of being seen to love the boys and to experience transformation by their relationship with them. The memorial to Lord Shaftesbury which is the Gilbert statue of Eros in Picadilly Circus somehow represented from the

beginning the contradictory ambivalence towards the body and sex. It was campaigned against from the start by some who felt it was a too 'bodily' monument to Shaftsbury's achievements and became famous as the 'meat rack' where rent boys were readily available from the 1950s. According to Potts (2004) the new fountain came to serve as a conduit for anxieties about the uncontrollability of public space and of sexuality within it.

This discourse of love all but disappeared in secularised accounts of the need for 'positive role models' with the boys almost always and entirely described in terms of a 'lack.' The sense of deficit (in training and discipline) can quite simply derive from a discourse of 'underclass', but it sometimes also emerges in left discourses emphasising the contrast between domestication (a disturbingly feminine state) and liberation from oppression. Domestication and deficit can be uncomfortably close as analytic terms. The term 'humanising' (based in Freire) is sometimes also used with an accompanying sense of an encounter with the primitive and feral. First homophobia and then fears of allegations of paedophilia and finally representations of young working class men as 'animals' have all but vanquished the language of homosocial bonds of affection which characterised earlier accounts of the relationship between men and boys in the boys' club movement. It is this ambivalence which explains why, for all his undoubted disciplined, aggressive, adventurous and sporty masculinity, the Welsh Rugby Coach Gareth Thomas is unlikely to be among the male role models advocated by those who sense their lack. He was shortlisted (and named as a role model) for *The Pink List* published by *The Independent* in 2011.

A disciplined and potentially militarised masculinity – associated with boxing, competitive sport, fitness, nation, rule, security – has re-emerged as a solution to crisis and the lack of community cohesion. Christianity, associated by rulers with its power to create community cohesion since it was adopted by the Emperor Constantine as the religion of the empire, can once more be pressed into service. The call for 'fitness' to purpose – that is fitness to the call to serve God and glorify him – readily becomes a call to 'fitness' for other purposes.

'Spiritual fitness' was discussed during the Second World War in the context of the work of boys' clubs (*Spiritual Well-being through Boys' Clubs. A Survey of facts, their causes and a suggested remedy*, NABC, 1944) and has reappeared in papers currently under discussion in Christian youth work. The ability of a spirit of courage, resilience and indomitability to propel combatants towards victory in battles has been recognised by a variety of armies historically, including the US Military Academy at West Point which has 'recently adopted the domain of the human spirit as one of the six developmental domains in its Cadet Leader development system.' The US Army seeks to articulate 'a spiritual dimension to assist in its premier task of instilling an indomitable spirit' (Pargament, and Sweeney, 2011 : 58 ).

Lest this seems an alien import, consider the place of prestige given by the Coalition Government to the development of Cadets as an out of school opportunity. There is also the emphasis, from



the other side of the political spectrum in Compass Youth, on the possible offer of a 'new form of national public service' to all sixteen year olds in return for the minimum wage. This is accompanied by support for 'military academies' from all sides of British politics. As in the period of the formation of youth work, the honouring of those who serve in the armed forces in global wars easily comes to speak of and represent the virtues it is felt are needed and lacking among young people in the poorest urban areas.

However, the claims concerning the need to rescue masculinity no longer need explicitly grounding in religion, and at least some Christian youth work projects – especially in urban areas – draw on a discourse of love which emphasises a democratic openness and potentially invoke a historic Christian antimilitarism and even pacifism. Such projects have longevity, a preparedness to 'stand with' and witness pain and suffering and a discourse of love at ease with movements for social justice. They would characteristically draw on mystical theologies, such as those of Julian of Norwich or Thomas Merton (Youth Worker, Interview 4) which might be thought in contemporary terms to:

*propose a sacred anarchy ... which places the crown of divine preference upon the brow of the nomadic and the immigrant ... of the outsider, the marginalised, the disempowered, of the least among us ...*

and to ask:

*What would a nation look like that renounced sovereignty, that flexed the muscles not of military strength but of forgiveness, that organised a foreign policy around hospitality to the dispossessed and impoverished, that opened its borders to the widow, the orphan, the stranger, that took food out of its own mouth and shared its wealth, that placed the crown of privilege upon what Paul called ta me onta, 'the nothings and nobodies of the world'?(Caputo, 2012: 62)*

In this they are neither seeking role models or to be role models but desiring, above all, relationship.

## Conclusion

Youth work is playing and has played a significant part in a trade in the cultural capital of respectable masculinity, and the consequent disavowing of other masculinities whether they are seen as criminal or effeminate or both. This disavowal renders more difficult the practice of critical informal learning in youth work, which is dismissed and made redundant.

In youth work in England currently the emphasis on male role models is a significant vehicle for the trading in respectable masculinities and this is accompanied by a re-emergence, in a variety of

settings, of a 'structure of feeling' which values competitive sport, bodily and spiritual discipline, and adventure as key elements of manliness, closely deriving from the traditions of Muscular Christianity which informed the boys' club movement.

Such a version of masculinity is readily assimilable to militarism (in a period of warfare such as this one) and to the othering, especially, of Muslim communities. It also evokes a strongly hierarchical and anti-egalitarian form of relationship, which proposes feminism and commitment to gender equality as emasculating and fears homosocial and homoerotic bonds.

It is arguable that there is a coincidence of the valorisation of this respectable masculinity and the re-emergence of Evangelical organisations as key players in the youth work sector. The large-scale losses of professional youth work posts based in Local Authority Youth Services and Education Departments has meant a loss of focus on critical informal social education. However, whilst evangelical Christian organisations may have been hospitable to developments of markets in youth work, they have more readily embraced a critique of targets and state-imposed agendas than services based in Local Authorities, and it is unclear that they are more likely to pathologise working-class lads than are youth clubs or any other projects or secular ideologies. In fact it can be argued that, particularly in urban contexts, they have a range of resources which enable a counter-discourse based on mutuality and an ethics of presence with marginalised communities, from which a much needed critique of assumptions about masculinity which have been closely intertwined with youth work throughout its history can be questioned and challenged.

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# Beyond Rhetoric: Asserting the importance of professional ethics and values in the training of Youth Support Workers in challenging times

Hazel Reid and Joanna Oliver

## Abstract

*In the austerity drive affecting most helping services in the UK and other North Atlantic countries, this article asserts the importance of professional ethics and values in the training of youth support workers. It asks for a pro-active and self-aware approach when wrestling with ethical problems and ethical dilemmas. Professional ethics and values are explored in terms of their function within youth support training and practice that aims to place the needs of the young person as the focus of the work. The article offers a critical discussion on principles; alongside policy, legislation and practical implications within a target driven environment. The context for the discussion is sited within multi-professional and multi-agency young people's services in England. However, the focus on education and training concerning ethics and values will be of interest elsewhere; as high levels of youth unemployment and social exclusion create circumstances where practitioners make difficult decisions in challenging times.*

**Key words:** Ethics, values, Youth Support training.

THE IMPACT of the ongoing economic recession suggests a need for more professional creativity in working with young people via 'helping' services, alongside less reliance upon previous working practices. This is relevant to existing youth support workers, who are negotiating the many changes in the sector and those who are entering the work, who may be seeking a clear professional steer. Our premise is that a critical consideration of professional ethics and values is essential in initial education and training for these practitioners and as part of their ongoing professional development.

In England, a major factor in the changing landscape of youth support services is the devolution of services to local authority control. This is coupled with economic challenge and financial deficit which has meant that resources are stretched and in some cases, have been heavily decreased or even withdrawn. The spending cuts to public services have occurred across the UK, although it should be noted that the delivery of youth support differs across the four home countries. The financial crisis across the EU and in other countries in the North Atlantic has resulted (or is likely

to result) in the reduction or withdrawal of financial support for helping services that are often viewed as peripheral, when compared to the ‘core’ services of health and education. One way of managing reduced resources for supporting young people is to create a combined service, ‘pooling’ resources, with a view to reducing instances of duplication; alongside counteracting possibilities of young people ‘falling through the net’ – the latter as a consequence of inadequate information sharing. This combining of services can lead to blurred operational boundaries and professional uncertainty, experienced by the practitioners themselves, and the view of their role by others (Lewin and Colley, 2011). Yet, the vision for youth support work in England was portrayed as a resolution to fragmented working, to bring coherence and ensure a holistic overview of the needs of a young person (Smith, 2007). Smith (2007) highlights a range of issues that have led to the ‘failure of Connexions’ (the name given to the now disbanded ‘holistic’ service) – significantly, the lack of assessed and supervised practice in the training of youth support workers. Our paper cannot offer a full exploration of youth support services, but Smith’s point is worth noting, as it demarcates the ‘professional’ youth worker from that of the ‘youth support worker’. Professional youth worker training, similar to that of social work professionals, comprises ongoing vocational assessment and supervision. Additionally, the ethical code for youth work (NYA, 2004) does not seamlessly translate to the role of youth support worker, which is explored further on in this paper.

It is important to clarify at this point that what is offered here is a debate on a contemporary issue, not a report derived from an empirical study; thus the discussion is not based on sets of research data, but on teaching practice. To support the arguments, reference is made to relevant literature in the field. The article will conclude with recommendations for an approach in the vocational and educational training of practitioners, derived from the experience of the authors and discussions with trainee youth support workers. However, before continuing it is necessary to explain the terms that we are using in this paper.

## Definition of terms

We will return to our use of the word professional later, but first we should clarify our use of the term ‘youth support worker’. Youth support workers in England are practitioners working with young people in a range of supporting roles in the helping services; for example connected to education, community, social and youth work. The job titles used for these roles vary, but include learning mentors, those working in educational welfare, voluntary work in community settings and ‘personal advisers’ supporting young people who face a number of barriers to full participation in education, training and/or work. These barriers may be social, psychological or physical in nature: for example, related to poverty, homelessness and other social disadvantage, abuse or mental health issues, substance use or criminal activity, learning or physical disability.

Personal advisers (the term used in England where the role was developed within the Connexions service) work with existing helping professionals such as social workers, probationary teams,

educationalists, health professionals, counsellors, youth workers and so on; but their role was designed to be the first point of contact for a young person when experiencing a difficulty in terms of education, or the transition between education and work. They may be referred to as ‘intensive’ personal advisers working with young people over a period of time, rather than providing interim guidance on educational and work decisions at particular transition points. As mentioned, this ‘new’ youth support role differs from that of a ‘youth worker’ in terms of training and qualification and the manner of working with young people, yet the initial conception of youth support services (which later became known as Connexions) indicated that the job specification of the Connexions Personal Advisor role paralleled that of a youth worker (Smith, 2002). But, youth support work has a greater emphasis on one-to-one work with young people sited within formal institutions, albeit that outreach work does take place. The focus of youth support work is located in case work and case management, which is a detour from traditional youth work: the latter is centred on association and group; hence the reference to youth and community work. Professional youth work is rooted in learning by doing; ie. learning is a co-constructed process resulting from wider activity. This is different from the outcome focussed and target driven agenda that influences ‘youth support’ practice. Indeed, there have been a raft of arguments against traditional youth work being ‘corrupted’ by this way of working. For example, Payne (2009:218) argues such contrived support work ‘serves to marginalise “pure” youth work’.

However, upholding the concept of ‘professional’ is not to yearn for a ‘golden age’ of elite workers whose knowledge base and practices cannot be open to accountability or scrutiny. There has been a well documented crisis of trust in professionals among policy makers across the UK and elsewhere (Furlong, 2000; Evetts, 2011). It is no longer the case that there is unquestioned faith that professionals always act responsibly in relation to their clients (Reid and West, 2011). As part of the ‘modernisation’ of human services, governments have influenced professional educational programmes and practice via the language of standards, accountability and an economic ‘what works’ agenda (Bradbury et al, 2009). Practice is complex and the ‘technicising’ and reductive discourse of ‘what works’ in social interactions within the helping services, and within teaching and learning, ignores the worlds of meaning that influence outcomes (Kemmis, 2011). Part of the difficulty that we refer to in this paper is the lack of an established professional structure for the (relatively) ‘new’ role of the youth support worker in England. Opening up a discussion about structure is to engage with a debate that cannot be covered here. We are mindful of Wenger’s (2000) work on communities of practice and situated learning and acknowledge that youth support workers in England are, in most cases, shaping their practice as they practice. We acknowledge that this evolving shape is informed by theorizing about the work from a range of existing helping services, but the professional identity of youth support workers is contested and fragile (Smith, 2007).

Referring to Kemmis (2011) and Kubiak (2010), about ‘practice shape’, one could argue that there is a traceable history that predetermines the shape of youth support practice. Practitioners do not

have a distinct view of their professional identity or the professional agency that such identity may bring, as described by Kemmis (2011), yet youth support workers symbolise contemporary service provision for young people. As Kemmis notes: ‘cultural-discursive, social and material-economic frameworks existed prior to the arrival of these particular people, in this encounter, in this setting’, which invariably gives ‘the practice its character, meaning and significance’ (Kemmis, 2011: 150). They lack the social capital found in related professional fields and are learning to build the capacity to participate appropriately – and professionally. So, what we mean by professional should become clear in what follows: it cannot be separated from an autonomous, reflexive practice that pays attention to ethics and values in the service of ‘helping’ others. Ongoing attention to ethics and values is needed to question and counter the reductionist ‘what works’ approach with its focus on outcomes and outputs, as ‘the technicist view threatens to empty practice of its *moral* dimension’ (Kemmis, 2011:163).

## The training context for youth support workers

The context for our discussion derives from teaching participants, working in the roles described above, on a Foundation degree in Supporting Young People. These youth support workers are employed by schools, by local government authorities and in community or voluntary services. As they work in multi-agency, multi-professional contexts, youth support workers invariably support the role of other professionals, for example teachers, but they are not classed as assistants. Kubiak (2010) explores paraprofessional development in the UK and although he refers specifically to roles in health and social care, it is comparable to youth support workers, who in some ways reflect the description of a paraprofessional. Kubiak states the ‘reconceptualisation of support worker roles is a reflection of the professionalization of this workforce’ (Kubiak 2010:128), and as youth support practice takes shape, it is part of this reconceptualisation. Kubiak warns of the potential disruption to ‘well-established occupational hierarchies and of who does what work’ (2010: 128) – an important issue when considering ethics and values in multi-professional working, across a range of agencies.

Youth support workers may already have relevant work experience or be designated as trainees in the role, and their age on the programme spans the range from young adults (20+) to mature workers. Some may have an undergraduate degree, but the majority will not have qualifications at Higher Education level. On successful completion of the Foundation degree, the participant gains 120 credits at HE level 4 and 120 credits at HE level 5 (the equivalent of two years of a three year undergraduate degree in the UK), and they can complete a third year in order to gain a full Bachelor of Arts degree. Foundation degrees are vocational and, normally, for participants who are in work and want to gain a relevant HE qualification: participation may or may not be sponsored by an employer, but all require a significant amount of work-based learning. Having explained the use of terms and described the context for the following discussion, we will now move on to outline the four key themes related to ethics and values, which are introduced within the vocational and

educational training of youth support workers on the Foundation degree to which we refer. These themes are:

- Understanding the function of professional codes of ethics, regulation and professional autonomy.
- Managing ethical problems and ethical dilemmas.
- Acknowledging the personal/professional interplay in working lives.
- Exploring notions of professional identity within multi-professional and multi-agency contexts.

## Professional codes of ethics, regulation and professional autonomy

According to McCulloch (2007:54), ‘Ethical practice is action that leads to human well-being from a perspective that values the disposition to act truly and justly’. These are fine words that encapsulate an ethical approach, but they are open to different interpretations. The ‘disposition to act truly and justly’ can be constrained by strict adherence to the rules when the latter can conflict with the practitioner’s wish to do what seems ‘right’, rather than what is ‘correct’. Such difficulties present the individual with ethical dilemmas: these are less easy to resolve than ethical problems.

Discussions around ethical principles derive from debates in moral philosophy that occurred in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Predominant discourse defines three main stances, those of virtue, consequentialism and deontological, which are reframed by Cribb and Ball (2005) as dispositions, goals and obligations respectively. One could argue that in a target driven context, virtue ethics – or those related to one’s personal traits or dispositions, are shrouded by a more consequentialist, or goal-driven stance, that is intended to serve the most people. In some ways, deontological considerations (concerned with duty and moral obligation) serve to mediate virtue and consequence. Cribb and Ball promote an approach to ethics that frames these positions as complementary, rather than competing; what they term a ‘three-dimensional account of ethics’ (2005:124). This is also favoured by Haynes (1998), with her presentation of the triadic taxonomy of ethics, as part of a wider exploration of ‘ends and means’. On the Foundation degree, trainees are encouraged to consider which of these positions they naturally tend toward and then to reflect upon each position as complementary in their consideration of ethical situations they are facing. This approach helps trainees to acknowledge the ethical gaps created by conflicting agendas related to the espoused ‘young person centred approach’ (Reid and Fielding, 2007) within a context that prioritises the meeting of targets, which can also often challenge trainees’ values.

The helping professions, drawing significantly on the discipline of psychology, have their roots in values which assume that the individual has it within their power to change for the better – ‘better’ here meaning what the mainstream society defines as socially acceptable behaviour. This individualistic view, which has dominated the traditional approaches within psychology, ignores



how an individual's 'success' is shaped by the social, cultural, historical and political context within which they operate (Parker, 2007). Ethics, based on values that are underpinned by the discipline of psychology alone, can be problematic if issues related to power and position, are not considered. However, whilst it is important to recognise the influence of such complex issues, problems in practice are rarely addressed if action is always viewed as, ultimately, ineffective. An ethical and reflexive practitioner will acknowledge the difficulties, but action should, primarily, consider the best interests of the young person.

At a practical level, ethical codes do attempt to address ethical problems and to regulate professional behaviour. They exist to protect the service user (the client) and the practitioner in a society that requires agencies (and their professionals) to be accountable for the services offered. Codes are more than guidelines – the latter appear optional, whereas 'a code' implies a system of laws to be followed; based on a prevailing standard of agreed moral behaviour. The meaning is precise and it becomes difficult to find an alternative word that carries the same impact. Codes serve to unify a group of people around a common purpose and, by so doing, help to define that purpose. Professional codes of conduct within the helping services are usually, but not exclusively (Daniels and Jenkins, 2000), governed by the legislative framework within a particular country. For the trainee youth support worker it is essential that they become familiar with the codes that apply to their work. As part of the Foundation degree, trainees compare and contrast a range of ethical codes, including social work (BASW, 2012), counselling (BACP, 1988) and youth work (NYA, 2004). In so doing, youth support workers have an opportunity to understand the codes that govern the wider landscape, in an attempt to understand their own practice and also enhance multi-agency working.

Responsible and reflective practice requires a practitioner to interpret (rather than just follow) the codes of practice which govern their work and to develop an attitude of 'ethical watchfulness' (Reid, 2004). Maintaining ethical watchfulness becomes increasingly important when conflicts arise in the pressure to meet 'placement' targets (ie. getting young people to take up engagement opportunities that may not always be suitable). Russell et al (2010:1) have likened this to 'playing the numbers game'. At the heart of ethical watchfulness however, lies a respect for persons and an acknowledgement of the defining principles of autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence, justice and fidelity.

## Ethical principles

Ethical codes and guidelines are developed from a consensual view within a profession and function as a demonstration that the organisation and its services are accountable. It is also important to state that ethical codes set boundaries around practice. These boundaries aim to protect clients from malpractice, but can also serve the particular profession by determining its place within the helping professions. In other words such codes also enhance and protect the boundaries around a particular

area of expertise (McLeod, 1998). Working to support young people within a multi-professional context does not mean that the range of interventions can be ‘boundary-less’; as professional youth workers will know, practitioners must be aware of the limits of their own expertise and know when to make a referral.

When existing codes of practice compete, or professional common sense and intuition do not provide a solution, reference can be made to more general ethical principles. The principles mentioned above are well known, but are now summarised briefly. Autonomy refers to the right to freedom of choice and freedom of action, provided that these freedoms do not harm others. In many countries such rights are upheld by legislation. Non-maleficence translates as ‘above all do no harm’. Even where a young person has sought help and given informed consent, the practitioner cannot assume that the responsibility for the consequences of any interaction is the young person’s alone. Beneficence refers to the principle of ‘doing good’ and promoting human well-being. To meet this, practitioners ensure they are working within their competence and maintaining and updating their knowledge and skills. Justice focuses on the equitable distribution of and access to goods (ie. resources) and services. Access to those services is constrained by funding and by policy controls. Finally, fidelity relates to the qualities of loyalty, reliability and acting in good faith. Codes relating to confidentiality are informed by the moral and ethical principle of fidelity (even where there are limits to confidentiality, these limits need to be explicit and explained).

Whilst all of these principles are relevant to the helping professions, and in particular when working with people who may be vulnerable, it is possible that they may conflict with each other in some circumstances. Within an increasingly litigious society, adherence to such principles can be difficult. To a practitioner working within a multi-professional and multicultural context, such principles can appear somewhat abstract as they are based upon rational decision making (Banks, 2009). Further, ethical issues cannot be separated from their social and historical context: learning and practice is always situated in a social context (MacIntyre, 1981; Wenger, 2000). McLeod (1998) gives the example of the debate over abortion to illustrate the point: whose rights predominate, the rights of the woman to choose or the rights of the unborn child? McLeod (1998: 274) continues, ‘Moral concepts such as “rights” or “autonomy” only have meaning in relation to the cultural tradition in which they operate.’ Such debates are included in the training of youth support workers on the Foundation degree: our concern is that they may cease to be given the same critical attention where training moves exclusively to ‘in house delivery’ in the current climate of financial cutbacks. It is likely that the focus will shift to a mechanistic approach based on ‘what to do’ (as enshrined in organisational policies), without an exploration (ie. understanding the why) of the wider social, cultural and moral issues that underpin an ethical code of practice. Banks (2009) makes the point that models for ethical decision making are useful at the trainee stage, as tools for ‘students to reason and reflect systemically on ethical issues in practice’ (2009:4). Banks promotes a concept of ‘ethics in professional life’ (2009:5), which acknowledges and synergises personal and professional considerations within professional ethical decision making.

To move beyond an abstract discussion, the next section offers a practical approach for managing ethical problems and ethical dilemmas, in order to ‘open up’ such discussions further.

## Managing ethical problems and ethical dilemmas

*It was a really difficult situation and I worried about making the right decision. In many ways I wish she hadn't told me, but then again I suppose she needed to tell someone, and that someone was me. That's what comes of building trust and rapport! I had done the confidentiality bit at the start of the interview and I did tell her when it came out that I would have to report what she'd told me – she asked me not to and I explained again that I had to, but then she clammed up after that. Anyway, I knew that I had to do something, but my main worry was that taking action could mean separating her from a parent that she clearly loved. I didn't think she would see being taken into care as in her best interests! In the end I decided to talk to my line manager – well I did this the same day, which was the right decision it seems. It was made clear to me that within the terms of our professional code it had to be reported. It's out of my hands now, but I'm still uncomfortable about all of this.*

The ‘story’ above (a case study, not a research transcript) is used to illustrate the concerns that many practitioners have when faced with an ethical problem. In this case seeking advice from someone with more experience and greater authority, and doing this without delay, is a safe and ‘correct’ action to take. However, how does it fit with the moral and ethical principles outlined previously? We might ask if it is always the case that removing a child or vulnerable young person from their home is the right decision and question on whose behalf the practitioner is acting; for instance, who is being protected here – the young person, the practitioner, the service – all three? In this case, agreeing with the young person’s request would conflict with the organisation’s policy on safeguarding young people and, indeed, the law. When working in state funded agencies reporting is usually mandatory and in the story above, the practitioner had informed the young person in advance of the circumstances within which they would breach confidentiality. But that does not make it easy. That said the instinctive justification that ‘she needed to tell someone’ is reasonable – the young person perhaps wanted someone to take action, even though she did not ask for this explicitly.

It is important for youth support workers to have, and be aware of, their own sense of right and wrong, and to acknowledge that this may vary across different cultures. What the practitioner is facing above is an ethical problem, rather than an ethical dilemma, that is resolved by adherence to the organisation’s ethical code; albeit they are left with residual concerns. Codes should make explicit behaviours that are considered safe and appropriate – for example, on aspects such as where to meet with a client within the bounds of a professional relationship. However, there are other situations that arise which are not encompassed by codes and guidelines or where such codes are ambiguous. When the issue cannot be solved by ‘ethical watchfulness’ or by strict adherence

to a code, the practitioner is then faced with an ethical dilemma. Birdsall and Hubert (2000:30) state that ethical dilemmas usually display four characteristics. First, the dilemma ‘offers a reasonable choice between two alternative courses of action’. Second, ‘each of these carries its own consequences’. Third, ‘either course of action can be defended in terms of ethical codes of practice’ and, fourth, ‘each course of action will compromise one of the ethical principles’.

What follows is a case study of an ethical dilemma where a trainee practitioner is working with a young person in a community based provision, with a high proportion of Muslim families:

*I didn't know what to say or do next – she said: ‘I need sexual health advice but have nowhere and no one to go to for it. I am too frightened to go to a clinic or something by myself – please come with me. I am frightened of what is going to happen next and am even frightened that I am talking with you about it.’ I was torn between my duties as a youth support worker and in preserving the trusting relationship I was developing with the young person and my duties as a Muslim woman, wife and mother. How would I feel if this were my own daughter? Am I being dishonourable by helping this young woman? Which of my duties and obligations prevail? I had more questions than answers and this was compounded by my awareness of my own fear. I do not have the expert knowledge to advise her and I knew of a clinic that would be able to do so, but what would happen if a member of my community saw me going into the building?*

First person narratives from practitioners or ‘clients’ (like these two case studies) can help trainees gain a different perspective on an ethical issue. A third person case study often suggests there is a preconceived ‘correct’ response, whereas a first person story can be more engaging and can generate a deeper discussion and analysis of the issue. An ethical dilemma, like the one above, will be less easy to resolve than an ethical problem. Corey et al (1993) suggest a reflective process that can be followed when such ethical dilemmas occur. The steps are:

- Identify the problem or dilemma in clear terms.
- Identify the potential issues involved.
- Review relevant ethical guidelines, codes and legal requirements.
- Discuss and consult with colleagues.
- Consider possible and probable courses of action.
- Enumerate the possible consequences of various decisions.
- Decide what appears to be the best course of action.
- Document each step so that the decision-making process can be shown to be sound.

In deciding on what is the best course of action, Stadler (1986) advises that any action taken to resolve an ethical dilemma should be measured against the criteria of ‘universality’, ‘publicity’ and ‘justice’. When working with young people in a multi-professional context, the practitioner

(and their line manager) could ask themselves the following questions (adapted from McLeod, 1998:274): ‘Would I recommend this course of action to anyone else working in similar circumstances? Would I condone my behaviour if I observed it in someone else?’ (Universality). ‘Would I tell other practitioners what I intend to do? Would I be willing to have the actions and the rationale for them published on the front page of the local newspaper or reported on the evening news?’ (Publicity). ‘Would I treat another young person in the same situation differently? If this person were the son or daughter of someone well known, would I take the same action?’ (Justice).

Whilst useful, it is important to acknowledge that the opportunity to take a step-by-step approach is unlikely to be available in the moment of practice; as described in the second story above. Learning ‘what to do next’ develops in the experience of practice, in what Schön (1991:42) referred to ‘as the swampy lowland’ rather than the ‘high hard ground’ of research-based theory. It is, usually, after encountering a new or untested experience that the youth support worker will need to find time and a ‘space’ for such reflective processes. And it should not be assumed that spaces for formal reflection are available in ‘busy’ practice, where access to supervision for youth support workers and personal advisers can be limited, if not entirely absent (Reid, 2010; Lewin and Colley, 2011).

When highlighting the difficulties of ethical decision making, it is possible that what gets lost in the complexity is the belief and trust in the practitioner’s ability to act intuitively – with good faith. Practitioner autonomy is important, but the level of this can vary across the helping services. For example, ‘traditionally’, youth workers have had considerably more autonomy in terms of their working practices, than have colleagues working within the social services (McCulloch, 2007). Within contemporary youth support services, this autonomy requires some examination to ensure standards of ethical working are understood and shared; particularly when what is perceived as ‘good practice’ may vary between different groups of practitioners (McCulloch, 2007).

Banks (2009) also uses case studies to explore ethical ‘good practice’, to help trainees to contextualise the situations they face. Often, the ‘cases’ used within the Foundation degree are either direct narratives from trainee practice, or are case studies derived from such narratives. In this way, trainees are afforded the space that Kubiak (2010) deems necessary in paraprofessional learning and development. Banks (2009) states that ‘from a virtue ethics point of view’, via an exploration of their own narrative accounts, trainees can reflect upon ‘their feelings, imaginings, hopes and fears’ (2009: 7). Banks also opposes separating ethics work from other aspects of practice, which is the approach taken on the Foundation degree.

## The personal/professional interplay

Working with young people in a multi-professional context can sometimes be a challenge to one’s personhood. What a group of practitioners think, or are directed to think, of as ‘good’ may be adverse to, and can challenge, an individual practitioner’s sense of what is ‘right’. An awareness of

the role of ‘personhood’ within professional practice can help to exercise the most effective tool of all – ‘self’. Professional ethics and values are often internal (silent) influences in work with young people but, when made visible through reflective practice, can help practitioners to manoeuvre through the complexities of the work, in relation to a range of sometimes conflicting professional guidelines. At the crux of ‘being professional’ for the youth support worker is the ability to be autonomous, yet compliant, which is a delicate balancing act between acting on one’s own initiative and abiding by the ‘rules’ presented in legislation, policy and codes of practice. Singer (1979: 185) asserts that ‘The “internal voice” is more likely to be a product of one’s upbringing and education than a source of genuine ethical insight’. In the multi-professional arena this is further complicated by the range of professional policies and codes, as well as the influence of organisational cultures and inter/intra personal dynamics.

In a wide ranging article derived from a sociological analysis of professional work, Evetts (2011) considers, amongst other issues, professionalism as an occupational value. Aware of the disciplining aspects of professional codes and standards, where ‘professionalism is being constructed and imposed “from above”’ (2011:11), Evetts goes on to discuss the benefits that standardization and formal processes create. For example such processes involve Human Resource Management practices that protect all employees and increase ‘the transparency of what were often hidden, even “mysterious” arrangements’: for instance the way career development has moved away from ‘the sponsorship of the privileged few’ (p13). Thus there are constraints and opportunities in professional (and multi-professional) contexts that are considerations when attempting to balance the personal / professional interplay. In relation to evaluating the degree of individual professional autonomy, a critical question posed by the trainee would be, ‘Am I able to say “No – this is not in the best interest of my client”?’

## **Developing the capacity in youth support workers for doing ‘ethics work’**

Youth support workers swing between wanting to be told what to do and how, and desiring autonomy: it is only through honest and systemic reflection that they are able to acknowledge which aspects of their work are challenging to them personally. In considering the personal/professional interplay, some key questions that practitioners can ask themselves from the outset of their training, and then as an ongoing reflexive dialogue throughout their careers, are:

- How, when and why do my personal value systems influence my professional practice?
- Upon what do I base judgements and professional decisions?
- Have I developed the resilience to make professional decisions that may conflict with my personhood and manage the consequences of doing so?

Fundamentally, decision making is a matter of prioritising in a proactive, reflexive and thoughtful

way, balancing a range of considerations. Arguments as to whether the ‘ends’ justify the ‘means’ may be regarded as an infinite dialogue that will, ultimately, be subjective. Haynes (1998) discusses such instances, which initially present as straightforward professional situations, but become much more complex: as upon reflection they amount to little more than personal, value based judgement. Haynes (1998) goes on to present a model for considering three such priorities, termed the ‘Triadic Taxonomy of Ethics’, as mentioned earlier, which acknowledges the interrelationship of care, consistency and consequence and how discounting any one of these aspects is a challenge to the required equilibrium.

Reflection and self analysis are essential for an understanding of professional ethics and values, so as to acknowledge one’s ‘self’ in order to place the young person at the centre of the work. In ‘people based’ services, a relationship between the professional self and the personal self is inevitable, which is contrary to the view that ‘there is inevitably a difference between private and public morality’ (Robinson and Garratt, 2004:53). The conflict between personal and professional values is often referred to as a way of ‘highlighting the difference between how they would have acted in a situation if it had arisen in their private lives and how they felt they should act in the role of a professional worker’ (Banks, 2001a:69). It has been implied that there is a need for congruence between private and professional values, that ‘how’ we are, correlates with ‘who’ we are; what Banks (2001b) determines to be a core quality and what Parsons (2002) claims to be the ‘personal touch’ that bureaucracy can destroy.

Self efficacy is a critical aspect of professionalism; requiring the practitioner to have developed qualities of autonomy and self sufficiency. This reflects the current expectation for young people to be able to navigate the challenges of ‘being young’ in contemporary society. There is a parallel process between the resilience of the practitioner in their ability to be flexible and autonomous and the necessity for young people to develop these skills also.

Moving on, the next section outlines how youth support workers can develop the capacity to manage, reflexively, the conflicts and challenges to professional ethics and values. The suggestions are based on collaborative discussions with students exploring professional ethics and values on the Foundation degree and were found to be effective ways of developing ethical practice.

## **Ethical decision making in professional practice – building on discussions with students**

Earlier, we referred to ‘autonomy’, in relation to the person accessing the service and also in relation to the practitioner’s professional freedom. At the core of this is developing professional wisdom and maturity, what was referred to previously as ‘ethical watchfulness’ (Reid, 2004). It could be argued that ‘autonomy’ and ‘professional freedom’ are welcome attributes when the practitioner has reached a level of confidence and comfort within their role, where they are able to

make use of such attributes to exercise considered responses, as opposed to reactive ones. Within this, there is the aspect of the practitioner agreeing to ‘uphold the integrity of a profession’ (a typical inclusion in ethical codes) and, consequently, ‘autonomy’ and ‘professional freedom’ are developed intrinsically, rather than being ‘awarded’ extrinsically. It is this intrinsic professional development that is outlined in this section, via some activities that students find useful in developing skills for ethical decision making.

### *1. Opportunities for honest reflection upon a broad range of ethical dilemmas*

In determining a child or young person in need, the practitioner makes a judgement as to what constitutes ‘need’ and in relation to this, what is meant by being at risk of ‘significant harm’ (Brayne and Carr, 2008). This amounts to a subjective estimation of what is ‘significant’. On what basis is significance measured and what determines what is significant enough to warrant a particular intervention or response? Such questions need to be engaged with in a ‘safe’ space, to enable the many facets of a given situation to be explored, within contemporary policy and legislative contexts. The learning environment of tertiary/university study can provide one such safe space, complementing work-based forums, such as supervision (where it exists) and case discussions. Many of the methods and priorities for target driven work, are in conflict with the person-centred approach (Rogers, 1967) and do not attend to the dynamic intricacies that person-centred work requires and generates; hence the attempt to synergise virtuous, deontological and consequentialist approaches to ethics work (Cribb and Ball, 2005). The demands of contemporary society, especially when resources are restricted or cut, can mean that the focus moves away from the young person and, as Russell et al conclude, ‘it is the young people themselves who are most likely to suffer from the ‘numbers game’ that PAs [personal advisers] are forced to play’ (2010:11).

### *2. Opportunities for developing professional empathy, within the bounds of professional codes and also policy changes*

Information sharing is based upon two things: ‘need to know’ and ‘consent’ – which will often differ across professional contexts. Multi-professional learning forums, perhaps via shared training events that also comply with the promotion of pooled resources, can be useful in this instance. Additionally, critical examination of a range of professional and ethical codes enables a deeper and broader awareness of other professionals working with young people. However, a further complication is presented by changing roles and remits; for example, the youth support worker increasingly in the role of record keeper, the social worker as co-ordinator (rather than as face-to-face practitioner). These may also present a dilemma for the practitioner – ‘Is this what I believe I should be doing with young people?’ Constant changes can lead to misunderstanding and confusion and for those whose job role has changed beyond recognition, this may also breed resentment – ‘Is this what I want to do?’ For some trainees, this occurs during their course of study, as shifting policy and funding regimes can result in frequent alterations to practice. Practitioners are part of a wider professional context that is inherently transient and inevitably fractious, as expressed by Smith (2002, 2007). In their research with Personal Advisors engaging young people



through Education to Employment (E2E) programmes, Russell et al quote a PA who states that ‘... one of the biggest frustrations and it always seems to come back to this is the fact that not everyone is singing from the same hymn sheet’ (PA1 in Russell et al, 2010:9).

### ***3. Acknowledgement that ‘being professional’ is about being aware, mindful and observant of one’s own morality and its influence upon professional practice***

Trainee youth support workers will often talk about ‘being professional’ and not ‘allowing’ their own values into their professional practice. Reference is made to professional ‘hats’ and that although they hold a particular view in their personal life, it does not, they feel, cross over into their professional world. This suggests a belief that ‘being professional’ involves a denial of personal values. To question this simplistic view, students are encouraged to consider the meaning of professional ethics and values – as it relates to core concepts within the Foundation degree. In this way, the programme is a developmental learning experience for many youth support workers, who, although governed by legislation and professional codes for practice (eg. where and when to meet a client) may not have a specific ethical code, or developed practice shape, as explored earlier. On the programme they explore the relationships between their personal values, their own career trajectory and the purpose of professional ethics and values in their current professional role. This need to define and acknowledge the relationship between personal and professional values in the development of a professional identity resonates with the work of Cooper (2008). Kemmis (2011) encapsulates this in his claim that the practice of a professional practitioner ‘draws on a particular history of personal experience; it involves a particular view of what an appropriate professional identity is, and a particular way of being a “subject” (a knowing and knowledgeable person)’ (Kemmis, 2011:151).

Cooper also champions ‘a “safe” space where “mistakes” are allowed and are seen as part of an open learning culture’ (Cooper, 2008: 70). This concurs with Oliver (2006) who endorses an approach that is ‘dialogical, reflective and collective’ (Oliver, 2006 cited in Cooper, 2008:68). This echoes Winnicott’s (1971) concept of a safe transitional space for learning. The importance of critical, reflective and collective discussion, contained within a safe space, that embraces the presence and the significance of personal values and their relationship to professional practice, cannot be underestimated.

## **Conclusion**

Understanding and applying professional and personal ethics and values when working with young people in any helping service is complex and, additionally, problematic when working in a multi-professional context. It has been argued that degrees of professional status and ethical watchfulness are interwoven with self-awareness and the acknowledgement of the interlocking and disconnection of the personal and the professional. When this is introduced in training and achieved in practice, the practitioner can then exercise and perhaps even enjoy what Mahoney

(2001) refers to as 'free wheeling time'. Arriving at this point in a professional identity, where a practitioner can be both ethically watchful and ethically confident, is not a static state: it takes on-going reflexive practice. Our concern is that the demands of youth support work have increased alongside a decrease in resources: this may result in practitioners becoming undereducated or underprepared for the complexities of the work if the quality of professional training is diminished. The learning space that higher education provides moves beyond the potentially mechanistic nature of in-house training, which can be viewed as a pragmatic alternative in times of austerity. A safe, reflexive space for initial and ongoing professional development within busy practice is vital if ethical principles are to be understood and embodied – beyond the often shallow rhetoric of ethical codes and standards. Young people, at the core of the work, deserve no less.

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## Note

\* Cooper is incorrectly attributed to Cooper Bradford in the original article in *Youth & Policy*.



# Who Dunnit? Gangs, Joint Enterprise, Bad Character and Duress

John Pitts

## Abstract

*In cases where it is alleged that an offence is perpetrated by a gang, but where there is no definitive, eye-witness evidence of involvement, the prosecution's case often rests upon the presumption that a person, by dint of their prior association with 'known gang members', and hence their understanding of and commitment to the aims, purposes and modus operandi of the gang, is engaged in a 'joint enterprise' to perpetrate that offence. The charge of joint enterprise is often supported by a submission of evidence of the defendant's 'previous bad character'. However, because of the lack of any generally agreed definition of gang involvement, the complex patterns of association in gang-affected neighbourhoods, the sometimes questionable relevance of the evidence deployed to support a submission of previous 'bad character' and the fact that the alleged perpetrators are not infrequently subject to some degree of implicit or explicit coercion or duress, establishing the defendant's actual culpability is fraught with difficulty and there is, therefore an ever-present danger of injustice. In this article I explore the patterns of association between young people in gang affected neighbourhoods and the ways in which the law and policing practice understands, and sometimes misunderstands these relationships. I then suggest a set of definitions which could help to clarify the actual nature and degree of an individual's association with a youth gang.*

**Key Words:** Gangs, Prosecution, Joint Enterprise, Duress, Bad Character

UNLIKE THE UK, in the USA most states have anti-gang statutes. Some states such as Georgia, Texas and California simply prohibit '*participation in criminal street gangs*'. The California Penal Code, for example, states that:

*Any person who actively participates in any criminal street gang with knowledge that its members engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal gang activity, and who wilfully promotes, furthers, or assists in any felonious criminal conduct by members of that gang, shall be punished by imprisonment in a county jail for a period not to exceed one year, or by imprisonment in the state prison for 16 months, or two or three years.*

Several states, like Florida and Kentucky, make it a crime for a person to recruit somebody else into a gang, while others, like New Jersey, allow schools to prohibit students from wearing 'gang

apparel'. In most states, gang-related offences attract 'enhanced penalties'. In Alaska, for example, if a gang-involved person commits an offence that would otherwise be classified as a *Class A misdemeanor*, the offence is reclassified as a *Class C felony*, thus incurring a harsher penalty.

Yet these anti-gang statutes remain contentious. In their response to the introduction of the 2013 Chicago, *Street Gang Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Statute*, (a.k.a. the *Gang RICO*) (NBC Chicago, 2013) the *Chicago Justice Project*, a consortium of lawyers and community groups, pointed to the problem that:

*The crux of this law is the ability of the legal system to determine if the youth in question is a member of a gang. But providing a reliable and consistent way of determining an individual's gang membership is no simple task. Without their ability to determine which offender is and is not in a gang in a reliable fashion means many kids are going to get sentenced to prison terms through 'guilt by association' rather than any true aggravating factor associated with their case. (Chicago Justice, 2013)*

This is a problem which also dogs the legal system in England and Wales, despite the fact that the only specific anti-gang statute currently available to the police and prosecutors is the *Gang Injunction*, commonly known as the *Gangbo* because of its similarity to an ASBO. Introduced in the *Policing and Crime Act* (2009), police and local authorities may apply to a county court for a gang injunction against individuals whom they believe, on the balance of probabilities, to be involved in gang-related violence. Unlike the US statutes, the gang injunction is designed, first and foremost, to divert the subject from gang involvement rather than punish them for it.

However, in the past decade in England, the common law doctrine of *Joint Enterprise* has been utilised by prosecutors as a de facto anti-gang statute with which to target adolescents and young adults allegedly involved in street gangs. The offence of *Joint Enterprise* is said to have been introduced in 1536 as a means of prosecuting duellers and their associates. Today, under *Joint Enterprise*, a person may be found guilty for a crime apparently committed by another person if they *knowingly assist or encourage the crime and agree to act together for a 'common purpose'*, in which case each member of the group assumes responsibility for the actions of the others. Law has both a regulatory and an educative role and the police tend to favour prosecutions of gang members under the doctrine of *Joint Enterprise* because they believe it sends a powerful deterrent message to would-be affiliates about the perils of gang involvement. It is also a comparatively efficient way of dealing with a plurality of perpetrators.

Inevitably perhaps, because it introduces a lower standard of proof into the legal equation, Joint Enterprise has many critics. The *Prison Reform Trust* is concerned that it can act as '*a drag-net, bringing individuals and groups into the criminal justice system*' unnecessarily. The campaigning group JENGbA (*Joint Enterprise – Not Guilty by Association*) contends in its on-line literature

that Joint Enterprise confuses juries because they see that some defendants are more culpable than others, while some are probably innocent, but are instructed by judges to *either convict or acquit the whole group*. However, no actual cases in which this occurred are cited.

As with the Chicago *Gang RICO*, the central question in the case of Joint Enterprise concerns how the police and the prosecution establish who is, and who is not, a 'gang member'. In January 2012 the Cross Party Justice Committee (House of Commons, 2012) published a report recommending that, as a matter of urgency, the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) issue guidance on the use of joint enterprise when charging decisions are made and, in particular, on the relationship between association and complicity in gang-related violence and homicide because, while there is a fairly widely accepted definition of a gang ...

*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)

... there is no clear definition of 'gang membership'.

## Evidential Ambiguity

Few Jurors are likely to have trawled cyberspace in search of *YouTube* renditions of 'gangsta' rap, and so their main source of information about social relationships between young people in gang affected neighbourhoods will come via the media and the Crown Prosecution Service.

In London, at least, police evidence in gang-related cases is distinctive. It tends to take the form of a listing by specialist police officers of analogous cases that have been successfully prosecuted in the past. This listing is accompanied by a quasi-anthropological account of the *raison d'être*, culture, values, attitudes, structure, dynamics, activities and *modus operandi* of the youth gang. In this preamble particular attention is paid to the distinctive language, signs and symbols employed by youth gangs, their musical tastes and their propensity to produce sensational RAP videos. This prologue is designed to demonstrate the extensive knowledge and expertise the police have in this relatively arcane branch of policing.

The evidence proper normally takes a more conventional form, comprising witness statements from the police and less frequently, members of the public, CCTV footage, RAP videos, traces of the locations of defendants' phones and the times they were used, recordings of 'phone conversations, if authorised by a magistrate, downloads of texts and photographs from the defendants' phones', guns, knives and drugs, and the observations of local beat officers or PCSOs working in gang-

affected neighbourhoods.

Obviously, these submissions are designed to build a case, not undermine it, and so they tend not to address the complexities of the relationships between those young people within gang affected neighbourhoods who are heavily involved in gang activity and those who are peripherally or sporadically involved, not infrequently as a means of self-protection or as a result of implicit or explicit coercion. Nor do they address the subtleties of relationships between these young people and their siblings, friends and associates who are uninvolved in gang-related illegalities.

The evidence provided by most UK and North American studies shows that young people living in gang-affected neighbourhoods are likely to know, to have grown up alongside, to have attended the same schools and to associate with young people affiliated with local gangs. (Hagedorn, 1998, Youth Justice Board, 2007; Klein, 2008; Pitts, 2008; Centre for Social Justice, 2009; Andell and Pitts, 2010; Beckett et al, 2013; Harding, 2013). This close association between ‘*gang affiliates*’ and other young people in gang affected neighbourhoods inevitably creates difficulties for the police and prosecutors; partly because gang involvement can be fluid and sporadic, but also because distinguishing between young people who associate with gang members and those who are ‘gang affiliated’ and engage in gang-related crime is no easy task.

In London, ‘Gang Nominals’, as the police describe those they suspect of gang involvement, are placed on a borough-specific *Gangs Matrix*. Inclusion on the matrix is based upon arrest and conviction data and corroborated and uncorroborated intelligence data, as well as material from *YouTube* and other social networking sites, CCTV footage and telephone traces. However, as the police acknowledge, identifying gang nominals is not a precise science because the Matrix captures both active gang members and their non-offending associates and siblings who are on the system by dint of their proximity to, and frequency of association with gang members, rather than crimes they have perpetrated.

This research, and the experience of professionals working in gang-affected neighbourhoods also suggests that from time to time, young people in gang-affected neighbourhoods who are unaffiliated with the gangs, may be subject to pressure to undertake illegal acts, such as holding or transporting illicit drugs and hiding weapons or the proceeds of drug sales (Pitts, 2008; Beckett et al, 2013).

Thus the language we use to describe gang involvement raises as many questions as it answers. Suspects are described variously and often interchangeably, by prosecutors as: *Associated*, *Involved*, *Wannabees*, *Affiliated* and *Members*. But these descriptors, as the taxonomy I posit below indicates, can mean very different things.



	<b>A Taxonomy of Descriptors of Gang Involvement</b>
<b>Gang Associated</b>	Interacting socially with gang members by dint of propinquity, shared hobbies or pastimes, friendships or familial links (not necessarily illegal).
<b>Gang Involved I</b>	Not being a constituent member of a gang or group or necessarily subscribing to its norms and values but intermittently participating in some of its illegal activities.
<b>Gang Involved II</b>	Not being a constituent member of a gang or group or necessarily subscribing to its norms and values but coerced into undertaking illegal activities on its behalf.
<b>Wannabees</b>	Aspirants, who while subscribing to the gang's norms and values and adopting its dress code, signs and symbols, have not been accepted into the gang and are not involved in its illegal activities.
<b>Gang Affiliated</b>	A constituent, lower status, member of a gang or group; subscribing to its norms and values and participating, as a 'footsoldier', sometimes known as a 'younger', in its illegal activities.
<b>Gang Member</b>	Core member with high status in a gang or group, subscribing to its norms and values and orchestrating, though not necessarily participating in all of, its illegal activities.

Unless the diverse but distinctive patterns of association between young people that characterise gang-affected neighbourhoods is understood (Pitts, 2008; Harding, 2013) and a vocabulary which can reflect this diversity is developed, the doctrine of *Joint Enterprise* is likely to remain a source of injustice.

## Gang Association

Many young people will associate with gang members because of the involvement of siblings, relatives or associates with whom they have grown up and/or attended school. This close association between gang-involved and non-gang-involved children and young people was evident in interviews undertaken in recent research on sexual victimisation in gangs on six sites in England (Beckett, et al, 2013). In this research it became clear that gang 'association' is not the same thing as gang 'membership'.

In a recent case, the prosecution identified 7 alleged ‘gang members’ as associates of a subsequently acquitted, defendant. The defendant, aged 17, accepted that he associated with some of these individuals but claimed that his relationship with them did not involve any gang activity:

**Associate A**, aged around 28, was a neighbour. The defendant had been on ‘nodding terms’ with him for 18 months, since he had moved onto the estate.

**Associate B**, was a friend of the defendant’s younger brother who sometimes accompanied him to a recording studio where they recorded musical compositions.

**Associate C**, and the defendant were friends. They had known each other since they were five years old and had grown up together on the estate.

**Associate D**, was a local Rap artist with whom the defendant sometimes collaborated.

**Associate E**, was the son of his mother’s closest friend and a neighbour.

**Associate G**, was unknown to the defendant.

**Associate I**, played football in the same Sunday Morning League team as the defendant and lived on his estate.

It is almost certainly the case that some of these associates were, or had been, involved in gang-related offending, but they were also footballers, musicians, long-standing friends and neighbours of the defendant. The reality is that in gang-affected neighbourhoods, gang-involved and non-gang-involved children and young people live side by side and lead overlapping social lives, and like other adolescents, their patterns of association are determined to a large extent by propinquity and shared interests.

## Gang Involvement I

‘Strategic positioning’ by young people in gang-affected neighbourhoods, to keep themselves safe, was one of the main findings of research I undertook in Waltham Forest, Lambeth and Lewisham (Pitts, 2007; 2008; Youth Justice Board 2007; Centre for Social Justice, 2009).

*The idea of Involuntary Affiliation describes most accurately the bind in which increasing numbers of young people in the poorest neighbourhoods in Britain find themselves. It offers a more coherent explanation of their criminal motivation, and the evolution of their criminal careers in this dangerous world awash with drugs, money and firearms, than the accounts offered by much contemporary criminology and the law.*

*The law, locked into the individualising, volitional, imperative, cannot easily deal with a world characterised by cultures of conflict, coercion and control and involuntary affiliation. Its solution, Joint Enterprise, is simple but effective; everybody becomes equally culpable.* (Pitts, 2008)

For many young people in gang affected neighbourhoods, involvement with gang members is essentially pragmatic, a means of securing some degree of safety in a high-risk situation and this may, from time to time, require them to break the law. My research revealed that as the gangs grew larger in the first decade of the 21st century, and territorial disputes intensified, the numbers of protagonists increased and it was no longer easy for anyone to distinguish who, on any given estate, was or wasn't a gang member (Pitts, 2007; Matthews and Pitts, 2007). This meant that, in effect, residence became synonymous with affiliation in the eyes of members of rival gangs and young people with no prior gang involvement were restricted to their own estates because of the threat posed to them.

One of the consequences of the siege mentality that this engendered is that many perfectly innocent young people will appear in *YouTube* Rap videos, partly because there is not much else to do, partly because most of the young people in that age group are 'into' the music and partly because it is strategically important to indicate to gang affiliates and gang members that you are well disposed towards them. The fact that one's appearance on these videos may subsequently be used by the prosecution to demonstrate gang involvement, affiliation or membership, seldom occurs to most of the young participants.

The prosecution in these cases normally cites the content of these videos as evidence of the willingness and ability of the assembled rappers, most of whom do not actually sing but content themselves with bopping up and down and making gang signs with their fingers, to commit the offences for which they are being prosecuted.

However, much North American research suggests that 'myth making' and the creation of a tradition, in which key gang members are lionised and their escapades and achievements exaggerated, is a central activity of youth gangs (Klein, 2008). This is why Rap music, and its mediation via *YouTube* and social networking sites has become a central activity for many UK youth gangs. Indeed, research undertaken in West Yorkshire revealed 'gangs' that did nothing but generate *YouTube* raps about wholly mythical events and achievements (Andell and Pitts, 2010). The ability to write and rap about gang activity is therefore highly valued by gang associates but the audience for these musical offerings is far larger than this. In reality, Gangsta Rap is a significant strand in contemporary mainstream youth culture.

Paul Lester writing in the *Guardian* about the successful UK rap artist Sneakbo (Agassi Odusina), in May 2012 notes that:

*Drake (a famous US rapper) loves Sneakbo, and that's good enough reason for us to feature him here, because we love Drake. In fact, Drake loves Sneakbo – a 19-year-old rapper from Brixton in south London – so much that he spent a large proportion of a recent interview singing his praises; five minutes at least, which – considering you only usually get 20 or so*

*with the American superstar – either suggests the interviewer is mad, or Drake really, really does love Sneakbo ...*

*So who is this Sneakbo character? Apparently, or so we've been told, he's more Giggs than Tinchy, more 'road' than 'pop'. Although he's not altogether unpopular: he's had more than 20m YouTube channel views. We know YouTube views rarely translate into actual CD sales or downloads, or at least not in the same numbers, but you must admit, 20m – that's pretty big ...*

*His mixtape I'm Buzzin' was downloaded 5,000 times in a day and his debut single The Wave just scraped the top 40 last autumn ... with his follow-up single, Sing for Tomorrow, which has just been added to the Radio 1 playlist as he gears up to go into the studio with Jessie J and Roll Deep's people for his debut album, tentatively titled Sneak to Da Bo.*

When *Sneakbo* first attracted a mainstream following he was paid in the region of £2,000 for a public appearance, plus royalties from album sales and radio plays. Latterly he has been able to command between £15,000 and £20,000 for his appearances at venues like the O2.

Like *So Solid Crew* before him, *Sneakbo* owes his popularity to the fact that he is associated with the notorious Lambeth GAS (Guns and Shanks) gang. Indeed, the twitter responses from *Sneakbo*'s fans stress how 'real' and gritty' his music is and it appears that fans of Rap are looking for this 'effect'. Many of the themes and much of the terminology used in UK Gangsta Rap derive directly from those employed by North American rappers like *Rich Ross*, *50 Cent*, *Little Wayne* and, latterly, *Drake*.

### ***50 Cent "Shootin' Guns"***

*Got my guns and magazines ending up in front of me  
nothing is quite as it seems, fuck with me and you going to see  
shoot your gun now make you a believer  
now you better pray for something more*

In a recent case, the prosecution presented rap videos featuring several defendants in which the lyrics spoke of 'taking out' the opposition with 'automatics' etc. In fact, this group had never previously been known to own or use firearms and although they were being prosecuted for a murder, the fatal blow was struck by an umbrella stem.

## **Gang Involvement II**

It is not uncommon for gang affiliates or gang members to induce younger children and young people, sometimes young 'girlfriends', who are not necessarily involved in gangs and are unknown to the police, to hold, hide or transport drugs money or firearms for them. They do this to avoid

apprehension and the associated risk of imprisonment. The children and young people involved may do this out of a misplaced sense of loyalty to the gang, an ill-judged desire to share in the glamour of gang life or, not infrequently, because they are subject to duress (Andell and Pitts, 2013).

*Black's Law Dictionary* (1990) defines duress as:

*any unlawful threat or coercion used ... to induce another to act [or not act] in a manner [they] otherwise would not [or would].*

Thus the defendant admits to breaking the law, but claims that they are not liable because, they did so as a result of extreme unlawful pressure.

However, a person cannot rely on the defence of duress if they have voluntarily exposed themselves to the risk of duress by joining a criminal organisation or gang. In the case of *R v Sharp* [1987] 1 QB 353 Lord Lane CJ ruled (at p. 861) that:

*... where a person has voluntarily, and with knowledge of its nature, joined a criminal organisation or gang which he knew might bring pressure on him to commit an offence and was an active member when he was put under such pressure, he cannot avail himself of the defence of duress.*

Once again we confront the problem of defining gang 'membership' in a social milieu in which relationships transcend the boundaries between gang association, gang involvement and gang affiliation.

In a recent case, a young man with no previous convictions and an exemplary school and college record was charged with possessing a firearm with intent to endanger life. The defendant said he was forced to hide the gun because of threats from gang members on his estate that they would attack his parents and sexually assault his sister. He refused to name the people who threatened him, he said, because he knew what they were capable of, and that the police would be unable to protect him or his family if he did name them. When his house was raided, letters from imprisoned gang members were found. The defendant claimed that these two people were school friends and that he was writing to them to 'cheer them up'. The prosecution argued that the presence of these letters demonstrated the defendant's prior gang involvement and that, as a result he could not invoke a defence of duress because he must have known that at some future point members of this gang *might bring pressure on him to commit an offence*. However, if we follow that logic, the defendant would have had to have known about his friend's future gang involvement when he was in infant school, because that was where the friendship group, some of whose members eventually became gang-involved, first got together.

In cases where the defendant is claiming duress, it is incumbent upon them to specify where, when and by whom such threats were uttered. However, if a child or young person living in a gang-affected neighbourhood is asked by particular people to carry a bag or parcel from A to B or to hide it at home, they know they cannot say ‘no’. Moreover, if no explicit threat is uttered; they are unwilling to identify those whom they believe promulgated the implicit threat, and if they have associated with them in the past, particularly if this was recorded on a *YouTube* video or a photograph on their mobile phone, a plea of duress is unlikely to hold up.

## Wannabees

Wannabees are young people, normally found in loosely structured groups who engage in spontaneous social activity and sometimes exciting, impulsive, criminal activity including collective violence against other groups. They tend to hover on the fringes of real gangs and although they may assume the trappings of street gangs, insignia, colours and street names, and lay claim to territory, they are essentially aspirants, eager to gain acceptance and eventual inclusion in a real gang. In a study undertaken in West Yorkshire (Andell and Pitts, 2010), the researchers unearthed the *187 crew*. This group wore T-shirts with a 187 motif (187 is US police code for a drive-by shooting) but they had no known criminal involvement. However, these sorts of trappings of gang membership are frequently cited by the prosecution as evidence of gang membership and of previous bad character (see below) and this puts young Wannabees at risk of being drawn into the legal process.

## Gang Affiliated

A relatively low status affiliate of the gang, a ‘younger’, who is unlikely to initiate or orchestrate gang activity but will participate willingly in it.

## Gang Membership

A relatively high status affiliate of the gang, an ‘elder’ or ‘older’ who is likely to initiate or orchestrate gang activity but may rely on other, lower status, gang affiliates or gang associates to undertake it.

## Bad Character, Bad Judgement or Bad Luck?

The *Criminal Justice Act* (2003) changed the rules governing the admissibility of evidence relating to the character of defendants. The Act allows previous convictions and evidence of ‘untruthfulness’ and ‘reprehensible behaviour’, unrelated to the case in hand, to be put before a jury. This can include evidence relating to charges on which the defendant was acquitted. In the case of gang-related offences the prosecution may cite Rap Videos and photographs taken from the defendant’s

phone as well as previous arrests. As we have already noted, while appearance in a Rap video may show gang association they are not necessarily an indication of gang involvement, gang affiliation or gang membership and, unless the content is defamatory or an affront to public decency, it is not illegal either. Nor are pictures of young men making gang signs with their fingers taken on their telephones and downloads of pictures of rap stars or recordings of their music. Pictures of the defendant holding a gun or a large bag of illicit drugs is pretty solid evidence, but pictures of bottles of expensive Cognac, Brandy and Champagne and large wads of banknotes, popular amongst gang-involved young people, may testify to their aspirations but not to their culpability,

In a recent case a police witness wishing to demonstrate ‘the defendant’s previous bad character to the jury noted that Mr X was *no stranger to arrest*. What he failed to mention was that Mr X, while no stranger to arrest, had never in fact been charged for any of the alleged offences for which he had been arrested, had never been the subject of a ‘*No Further Action*’, decision by the police, and had never been prosecuted by the Crown Prosecution Service. The five arrests cited all occurred some time after an offence which was believed to have been perpetrated by members of the gang that was active on the estate where Mr X lived; some of whose members Mr X associated with. On each occasion Mr X spent less than one hour in the police station. He believed that he was regarded by the police as a ‘wrong-un’ because of his long lasting friendship with a member of the aforementioned gang. Once again, a failure to understand the complex patterns of association amongst young people living in gang-affected neighbourhoods meant that this young man had been placed on the Metropolitan Police Gangs Matrix and had thereby become one of the ‘usual suspects’.

Few of the defence solicitors and barristers in these cases have firsthand knowledge of the complex patterns of association in gang-affected neighbourhoods, and their young clients are unlikely to volunteer this information. If it is to be introduced into these trials at all, it will have to come from the youth workers and workers in gang-desistance programmes who know the young people and the neighbourhoods they inhabit. The interests of the young people, as well as those of the justice system, would be better served if these workers were to establish a dialogue with the lawyers in local criminal law practices, via the local branches of the Law Society, in order to brief them on the peculiarities of the social worlds in which their young clients are enmeshed.

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# ‘The voluntary organisation forms ... a unique feature of the British way of life’: One voluntary organisation’s response to the birth of the Youth Service

Helen M. F. Jones

## Abstract

*With the future of the UK’s statutory Youth Service in doubt, this article looks back to the days of its birth. After the Second World War, some people were critical about the idea of direct state involvement and its possible association with the indoctrination of impressionable young people. However, in the West Riding of Yorkshire (WRY), the Education Authority saw the arrival of state provision as signalling an end to the need for voluntary organisations in youth work. The West Riding Association (WRA) and the Leeds Association of Girls’ and Mixed Clubs (LAGC) fought to continue their work with voluntary sector clubs where young people played a leading role in planning and organising their programmes. The Associations’ archives show the struggle leading up to their eventual amalgamation in 1950, in the face of the almost total removal of funding.*

**Key Words:** funding; voluntary sector; association; Youth Service.

IN LIGHT OF the ongoing demise of state sponsored youth work, it seems timely to revisit its birth over sixty years ago. At the time, some voluntary organisations responded rather equivocally and not without suspicion to the arrival of the Youth Service and to the increasing power wielded by the statutory sector. Although the growth in funding for work with young people was welcomed, the involvement of the state was greeted with wariness and youth work became contested territory. The status quo, which had evolved since the nineteenth century, was changed virtually overnight. This article looks at the period immediately after the Second World War through a case study of the situation faced by the West Riding Association of Girls’ and Mixed Clubs (WRA) and the Leeds Association of Girls’ and Mixed Clubs (LAGC).<sup>1</sup>

Until the 1920s, youth work was largely the preserve of volunteers. It was financed by fundraising, which took a range of forms. The efforts of youth work pioneers have been documented by writers and editors including Smith (2001), Spence (2004) and Gilchrist et al (for example 2011; 2013) among others. Some of the pioneers were particularly concerned about the welfare of girls working in workshops, factories and mills. Emmeline Pethick, for example, focussed on the plight of the young women employed in dress-making (1898) whilst Lily Montagu was interested in various

issues including girls’ employment in sweated labour (Montagu, 1904; Spence, 2004).

In Leeds, as in other cities and towns, small girls’ clubs (linked mostly with single churches and chapels) came together in an association which facilitated activities including lectures and competitions. Some girls’ club associations were established by women who were concerned with ‘the industrial question’ (Pethick, 1898). The minutes and Annual Reports of the Leeds Association of Girls’ Clubs, however, suggest a preoccupation with competition rules rather than any particular interest in girls’ working conditions (Jones, 2011).

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, an increasing number of educated, middle-class young women were looking for outlets for their talents and many engaged in philanthropic activities (see, for example, Gleadle, 2001; Holloway, 2005)<sup>2</sup>. The LAGC was never wealthy but it was able to survive on a combination of donations from local philanthropists and occasional public appeals for specific items, whilst the work was done largely by unpaid volunteers. Only ‘expert’ teachers of particular skills such as drill were paid by the wealthier clubs. By the 1930s, however, women were entering professional jobs and fewer were seeking unpaid work. Increasingly, youth work was becoming a paid career and qualifications were being devised.

## Before and during wartime

From the 1930s, the National Association of Girls’ Clubs (NAGC) and other national organisations including the National Association of Boys’ Clubs (NABC) began to receive funds from the government which enabled them to make grants available to associations and clubs. This meant state influence started to grow. Grants from the NAGC were welcomed and it became possible to employ paid staff both as face-to-face workers and as administrators. Further support became available from the King George V Jubilee Trust (inaugurated in March 1935). Broadcasting on 12 April 1935, the King spoke of ‘admirable’ voluntary organisations through which he intended that the Trust’s money would be channelled to the country’s young people. He explained that the funds would help to ‘co-ordinate’ existing efforts and extend work into new areas (George V, 1935).

In Yorkshire, the Trust supported the creation of the Yorkshire Association of Girls’ Clubs, following the Yorkshire Association of Boys’ Clubs (founded in 1933). Leeds was not the only city or town with its own association, but there was no coherence across the country. This prompted the NAGC to create a regional tier system through which they could contact local clubs. LAGC co-operated in the development of the regional organisation and largely continued its work as before. The Yorkshire Association operated as a clearing house for grant applications, which it forwarded, in order of merit, to the NAGC. It concentrated its efforts in the localities which were not covered by LAGC or by the Sheffield Association of Girls’ Clubs and Mixed Clubs.

In 1939 (shortly before the war began), a report commissioned by the King George V Jubilee Trust

reported on the needs of school leavers. Davies notes that it ‘struggled hard to make the case for a stronger state presence which did not undermine the voluntary sector’ (1999: 16). Later in the year, Circular 1486: *In the Service of Youth* established a role for the state in the face of war with the intention of avoiding the ‘social problem’ of widespread delinquency which had arisen during the First World War (Board of Education, 1939). Located in the Board of Education, the remit of *In the Service of Youth* included: ‘offering young people disciplined recreational opportunities consistent with ideas of “freedom” and “liberal democracy”’ (Bradford, 2006: 133). The context for the work was the outbreak of war and the perceived need for young people to become part of the nation’s war effort in military or civilian terms. The following year the Board of Education published Circular 1516: *The Challenge of Youth* (1940). It identified the need for ‘social facilities, physical recreation and continued education’ (Davies, 1999: 20). The two circulars are regarded as forming the foundation of the Youth Service, although a series of other circulars were issued during the early years of the war (for further details see Bradford, 2006). Circular 1516 was based on the premise of statutory and voluntary youth provision co-existing (Davies, 1999: 20). During the 1930s, some travellers to Germany had been impressed with the compulsory Hitler Jugend but the outbreak of war saw greater emphasis on the significance of both voluntary engagement and voluntary effort and concomitant reluctance to imitate totalitarian states.

In response to Circular 1516, Local Education Authorities (LEAs) began to establish structures to facilitate their work with young people. Amongst these was the West Riding of Yorkshire which created its County Youth Committee in February 1940. With the County Council as an umbrella organisation, West Yorkshire’s town councils also set up structures. In 1941, to mirror the statutory structure, the Yorkshire Association of Girls’ and Mixed Clubs disaggregated and, reflecting local government regions, the West Riding Association of Girls’ Clubs and Mixed Clubs (WRA) was created. Wartime travel difficulties, the black-out, children and young people’s evacuation and the work caused by the billeting of soldiers all helped to make the administration of a single organisation, covering a county stretching from Middlesbrough to Sheffield and Hull to Sedbergh, impossible. Even on its own, the West Riding stretched from Sedbergh in the north-west, (Sedbergh is now in Cumbria) to Sheffield (now part of South Yorkshire), an area of over six thousand square kilometres. It included several large, mainly industrial, cities and numerous towns as well as a vast number of villages. The cities had their own councils whilst the County Council was responsible for the rest of the county. By this time, girls’ and mixed clubs’ monies came from a combination of fundraising (holding dances, for example) and grants from the Ministry of Education, channelled via the NAGC.

Throughout the war, the voluntary sector continued to receive funding channelled through their national bodies whilst LEAs also received funds from the Ministry of Education. Statutory clubs were often able to meet in schools and other premises coming under the aegis of local authorities whilst voluntary clubs generally had easier access to church halls. Immediately after the war, the West Riding Education Authority produced a report in which the situation during the war was

described. Its Youth Service had expanded rapidly ‘primarily to deal with problems peculiar to war conditions’. The report stated:

*The black-out, conditions of work and general moral dangers were good enough reasons for coping with as many young people as possible and whilst efforts were made to give them something constructive to do, the main concern was to keep them away from harmful influences. [...] The emphasis was ... on quantity rather than quality. Grants were made to clubs without any detailed investigation into the work they were doing.* (West Riding Education Authority, 1948)

The fact that standards in statutory clubs were open to question compares markedly with the situation in clubs affiliated to the WRA. For example, during November 1945, Shepley Youth Club near Huddersfield was disaffiliated from the WRA because ‘the Committee were not satisfied that the Club fulfilled the standards and conditions of affiliation’ (WRA, 1945d). In particular, the WRA required its clubs to show that they had effective Members’ Committees or, where necessary, clubs were supported in developing them.

## The birth of the Service of Youth

A fundamental change was made during 1945-6 when central government, through the Ministry of Education, started to direct funds to local authorities and the statutory Youth Service was born. The Ministry intended LEAs to develop Youth Services and also to provide grants to established voluntary bodies which hitherto had received funds via their national bodies. As a WRA document later explained, ‘Formerly the Ministry of Education made grants available to aid the work of Voluntary Youth Organisations, but it is now their policy that such grants shall be the responsibility of Local Education Authorities, and many Authorities make substantial grants’ (WRA, 1947c). This transferred the responsibility for identifying local priorities to local authorities and the impact on long-standing voluntary organisations could be profound. In some areas, local authorities built good relationships with existing voluntary organisations but in the West Riding this was not the case and a more difficult situation emerged. In April 1945, the WRA learned that West Riding County Council had ‘declined to grant-aid the work of the Association’ (WRA, 1945a). It subsequently transpired that club leaders’ salaries could be paid through grant aid but that the WRA organiser’s salary together with administrative and office costs could not be funded (WRA, 1945b). The West Riding Education Committee allocated £25,000 to its ‘Youth Activities’ for 1945-6 (WRY, 1945). Across the voluntary sector, only the West Riding Federation of Young Farmers’ Clubs received any funding for the year. The decision by the County Council to take responsibility for all youth work happened abruptly and appears to have come as a shock both locally and nationally. WRA minutes record that ‘the National Association wished to know the reason [...] and to take up the matter with the Ministry of Education’ (WRA, 1945a). Probably presuming that either there had been an error, or that it would be possible to reach an accommodation, the NAGC made a grant

themselves. As a result, the WRA's income for 1945-6 was comparable with the income for the previous year: around 60% came from the NAGC. The rest came through subscriptions, donations and affiliation fees.

LAGC was facing similar difficulties in securing funding from the West Riding Education Authority and its constituent LEAs. The two associations agreed to consider the development of future joint policy, bearing in mind the difficulty they were facing in securing grant aid from local authorities and also the reduction in finance to the NAGC from the Ministry. In November 1945, representatives of both associations and Sheffield Association of Girls' Clubs and Mixed Clubs met with six LEA area youth officers and also workers from major youth clubs across the West Riding to discuss how the statutory and voluntary organisations should work together (WRA, 1945b). Miss Harford travelled from London, representing the NAGC. She gave an overview of the initiatives being taken by national headquarters including 'their realisation of the need for research work'. She described the 'evolution' of arrangements where voluntary organisations 'could relieve the LEA of certain work and they in turn give material assistance' although she was clearly mindful of the situation in the West Riding. Indeed, she described the situation as 'very peculiar'. This she attributed in part to its 'many strong County Boroughs' (WRA, 1945c). The WRA and LAGC were probably hoping to hear good news about a breakthrough in terms of future funding but sadly this was not forthcoming. The NAGC was powerless to overturn the West Riding Council's decision. Rather, Miss Harford posed a series of questions to the meeting including 'How could the Statutory and Voluntary Organisations work together for best results?' She asked, on the one hand, whether there was a need for the NAGC but on the other hand whether there was a need for Associations for the County Boroughs which, unlike Leeds, had no associations of their own. There was logic to the latter suggestion: a network of associations which mirrored the county boroughs might have had potential to establish local priorities and divide responsibilities along clearly delineated lines. The minutes record, 'There was a full discussion ... and finally it was resolved [to form] a small committee' (WRA, 1945c). Subsequently, the committee did not recommend the creation of numerous small associations.

In the face of the abrupt removal of funding, it appears that initially both associations believed that policy would change and the Education Authority would rethink its decision, coming into line with other authorities around the country. The following year, the WRA's Annual Report restated their understanding of the situation:

*Although the policy of the Ministry is partnership between the Statutory Local Authorities and Voluntary Organisations in the Service of Youth, the West Riding Education Authority considers that this Service can be carried out by its own machinery and its own staff alone so far as clubs are concerned, and is not prepared to grant aid the administrative expenses of a voluntary body, such as ours. (WRA, 1947c).*

The payment of face-to-face workers would be undertaken by local authorities but the WRA's network of organisers and infrastructure would not be supported. Overall control of the West Riding County Council frequently shifted between political parties and there was possibly hope that a change would herald a shift in approach to voluntary organisations.

## The West Riding of Yorkshire

The WRA and LAGC's difficulties in securing funding, and the West Riding County Council's antipathy towards voluntary organisations, appear to have originated with Councillor Walter Hyman, Chairman of the Education Authority. Cook describes Hyman as a 'powerful and sometimes controversial figure' who was 'a dominant force on the many committees he chaired' (2000: 89). A Labour Party councillor, he had his own vision which he carried through with zeal and tenacity. His vision did not include the voluntary sector, except as a marginal group of volunteers making no demands on state finance. In 1967, Hyman's obituary quoted Sir Alec Clegg (Chief Education Officer to the West Riding 1945-74) who described a man who was 'quite reckless in his disregard of the way of peace and compromise'. Despite the normally quasi-hagiographic nature of obituaries, Clegg added, 'If he had had more conciliation in his makeup and an ability to disguise his contempt of stupidity and pretence he might well have distinguished himself as much in the national educational field as he did in the West Riding' (N.K., 1967). Whether Hyman would have wished to enter a wider stage is a moot point. A Yorkshire man who proposed the amalgamation of Yorkshire's three Ridings and creation of a provincial tier of government (N.K., 1967), Hyman probably saw Yorkshire as infinitely more significant than England. Nationally, this was an era when belief in the desirability of state provision was ascendant. During the war, people had sacrificed much for the state and now, in return, the state should take responsibility for welfare and other aspects of life. As Kynaston states, 'the British people, in return for all their sufferings in a noble cause, deserved a new start after the war' (2007: 22). For Hyman, the WRA epitomised an older, obsolete world before the creation of the state's 'cradle to grave' care.

Despite the financial situation, the Association continued to support its members and to encourage young people's involvement in the management of their clubs to an increasingly sophisticated extent. During 1946, for example, the Executive Committee heard a report from The Mixed Clubs' Members' and Leaders' Conferences. Members' Committees believed that they 'should have more say in Programs [sic], the function of Leaders being to provide new ideas and to carry out the program desired by the Members'. Members wanted training in 'program planning' and teaching so they could take craft classes (WRA, 1946b). The WRA and LAGC Annual Reports provide overviews of the wide range of activities available in clubs including arts, crafts, sports and hobbies. Members were seen as frequently having tedious, repetitive jobs which could be assuaged by interesting club programmes, planned and organised by themselves.

During 1946, the matter of finance occurred less frequently in the minutes but, in September, the

WRA learned that the County Council had rejected its application towards office and administration costs. A letter from Mr Clegg was accepted as the final word for 1946 but the 'long and arduous fight' would be taken up again the following year (WRA, 1946b). In early 1947 it was agreed to defer applying for grant aid to LEAs until the West Riding Council had considered the Yorkshire Association of Boys' Clubs (YABC)'s application (WRA, 1947a). The rationale for this apparently gallant behaviour is unclear and YABC did not enjoy any greater success.

The ongoing culture of mutual suspicion between the WRA and LEA is shown in an account from March 1947 when the Association came into direct territorial conflict with the local Youth Officer and a Director of Education. During 1947, the West Riding Council was re-organising its Youth Service and required all their youth clubs to re-register. Registered groups were required to meet certain standards including having 'an adult management committee' (West Riding County Council, 1948). The WRA was informed that local education committees were the *de facto* management committees of all civic youth clubs. Thus any club seeking support from the LEA had to accept the LEA in management terms. In Huddersfield, the Leader of Lockwood Youth Centre had affiliated to the WRA 'improperly'. The Youth Officer and Director of Education:

*... expressed the view that the Association had little to offer to the Civic Youth Clubs. The [WRA] secretary pointed out the desirability of co-operation and the advantages of affiliation. The officers observed that the Education Committee provides training courses and advisory service. They have no Members' Councils, and are not enamoured of these. (WRA, 1947b).*

The Education Committee had not previously considered the question of whether civic youth clubs might affiliate to the WRA, but they had no objection to other clubs affiliating. The Director of Education provided the WRA secretary with a list of local clubs 'other than civic' (WRA, 1947b). This incident shows the different value bases emerging. A gulf was widening between clubs with paid leaders who were funded by the Council and those remaining totally dependent on volunteers and fundraising, where members played a significant role in management. This signified a new difficulty in reaching a *modus vivendi* within the sector in the West Riding. Contrary views on the value of Members' Councils were highlighted increasingly.

Clubs' Members' Committees sent representatives to regional Members' Councils: the WRA supported a considerable bureaucracy. In 1947, the WRA's Annual Report outlined the Association's strength of feeling about the significance of Members' Councils which 'consist of two representatives from each club, and... consider a wide range of subjects'. The members 'gain valuable experience in Committee work which will prove very useful in later life, and they can represent the views of their club, and by social activities they help generally to cement the life of the individual clubs into the life of the Association' (1947c). Clubs were represented on regional Members' Councils which the WRA funded 'almost' as sub-committees. Half their expenses would

be paid. It was felt that ‘such expenditure would carry weight with LEAs in consideration of grant aid’ (WRA, 1947a).

Clearly, Association staff invested time and resources in supporting and nurturing Members’ Councils. The fact that the Youth Officer and Education Officer were ‘not enamoured’ of young people’s direct involvement in managing clubs presaged the present when members have little input in their own provision while workers are tasked with encouraging and fostering participation. Associations had long supported the idea of members’ direct involvement: even early girls’ work pioneers had regarded the matter as significant. Meanwhile LEAs were attempting to establish ‘Junior Youth Councils’. The WRA secretary had investigated the question of whether they overlapped with Members’ Councils and ascertained from the County Council Youth Officer that ‘Junior Youth Councils were mostly rather defunct at present, and their resuscitation will not be tackled yet’ (WRA, 1947b).

It is worth noting that Association minutes suggest that the regional Members’ Councils were not necessarily the thriving bodies suggested to the outside world. It was politic to build up their significance where they had potential to be a trump card in negotiations with the County Council. During early 1947, Wakefield, Bradford, Barnsley and Harrogate Members’ Councils had met with varying success, due to bad weather – the winter of 1946-7 was particularly harsh (WRA, 1947a). Two years later the Organising Secretary reported:

*There are now two councils functioning in the West Riding: Harrogate and District which is the best of these and reasonably well attended, Bradford and Area, which needs a considerable amount of ‘nursing’ and help. I suggest that the West Riding needs two more... one in Skipton and one in Wakefield, where I understand there was one in the past but it is now absolutely dead. (Sinnamon, 1949: 4).*

It was clear that Members’ Councils required a considerable amount of support. It appears that the LEA and county councillors held somewhat divergent views on the merit of encouraging the active involvement of members in the running of clubs.

## A significant meeting

Minutes of the joint meeting of the two girls’ and mixed clubs associations’ executive committees in the autumn of 1947 record that Mrs G. Graham (the Chairman of the WRA) ‘observed that Voluntary Organisations are fighting for their life in the West Riding ... She thought we must look for things that are not done by the L.E.A. and make them our function’ (WRA, 1947d). This recommendation was made almost two years after Miss Harford had made a similar suggestion. Mrs Graham also recommended amalgamation of the two associations.



Later the same month, Mrs Graham met with County Councillor Walter Hyman, Chairman of the West Riding Education Authority, the man who chaired the committee whose decisions had led to the Association's loss of funding. She appears to have been motivated by recent discussions concerning the need to explore the things not undertaken by the LEA. Mrs Graham sought the meeting of her own volition to discuss how 'his Youth Scheme', as she termed it in rather disparaging terms, fitted with the WRA. There is no known account of Councillor Hyman's perspective on the meeting. He possibly regarded the period where the Ministry of Education funded voluntary organisations to work with young people as a period of transition from youth work's early days, where no workers were paid, to the modern era where youth work was an aspect of the welfare state's 'cradle to grave' provision.

By 1947, County Councillor Hyman had been chairing the Education Committee for ten years. Control in the West Riding moved between Labour and the Conservatives with regularity but the Education Committee's vision remained consistent as the dominant party provided the chair and the opposition, the deputy chair. It is almost certain that, before their meeting, Mrs Graham already knew the Councillor, either in person or by repute.

*Hyman was driven by personal as well as philanthropic motives and his refusal to compromise did not always encourage friendship. However, he has been described as having a genuine passion for education, a vigorous intellect, a readiness for unlimited burdens and the tenacity to ensure his ideas were accomplished. (Cook, 2000: 90).*

The breadth of the County Council Education Committee's responsibilities is truly impressive when viewed with the benefit of hindsight: they extended from the establishment of a permanent string quartet to the provision of library services in hospitals (WRY, 1947).

Mrs Graham subsequently circulated notes of her meeting with Councillor Hyman, which appears to have been confrontational at times. Whether the account was based on contemporaneous notes taken by herself or an aide, or whether she wrote her own account immediately *post facto*, is not known but either way, it seems to demonstrate diametrically opposed, somewhat combative, positions. Councillor Hyman represented the new state funded service which formed part of the new welfare state and advocated a monopoly in funding terms whilst Mrs Graham was in favour of a plural system where the voluntary clubs received state support.

At the outset, Councillor Hyman assumed Mrs Graham wished to discuss grants but she emphasised that she wanted to discuss policy. He responded that, provided the Association did not ask for grants, they could exist 'just as much or as little as [they] liked, just as long as [they] had voluntary workers who wanted to spend their time on such things' (Graham, 1947). Mrs Graham's style of writing suggests the tone in which the discussion took place. She observed that Councillor Hyman believed the days of voluntary clubs had ended 'because a really progressive LEA should have

taken all their work over’. Hence, he was not concerned over the continued existence of voluntary youth clubs provided they did not ask for any funds and could survive through the involvement of voluntary workers and fundraising.

Moving her focus, Mrs Graham turned to the advantages of the Association being affiliated to the NAGC, which provided a national perspective. Her account notes:

*This he pooh-poohed at first and grumbled because the National Association draws a big grant direct from the Ministry of Education. He also objected very strongly to the waste of time, money, and energy caused by such national organisations as the Young Farmers Clubs (he has resigned from their National Executive or Council).*

She expanded on her theme by talking about training:

*I pointed out that many of his personnel were NABC trained. He agreed that if we thought out any kind of training that was not being provided already and for which there was a demand he would be interested and if we wanted money we should ask for it and it would receive every consideration. (Graham, 1947).*

Apparently Alderman Hyman was ‘quite impressed’ by the Members’ Councils and explained that his own workers’ attempts at encouraging members’ participation had not met with success. Together with holidays (the WRA and LAGC had a long history of organising residentials both in the UK and mainland Europe) the idea of Members’ Councils was the only other aspect of the Association’s work with young people which impressed Hyman. He did not see the role of the national organisation immediately but ‘consented to give some thought to’ the advantages which ‘a County cannot offer simply because it is not a National Body’ (ibid).

Mrs Graham finally turned her attention to the idea that ‘the proper place for a Youth Club is as part of a Community Centre’. This particular angle is not recorded as having been discussed during any of the executive committee’s debates. She said she believed that youth centres needed to have ‘parent bodies’ just as ‘the real unit of society is the family not a collection of orphans’ (Graham, 1947). Hence, until sufficient community centres had been constructed, churches and chapels would have to suffice. Councillor Hyman disagreed on the grounds that religious bodies saw their work with young people as essentially missionary or evangelical and they sought only to recruit members. County Council Education Committee minutes show attempts were made to purchase secular premises for use as community centres (WRY, 1947). Mrs Graham does not record whether she challenged the notion that religious bodies were partisan. She concluded her notes by observing that the Association should stop attempting to get funding for administration but should seek a grant for supporting Members’ Councils; ‘I am bound to say that I cannot see why an authority which proposes to administer a comprehensive scheme itself should be expected

to subsidise another body to do the same work' (Graham, 1947). Whilst her intentions are not clearly recorded, it is possible that Graham met Hyman because she believed she might establish a good working relationship between the WRA and the County Council. However, this was not possible because the county councillor believed that the days of voluntary clubs receiving grant aid from the state were over.

Although Mrs Graham stated that she wished to discuss 'policy' rather than funding, she does not mention referring to the 1944 Education Act or Circulars 1486 and 1516. Rather, she selected the aspects of the Association's work which she felt were not being appropriately funded or valued. She might also have raised the question of the underpinning values but her record does not indicate that she chose to do so. The question of whether all paid work with young people should be within the state's aegis was central. Whilst many local authorities chose to provide voluntary organisations with funding comparable to that which they had received hitherto from the Board of Education via the NAGC, the West Riding made a different choice. Although it could be surmised that the personality of Councillor Hyman was a factor, the public confusion emanating from the dual associations may have contributed. For Mrs Graham, the Association's work was paramount. For Alderman Hyman, the Association's work is likely to have been an essentially middle-class concern of marginal interest. For him, the Association brought together girls' and mixed clubs, which were largely set up, and housed, by churches and chapels. As noted, he was suspicious about their underlying motives. The Association is never mentioned in published minutes of the County Council Education Committee.

## A financial crisis

According to the Leeds Association's Annual Report of 1947-8 'The times do not grow easier for voluntary organisations any more than for the country as a whole'. The report also notes that the West Riding and Leeds Associations had met to discuss amalgamation but found the idea 'impracticable' in the short term (WRA, 1948). Whilst the Association faced great financial difficulties, in 1947, its member clubs worked together to raise funds and bought a sofa and easy chairs to give to Princess Elizabeth and Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten as a wedding present.

In June 1948, (eight months after her meeting with Hyman) Mrs Graham wrote to advise the NAGC that the WRA had called an Extraordinary General Meeting with a view to dissolving the Association. She gave a typically vivid picture of the situation: 'for so long we in the West Riding have been struggling against veiled and active opposition from the LEA and our opposite numbers Yorkshire Association of Boys' Clubs'. She also recorded that WRA felt unsupported by the NAGC who had 'failed to appreciate the position' (Graham, 1948). The financial situation indeed was dire but perhaps Mrs Graham was attempting to call the Alderman Hyman's bluff. The Association represented and supported a large number of clubs, many of which were beyond the West Riding Education Authority's capacity to support. The WRA decided against winding itself up.

Later in 1948, the West Riding Education Authority produced its 'Scheme of Further Education, The Service of Youth, Community Centres and Village Halls'. Over halfway through, squeezed in at the end of a page, is the following point, 'The Authority do not [...] approve grants-in-aid towards local administration costs of national Boys' and Girls' Club organisations. Having themselves set up an adequate organisation they do not wish to encourage duplication of effort' (West Riding Education Authority Policy Subcommittee, 1948). Three years after establishing its Youth Service, the County Council clearly established its view that the voluntary sector was entirely unnecessary, if not actually undesirable. State provision had superseded voluntary or charitable activity in the fields of health and social services and the same applied to youth organisations.

By September, the West Riding Association was effectively bankrupt, but the LAGC and WRA limped on and did not amalgamate until early 1950. The need to join together was clear but the two organisations differed more than might be anticipated in terms of expectations and outlook. Minutes record ongoing bickering over staffing and priorities. However the 1950-51 Annual Report stated that the amalgamation 'long sought by both Associations on economy grounds [was] delayed through what at one time appeared to be the irreconcilable needs and demands of each Association'. Once effected, 'the advantages ... have far outweighed [the] disadvantages' (WRA, 1951).

Despite the amalgamation and resultant reduction in overheads, in 1951 the WRA reported ongoing financial struggle. Power had shifted away from Labour for the period 1949-52 so Alderman Hyman no longer exercised power but the Council still declined to provide direct grants. This left voluntary organisations to continue to 'rely on the goodwill and generosity of individuals' (WRA, 1951). Financial struggles notwithstanding, the Association's Annual Report for 1950-51 shows determination:

*Certainly it is that without such help the voluntary organisation which provides for its members a valuable training ground in self-help and service and which forms such a unique feature of the British way of life, would either die or would have its field so severely restricted as to render it impotent. By their contribution, whether 5/- or £50, our subscribers are not only helping our day to day work, but they are also ensuring that a State Youth Service of the pattern followed once in Germany will not come to pass in this country. (WRA, 1951).*

The report looked back over the decade since the publication of Circular 1486, which 'revolutionised' youth work. The increased provision through Local Education Authorities was 'necessary and is welcomed' but the continued existence of voluntary organisations was identified as a vital buffer in ensuring that youth work would not be swallowed into a system of state indoctrination. The report's sense of injustice is palpable as it continues: 'The fact that Local Authorities have accepted this extra responsibility has unfortunately led to a belief by some that the voluntary organisation has outlived its usefulness. Nothing can be further from the truth.' With scarcely veiled criticism

of the LEA, the report expanded on its philosophy of youth work:

*So long as our concern is with the welfare of the individual club member and not with simplifying the administration of the youth service, so long as we can see the value in small clubs – which might be inefficient economically but efficient from an educational standpoint – so long as we view the teaching of skills and the development of aptitudes as being secondary to the job of showing people how to work, play and live together, then the voluntary organisation has a vital part to play. (WRA, 1951).*

Valuing ‘association’ above focus on individual development is a contest still being played out in youth work sixty years later. In a slightly different tone, the report acknowledged the ‘excellent’ work being done by the statutory Youth Service. They advocated ‘co-operation and not competition’ between statutory and voluntary organisations (WRA, 1951). At grassroots level, the WRA was working increasingly harmoniously with statutory clubs.

By the financial year 1952-3, the WRA’s annual turnover had grown by a quarter whilst the contribution from the NAGC had declined by half. The NAGC contributed 60% of the WRA’s income in 1944-5 but this had declined to only 20% eight years later. At no time did the West Riding County Council provide any grant aid to the Association. The increase in income came from more effective fundraising on WRA’s behalf. The newly amalgamated Association gradually grew in confidence as it became more independent and found a way to survive and even thrive in the new environment. In 1953, the Annual Report’s cover strap-line was ‘a year of decision’ which it asserted reflected the organisation’s own ‘growing pains’. The report added that ‘The main points about youth clubs are, first that membership is entirely voluntary, and second, that they are largely what young people want them to be’ (WRA, 1953). The following year, the cover carried the message, ‘a year of encouragement’. The financial situation was described as ‘greatly strengthened’ and the situation was ‘a little more secure’. Impressively, membership of affiliated clubs was nearly 3500 young people across the region (WRA, 1954).

## Conclusion

The period immediately following the Second World War saw the birth of the Welfare State but also, as a direct outcome, a major threat to the future of voluntary organisations’ capacity to undertake youth work across the West Riding. Ultimately, the organisations’ work survived largely due to more effective fundraising from the general public. Funding slipped away from the WRA and LAGC’s grasp to an extent unequalled until the current reduction in funding for work with young people. At the time, the WRA and LAGC amalgamated under the WRA title thus reducing overheads and, in the twenty first century, The Youth Association traces its origins directly to them. The values of voluntarism, informal education and association remained a central tenet and throughout the 1950s and 60s affiliated groups continued to value the national dimension, the

networking opportunities and the provision of foreign exchanges and travel. Over the subsequent period, the Association began to run youth programmes in its own right, in addition to maintaining services to its many affiliates.

The scant concern for young people's participation shown by the statutory Youth Service in the early days appears to have set the pattern for subsequent generations. As WRA found, Members' Committees and Councils required support and determination from staff but were an important aspect of clubs' work. Alderman Hyman showed interest in the concept but his staff were clearly equivocal and LEA clubs did not establish an expectation of participation.

Misgivings concerning the notion of direct state involvement in youth provision sixty years ago, and fears that a statutory service was too close to one where participation was compulsory, largely have been forgotten. Visionary belief in the potential of a generous range of cradle-to-grave state provision was pitted against traditional adherence to voluntary provision. At a time of anger about the scale of financial cuts, and nostalgia for the days of a state funded Youth Service, it is salutary to find that its birth was met with suspicion from some of those involved in youth work.

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## Notes

- 1 Shortened abbreviations have been used. Hence, WRA has been used rather than WRAGMC and LAGC rather than LAGCMC.
- 2 In Leeds, early volunteers included several members of the prosperous Middleton and Lupton families (the great grandmother and great great aunts of the Duchess of Cambridge née Catherine





# THINKING SPACE



## Editorial Comment

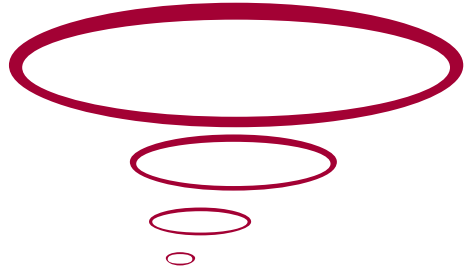
Aniela Wenham

*THINKING SPACE* provides a medium through which we are able to engage with more exploratory ideas for research, policy and practice. The editorial team recently received a submission of two pieces of writing from a young writer, Martha Davies. The first piece of writing, *Be Yourself* powerfully illustrates Martha's thoughts on what it means to be a girl growing up in contemporary society and won the Junior Laureate prize at the Arts Richmond Young Writers festival in 2014 for this essay (see <http://www.artsrichmond.org.uk/news.php>). This piece of writing is complemented by the accompanying *Thinking Space* article by Ali Hanbury and Ali Ronan that reflects upon the position of young women as they negotiate emerging discourses of 'resilience' within the field of sexual health.

The second submission from Marth Davies provides a glimpse into the demands made of young people within the current education system. This piece succinctly highlights the potential implications associated with the high levels of success young women are expected to achieve. Worryingly, this is also placed within a context that expects young people to take individual responsibility for such success at a time when educational expectations have been increasing rapidly. Reflections on what it means to be young and female, draw attention not only to contemporary notions of 'resilience', 'success' and 'failure', but also the diligent ways in which young lives continue to be scrutinized and subject to the surveillance of powerful 'others'.

*Youth & Policy* aims to highlight and critically debate contemporary issues relevant to young people in society. Martha Davies' writing provides a powerful reminder that behind policy frameworks, research and practice are the experiences and reflections of young people themselves. At a time when we are experiencing the decimation of youth services and provision these voices can so much more easily be silenced and forgotten.

# THINKING SPACE [1]



## Be Yourself

*Martha Davies*

“BE YOURSELF”.

Two words you’ve heard so many times. “Don’t be afraid. Be who you want to be.”

“Be yourself” says society. Those words that ring in your ears as you gaze at the models on the covers of magazines. That phrase in the back of your mind as you sit in front of a mirror, resenting the face that stares back at you. Hating it. Wishing you looked like the pretty girls; the girls you think everyone wants you to be.

Because, doesn’t anybody see? Doesn’t anybody realise? Everyone has insecurities. Each time you look at that magazine, each time you glance at yourself in the mirror, you feel it. The envy. The anger. You don’t want to be who you are. You want to be like the other girls; the girls on television, in the magazines, in the music videos. Like the girls at school. The ones that get noticed. The ones that are popular.

But there are things you don’t see. Behind closed doors sit people at computers, airbrushing, photo shopping. With each click they are manipulating you, twisting you. Those girls, those models, they’re just hiding. Behind the cameras and the makeup. They aren’t who you want to be.

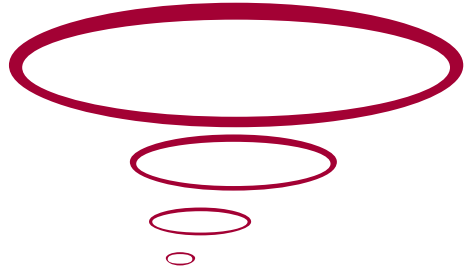
But each day, if you aren’t comparing yourself to someone, you’re being judged. By the girls at school. By the beady eyes of society. Are you sad? Skinny? Big? Intelligent? Are you pretty? Are you confident? There is no right answer. There is no escaping judgement. And each day at school, with exam after exam passing you by, you begin to notice the grades. To anyone else, they are just a simple scattering of letters marked on a piece of paper. But to you, there is more. They are the grades that define you, no matter how hard you have worked, or how much it means to you. You notice it, and then, then it begins to mean something.

So you begin to wonder, question yourself. The doubts flood your mind, coming in droplets at first, preparing for a tidal wave. A river of uncertainties, of fears and reservations. You aren't sure anymore. You have been compared to too many people, judged too many times.

And then, people ask: "Why?" "Why feel this way?" "Why do this to yourself?" They see the scars on girls' wrists, the bags under their eyes. They notice the clouds above their heads, the way they can't quite connect anymore. Some think it is a tragedy. Others, a way of seeking attention.

But the truth is, it is none of this. Society cannot control their judgements. It is a problem too big to conquer. And know this: being yourself is the hardest thing to be, in a world where nothing is acceptable but perfection. Perfection is impossible, unreachable, unattainable. You are only what the cameras, the media and the harrowing yet habitual glare of everyone around you judges you to be. Don't strive for perfection. Strive for knowledge. The knowledge that you have control over who you are, despite the views of anyone else.

# THINKING SPACE [2]

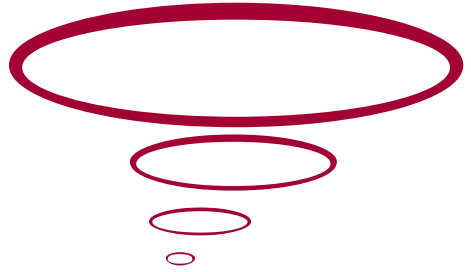


## Education is not about Exams

*Martha Davies*

THOSE CHILDHOOD DAYS, with no school, just play, no rules or regulations. Something we all seem to miss, when we end up like this, in the never-ending stream of tests, sums, and vocabulary lists. We gaze down at each new task with a feeling of dread as we cram into our head everything the teacher's said. We daydream of being eighteen anticipating the breaking of a routine that has come to feel increasingly obscene. No early rises filled with half-broken disguises hiding tired eyes. It's drilled into our minds that the progression of humankind depends on our qualifications, it's an expectation that comes with every equation, every essay and translation. And I'm not saying that these five years at school are not helping to improve my knowledge, or send me off to college when the whole cycle will repeat. I'm just saying that when we spend hours revising facts and figures with such vigour hoping to trigger the results we need, we forget that some of our generation's greatest minds dropped out of school, broke the rules to follow their own. They are not known for the GCSEs they achieved or whether or not they would succeed the grades on their report cards. Great people are known for being able to inspire, to work hard and dream big, to reward and to forgive. It doesn't matter if they don't know the value of  $x$  or if they got an A on their school project. Education is not about exams, or grades, or finals. Because they never prepare us for the biggest test, which is learning to face the challenges in place long after we leave education. We need to brace ourselves for the realisation that although school has taught us, shaped us, made us, there is more to life than this, so many things that go amiss when we think of what lies ahead as our lives further unfold.

# THINKING SPACE [3]



## **Risk and resilience: exploring the necessity and (im)possibility of being a critical and feminist youth worker in neo-liberal times.**

*Ali Hanbury and Ali Ronan*

*THINKING SPACE* offers practitioners a place to explore contradictions and tensions in our work and this paper has grown out of collaboration between feminist youth work practitioners and academic/post-doctoral researchers in Youth Studies. We want to develop a preliminary discussion of the emerging discourse of ‘resilience’ which is fast becoming *en vogue* in both youth and community policy and practice, and seems to describe a response by young people which is rather compliant and docile. We do this through two reflections on stories from practice experience within sexual health in order to interrogate the structural ‘everydayness’ of power and expectations of how it may operate in the lives of young women. We want to rethink and revise such terms as ‘resilience’, with its related concepts of ‘resistance’ and ‘success’, by using examples from youth work practice from the authors’ experience in sexual health settings. Instigating debates about the notion of resilience appears to question the unquestionable from a ‘common-sense’ neo-liberal perspective.

The current political imaginary defines resilience as possessing the capacity to ‘bounce back’ from adversity whether in the public or the private sphere (Harrison, 2013). The central narratives that frame this discourse are significant because they emerge concomitantly with neo-liberal ideas about individual responsibility and ‘active citizenship’ (Harrison 2013). It is not surprising that ‘Keep calm and carry on’ has (again) become the mantra of the moment while the very notion of resilience has become crucial to the creation of a political ‘happiness’ agenda.

The deployment of this resilience discourse is a significant and politically valuable strategy. It creates a politics of anticipation, which in turn links systemic and organisational resilience to

ideas of personal resilience. Harrison (2013) suggests that this shift towards valorising personal resilience is problematic for several reasons; not only does it support normative value judgements but it may also overemphasize the ability of people to ‘bounce back’. It occludes questions of gendered, classed and raced inequalities and becomes part of a wider neo-liberal agenda that shifts responsibility for dealing with crisis away from the public sphere and onto the individual.

## The scripting of young women’s (hetero)sexuality: the ‘dangerous’ jigsaw of adolescence

We argue that the notion of problematic adolescent lives still shapes contemporary policy discourses of targeted interventions. Some of the evidence for our debate comes from the authors’ experiences and reflections of practice within a sexual health organisation in which practitioners are ‘concerned’ by the ways in which young women’s lives are assumed to be lived in relation to (hetero)sexual activity. We argue that young women’s sexuality is still seen as problematic and/or dangerous. The Family Planning Association (FPA) link this explicitly to notions of resilience (2012) suggesting that:

*Resilience and competency building are central to helping young people navigate adolescence in healthy ways. Building on some previously published models of resilience work, [we explore] how to work with excluded, looked-after and targeted young people to nurture their resilience, maintain their sexual health and wellbeing and minimise their involvement in risk taking behaviours potentially damaging to themselves and others.*

We question the ways in which the language of resilience plays out through targeted, policy driven interventions that are designed to provide contraception to young women but which are based on measurable outputs and with outcomes linked explicitly to financial reward through payment by results within commissioned services. We ask what the relationship is between current notions of resilience to those examples of young women resisting the very means by which they are supposed (or expected) to be resilient and compliant i.e. through accepting prescribed contraceptive methods to prevent pregnancy.

## Reflection one

*A young woman taking the progesterone-only pill asked a youth worker whether this could be affecting her sex drive as she was less interested in having sex than before. The youth worker relayed this query to a sexual health nurse at a local clinic who stated that it could affect libido but that they usually don’t tell the young women this because they might stop taking it and ‘end up pregnant’.*

The young woman in this situation was displaying behaviours which we view as agentic and

engaged with her sexual responsibility and sexual relationships. Yet the response was to silence her concerns by bringing in the ‘expertise’ of the nurse. This leads us to ask, ‘Are youth workers unknowingly colluding with a regime of silencing young people’s debates and resilient behaviours despite an apparent commitment to participation and youth voice agendas?’ If so, the focus on young peoples’ resilience has become a well-used trope for youth workers as their work has shifted to increasingly focus on developing young peoples’ individual capacity to resist what is perceived as behaviour that threatens the hegemonic and political notion of active citizenship.

In our example, the nurse is positioned as holding an ‘expert’ view; as someone who ‘knows best’ and is simultaneously a professional who unwittingly but effectively silences the experiences and concerns of the young woman. The sexual ‘interest’ of the young woman is pitted against the common-sense Government commitment to reducing teenage conception rates so that sexual pleasure is side-lined and the young woman must accept that sacrifice for the greater good i.e. to comply with the aim of reducing teenage pregnancies.

## Young women’s bodies as a potential battleground for competing ideologies

In relation to contemporary feminist work with young women, we believe there is no doubt that the female body continues to be made public, visible and problematic. The female, sexualised body has become a ‘battleground’ (borrowing from Barbara Kruger) for legislation, Government initiatives and intervention, and media imagery. Dominant and hegemonic discourses create an essentialist view of women’s bodies as a legitimate site for intervention and experimentation. The female body becomes paradoxically ‘disembodied’, in need of procedures, processes and prescriptions to make it docile and malleable. We ask of the readers, ‘What forces are at play and what are the stakes if we take the view that contraceptive implants are safe and effective bodily interventions carried out by experts yet bodily events managed and controlled by the young woman herself are viewed as deviant and disgusting?’ (Tyler, 2008).

Using the specific example of prescribed contraception use, we have also noted the seemingly unproblematic, ‘everydayness’ and casual celebratory nature of women’s access to hormonal contraceptive methods (both prophylactic and ‘emergency’).

## Reflection two

*A youth worker was concerned about a number of working class white young women attending an alternative education programme, who were sexually active but not currently using a prescribed method of contraception. The young women were stating that they did not use contraceptive methods, as they did not want to be ‘putting drugs’ into their bodies. They appeared very clear in their argument that adults were always telling them not to use/*

*take/put drugs into their bodies and were therefore mobilising this as an argument for not using hormonal contraceptives. The youth worker here was exasperated and wanted the local sexual health service to come to convince the young women that hormonal contraception was a legitimate 'drug' that was safe to use.*

We suggest that the young women in this situation were having an active and 'savvy' debate which, as feminist youth and community workers we advocate and promote. Yet here the response was to silence their concerns by bringing in the 'expert'! If we view this situation from a core youth work principle of encouraging discussion, debate and challenging norms, we can see how the young women's actual resilience to the assumption of the benefits of using hormonal contraceptive methods becomes a deviant act.

The increasing individualised neo-liberal agenda towards young women and their bodies often removes them from the wider social context of feminist campaigning for safer woman-led reproductive behaviours. There is a central paradox for feminists, who demand on the one hand access to free and effective contraception and abortion choices, and on the other hand that chemical – and hormonal-based reproductive technologies should be free from harmful side effects. However, competing political discourses about adolescence often view young women in disembodied and disempowering ways, with rafts of strategies and implementation plans which strive to reduce teenage pregnancies, limit involvement in gangs, encourage the 'fight' against obesity and so on. These policy interventions seek to make some young lives/bodies not only docile but also unresisting and unproblematic.

There is another central paradox for feminist youth workers highlighted when researching resilience. Many studies focus on the unquestionable markers of success in relation to the positive psychological development and economic accomplishment of individuals, families and communities (Masten, 2009; Ungar, 2008), a perspective that youth workers in general would endorse. These studies often focus on the capacity of individuals to become resilient by generating individualised narratives that illustrate the possibility of 'learning' or 'building' resilience. However, there is a troubling possibility that youth work interventions that are implemented from within a resilience framework create 'resilience against resistance' and furthermore, ignore the societal and political inequalities that impact upon the capacity for 'success' in narrow terms. In contemporary politics, resilience encourages acquiescence not resistance.

In this second practice example youth work becomes a vehicle for teaching young people to acquiesce in adult-led expert agendas. What we would like to put forward is a call for youth and community workers to unpack and comment on a politically current and powerful rhetoric. Let us reflect upon the degree to which we are delivering the work with young women around the importance of consent, the ability to negotiate relationships, an awareness of their body and the significance of sexual pleasure.



## Conclusion: The need for critique and debate in feminist youth work

While this specific discussion of resilience and young people looks at the ways in which young women, who engage in heterosexual practice, are encouraged to make ‘choices’ about their contraceptive use it also uses feminist youth work as its wider context. Therein lies another paradox; while feminist youth work seeks to challenge gendered inequalities by giving young women both confidence and self-belief, it can unwittingly play into the hands of a subtle and pervasive neoliberal agenda. Words like ‘resilience’, ‘choice’ and ‘empowerment’ create the appearance of feminism that simultaneously privileges individual effort and triumph and in doing so ignores structural and gendered injustice. We think there is an emergence of a new gender regime, creating a space where the politics of meaning and imagery become inextricably linked with wider issues of choice and political economy. In this way, we argue that the visible mark of the sub-dermal contraceptive implant becomes a signifier, a marker of maturity and sexual activity. It becomes part of a common sense approach to (hetero)sexuality’s rites of passage.

There are other contradictions; it is undeniably important that young people feel sufficiently resilient and equipped to handle their lived situations. Working with young people to develop their resilience in sexual health can help them understand how to negotiate the complexities of consent, to understand the breadth and scope of women’s rights and what wider support is available to them. Many feminists in the 1970s mobilised themselves, as part of the broader women’s health movement, to question and critique the medicalising of women’s bodies. They drew attention to the powerful and potent drugs used as contraceptives as well as the raced and classed arguments about contraception use and the eugenicists’ vision of controlling the population. It appears that over forty years later we are in a situation where youth workers, women’s health advocates and in some instances young women, are no longer critiquing the use of hormonal contraceptives but instead are celebrating and hailing the fact that such a ‘simple’ and free intervention can prevent (unintended?) pregnancies.

There remains a need for a space for the core youth work principles and practice of encouraging discussion, debate and challenging ‘norms’. We continue to reflect upon the (im)possibility of being a critical feminist youth worker in neo-liberal times and we ask; what is the role of professional youth and community work in creating a critical and feminist site for exploration?

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# Reviews

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*Graham Brotherton and Mark Cronin (Editors)*

**Working with Vulnerable Children, Young People and Families**

Routledge 2013

ISBN: 978-0-415-53473-4 (pbk)

£24.99 (pbk)

pp. 191

Emilia Ohberg

IN *WORKING WITH Vulnerable Children, Young People and Families* the editors, Graham Brotherton and Mark Cronin have collected a number of texts by various authors that deal with different aspects of vulnerability. Their central argument is that ‘vulnerability is created by a complex interconnection of social circumstances and should not be seen as arising from mistaken or misplaced individual behaviour, decisions or fecklessness’ (p.10). In other words, the book attempts to refocus the debate away from the deficit model of issues like poverty, crime and disability and instead focus on the structural inequalities that, they argue, are the root causes of vulnerability and risk.

The book is a collection of 10 essays that deal with varying aspects of vulnerability and highlights some groups that may be vulnerable for one reason or another. It begins with a chapter outlining the historically differing views of vulnerability and risk before exploring the psychological aspects of being in a vulnerable position as well as an overview of the current legal and policy context (up to the first few years of the coalition government). It then goes on to discuss children with special educational needs and disabilities, homelessness, care leavers, children of prisoners, young people who have sexually harmed others, violence in personal relationships and digital media. Though the book clearly covers a varied number of topics and vulnerable groups it can hardly be said to be comprehensive, which is not, according to the authors, what they have set out to be. Nevertheless, I am missing sections on, for example, the particular vulnerabilities of young women as well as refugees and migrants and their children.

The book makes a convincing argument for the traditionally leftist view of vulnerability as a result of inequalities and structural oppression. However, it does present a fairly reductionist and dichotomised view of vulnerability. Apart from a brief mention at the very end of the conclusion, the authors do not seem to recognise individual agency and empowerment as having any bearing at all on either an individual’s level of vulnerability or their ability to act as active partners in trying to better their circumstances (p.186). To assume that people are just passive victims of intersectionality is disempowering and paternalistic. To deny that people have their own agency

and instead argue that all vulnerabilities are the result of structural oppression fails to recognise that to make any sort of lasting change in an individual's life, the individual must themselves be empowered to enact positive changes. This dichotomised attitude is, therefore, counterproductive.

That is not to say that structural inequalities are not the root cause of many issues that make people more or less vulnerable. On the contrary, the book clearly and persuasively recognises the various inequalities that can put individuals or groups in vulnerable or risky positions. I was pleased to see the arguments made for a move away from top-down measures towards placing 'a premium on flexible, negotiated strategies rather than seeking to impose pre-set models' (p.182). I was also gratified to find in the chapter on special educational needs and disabilities a much more empowering language than is often the case. It places a clear focus on disability as a set of barriers to physical environments or prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes as opposed to the medical model which focuses solely on what a person can or cannot do.

Despite the fact that the authors do not seem to recognise individual agency in relation to vulnerability, the book sometimes puts an inordinate focus on individuals. The idea of vulnerability, however, can arguably be more usefully applied to groups rather than individuals as otherwise one may run the risk of victimisation. In this way the idea of vulnerability can be the focus of policy initiatives whilst still recognising individuals as capable beings who can be empowered to make positive changes and reduce risky behaviour in their own lives.

The conclusion raises a number of points that would have been interesting to see further explored within the book. This includes the idea of povertyism, 'by which the poor or vulnerable are "othered" and subsequently labelled as "inferior or of lesser value" and constructed "as a source of moral contamination, a threat, an undeserving economic burden"' (p.185). In addition the conclusion raises questions regarding the nature of the relationship between practitioners and vulnerable individuals and groups, especially in terms of power. It does not, however, even briefly explore how these power differentials may impact on the individuals or groups in question.

Despite these criticisms, I would recommend this book for students and practitioners who are beginning to explore the idea of vulnerability and risk. It provides a useful exploration of the traditional left – and right-wing views of vulnerability and many of the chapters make interesting and valid points about how the structure of our society contributes to the creation of vulnerability as well as arguing for more reflexive practice. It also includes suggestions for how we, as practitioners, may help to influence policy developments in ways that are more empowering and conducive to a less 'deficit model' view of people in vulnerable situations.

**Emilia Ohberg is a student on the MA in Culture, Diaspora and Ethnicity at Birkbeck University of London and a qualified youth worker.**

*Ian Fyfe and Stuart Moir*

**Standing At The Crossroads: What Future For Youth Work? A Concept Journal Youth Work Reader**

Concept 2013

ISSN 2042-6

Online publication

Paula Connaughton

CONCEPT'S YOUTH work reader consists of published work over the past decade that reflects challenges, concerns, and new thinking on the directions for practice. The authors suggest youth work is at a metaphorical crossroads and want readers to see the chapters as a reappraisal of the changing directions of youth work, and look at possible future directions. Contributions mainly discuss Scotland's policy directives, but the editors' main ideas and choice of chapters seem to reflect Tony Jeffs' characteristic voice and ability to draw the reader into a critical discussion on the state of contemporary youth work in the UK (Chapter 2). In the chapters that follow Jeffs, there is consensus on the distinctive phase of neoliberalism that has resulted in a shift from the democratic process and principles of youth work to market-driven accountability structures. For students, practitioners and academics, this reader provides an account of the battle for continued existence as a distinct practice, and direction for future thought and action. The reader is therefore an enriching contribution to debate on critical youth work.

The reader consists of twelve chapters with the first an introduction that outlines two principle aims. One aim consists of the debate on neoliberalism and the contours of work with young people that has shifted from voluntary and informal approaches to formal and targeted work. As documented by a number of academics, the youth work sector is complicit in the shaping of a resource-driven intervention, locked in the language and funding of targeting 'NEETs' and 'risk-taking' behaviour (eg. Davies, 2008). The second aim is a reminder that tradition demonstrates youth workers' ability to be innovative and creative in finding spaces and places to practice and challenge the status quo.

In chapter 2, Jeffs offers a detailed account of governments' neoliberal restructuring of society with the drive for a market economy that individualises all areas of people's lives. In the process of restructuring, successive governments have undermined distinctive features of social democracy based on collective bargaining and universal social rights. An abiding concern of many people on the left of politics is the push for privatisation and the stripping of power from local authorities that have helped shift the terms of political debate and curtailed radicalism in youth work. In posing the question 'Whatever happened to radical youth work?', Jeffs engages the reader with historical antecedents of contemporary youth work practice, and suggests that what constitutes radical youth work is not compatible with neoliberalism. He argues that emancipatory practice, consisting of core features of collective formation, struggles to survive in conditions of managerialism that prioritises individualised casework over group work, informal education, and fellowship. By doing

so, he makes the point that youth workers should remind themselves that they are first and foremost ‘democratic educators’, ‘committed not merely to working with young people, but working with them in order to create a better society’. Thus, youth workers need to re-imagine youth work as democratic struggle.

This links well into Chapter 4 by Tony Taylor, which draws radical youth work to a wider radical project. Taylor offers a detailed discussion on what it means to be radical, which goes beyond Jeffs’ notion of (re)invigorating influences of tradition. He suggests that building alliances with similar professions and social movements is important, reclaiming emancipatory praxis with the struggle for direct democracy and class-based political action. Both Jeffs and Taylor agree that youth work itself is a democratic social movement, and the fight for youth work is synonymous with a fight for democracy.

An interesting observation is Dod Forrest’s (chapter 5) assertion that the Coalition government’s ‘Big Society’ ‘empowerment’ agenda underpins recent social policy and austerity cuts. As Forrest illustrates, families have been left to manage ‘their own’ consequences of poverty and inequality with fewer resources and more responsibility for looking after young people facing rising unemployment, and increased incidences of suicide, depression and eating disorders. This ideology of blame, Forrest argues, is a rationale for shifting responsibility of social ills onto the most vulnerable in society. This chapter adds to the consistent reminder that the role of the youth and community worker is essentially that of an educationalist bound by professional values and dialogical approaches to working with young people.

Ian Fyfe’s (chapter 6) contribution to the reader adds more depth to this debate as he reminds us of the tradition of social action in youth work. Fyfe suggests that the language of social action has been co-opted into mainstream youth work, resulting in legitimising volunteering as the ‘new’ policy context of social inclusion, lifelong learning, and citizenship at the expense of its radical meaning.

In returning to Jeffs’ point that youth workers are essentially ‘democratic educators’, other chapters focus on rights, participation, and political democracy. The bitterest pill for many young people is that they feel that they do not have a representative voice; a persistent feeling of powerlessness supported by austerity cuts that have affected them the most, whilst they are socialised into the ‘voting-as-civic-duty’ idea that participation will make the ‘youth’ voice heard. Tammi in Chapter 7 supports Jeffs’ argument that ‘educating’ a young person about the vote is a pointless exercise, as democracy is a lived experience. She argues that youth councils merely legitimise the status quo because of the imbalance of power embedded in consultation processes. Moreover, policy concern about a democratic deficit has managed to shift the concept of ‘citizenship’ as a right, to one that young people have to earn.

For Taylor in Chapter 3, the answer is the struggle for direct democracy in the workplace and the development of critical praxis, contributing to the wider political struggles. However, Tammi's focus on participation advocates social change led by and with young people through critical democratic action, which moves young people from passive actors to 'engaged' activists. Tammi's account has much in common with Brooks' (2009) analysis of European elections that looks at 18-25 voter turnouts. Young people are 'far from being politically apathetic', Brooks (2009:1) argues, they are engaged in a wide range of 'political activities', motivated by a sense of individual purpose and common concern, rather than duty to government.

To an extent, these arguments expose Moir's chapter 'The Democracy Challenge: Young People and Voter Registration' as lacking in critical analysis, as he pays little attention to the fact that representation is the weakest form of democracy. Anybody who is mildly interested in politics would agree that only 'the width of a Rizla paper' separates the main political parties because of the consensus on social rather than economic policy to deal with such matters as the unemployment and underemployment of young people. As Asher and French (2014) comment, corporate media influence and corporate power are central to governance. This analysis leaves Moir's chapter on lowering the age of franchise to 16 years open to comment that it would only act to divert young people from developing innovative new forms of political engagement.

Moving on, Bells' contribution to the reader is his evaluation of the national youth work strategy, which links nicely to Waiton's question on whether youth work has a future. As Waiton investigates the influence of media representations he makes the case that the stigmatised behaviour of 'youth' has become a political issue at a local and national level. The point made by Waiton is that policies such as anti-social behaviour orders have created a 'fear of youth' in wider society. Bell's position is that this has culminated in a conceptual tension between government policy directives and the traditions, methods and approaches of youth work. Hill's and Mackie's chapters (11 and 12) further outline the dangers of allying the purpose of youth work to the economy. Together these chapters support Jeffs' earlier point that youth work sectors are increasingly preparing young people as consumers and producers, obliged to advance economic interests over the importance of association, mutuality, love and care.

In drawing this review to a conclusion, if you are interested in the political economy of youth work this reader is definitely a necessary read, as it contributes to debates on purpose and distinctiveness of youth work, challenges, and contradictions. The uniqueness of this reader is precisely the way that the editors of the Concept Journal have managed to knit themes together to provide a snapshot of policy agendas and current tensions in the field. Most importantly, each paper reminds us that there is an alternative to 'normative' approaches to youth work practice.

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*Kieron Hatton*

### **Social Pedagogy in the UK**

Russell House Publishing 2013

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£14.95 (pbk)

pp. 115

Lesley Buckland

THIS BOOK is an assimilation of theories and practices both in the UK and across Europe that relies heavily on the research of others. It comprises five clearly defined sections and in chapters two to four, specifically considers the theory of social pedagogy, the practice of social pedagogy and the implications for social pedagogy here in the UK, primarily for social work.

In his introduction Hatton suggests that social pedagogy is an approach consisting of three main elements ‘A focus on the importance of relationship...practice which promotes “risk” taking... [and] a focus on the person as a whole’ in the context of both their personal and social environment (p.v). This varies from the view of many of his contemporaries including Cameron and Moss (2011), Petrie (2006) and Smith (2012) who suggest other elements such as reflection, pedagogy and well-being for example, ‘thus making it difficult to find one definition that would encapsulate social pedagogy in its complexity without trivialising it’ (Eichsteller and Holthoff, 2011: 177).

Chapter one looks at the development of social pedagogy in the UK with particular reference to higher education and introduces different elements that appear on a social pedagogy curriculum in higher education institutions in the UK, Netherlands, Norway and Ireland. Hatton notes that although there is a ‘confessed pessimism about the ability of social pedagogy to maintain a professional profile’ in Stockholm (p.1) he does not believe the same can be said about developments in the UK and he goes on to reference a number of institutions in the UK that have made social pedagogy an intrinsic part of their programmes that are valued by the participants.



Chapter two looks at the emergence of social pedagogy theory. It becomes evident to the reader at this point that the intended audience for this book is primarily social workers and that the research considered is narrow in its focus (primarily children and young people in care). Hatton explores the notion of a ‘commitment of attitude, mind set and ethos translated from the German ‘Haltung’ (p.15) which, he indicates, the Social Pedagogy Network Development would see as encompassing elements such as acceptance, playfulness, love, equality and empathy. Hatton particularly notes the use of the word ‘love’ and suggests that this ‘may also present challenges to UK practitioners’ but suggests it should be ‘seen as an example of Roger’s use of “unconditional positive regard”’ (p.15). This resonates with Erich Fromm’s (1995: 36) ideas around love as an art which, as all arts, we need to practice in order to develop; ‘love is an attitude, an orientation of character’.

Hatton begins to introduce us to how the theory looks in practice within various pilot projects involving looked after children here in the UK (this theme is returned to later in the book). The evaluation of the projects provided ‘mixed’ views on the benefits of social pedagogy in practice to children and young people (Berridge et al, 2011: 5). He doesn’t go quite as far as saying what value social pedagogy might have outside of these particular participants, in the field of education or indeed in Children’s Services. This is a bit of a shame as Derbyshire County Council have had some success in terms of improving outcomes for looked after children which they have identified as being intrinsically linked with using social pedagogic practices (Thomas, 2014).

In chapter three, Hatton attempts to provide a summary of ideas of some of the key thinkers often associated with social pedagogy. This is possibly one of the least convincing sections of the book as one is left with the distinct feeling that Hatton has purely summarised other people’s views on certain thinkers, often taking ideas out of context. For example Swile on Dewey was afforded a paragraph (p.27) which did little to encapsulate Dewey’s thinking on education or indeed how this has influenced ideas around social pedagogy.

Although the contents offer us a chapter on Social pedagogy and Youth Work, this comprises only a couple of pages which summarise the report from the Regional Youth Work Unit North East and the University of Sunderland (2010) entitled, ‘A study on the understanding of social pedagogy and its potential implications for youth work practice and training’. This research was prompted by the emergence of social pedagogy across the UK, particularly in residential children’s homes, following the Children’s Workforce Strategy 2005. What emerges from this report is that youth work practitioners and managers are quite familiar with the ideas and concepts of social pedagogy:

Social pedagogy underpins good quality youth work and social work practice, so it is already happening here - we just haven’t called it social pedagogy. The key benefit for children and young people is to be regarded as competent individuals who are treated with respect and supported / enabled to learn and develop as they grow into adults. (RYWUNE/UoS, 2010: 33)

According to an integrated services manager:

*Good youth workers have always put the young person at the centre of their work...They have the young people helping in terms of planning. They give them choices. They try not to bring their own prejudices into their work... Good youth work is based on social pedagogy. (ibid: 56).*

Hatton cites The Commission for Social Care Inspection (2006): ‘to reach their potential an individual must be allowed – and supported – to take risks, have new experiences and make mistakes’ (p.16). ‘How then’, he asks, ‘can we align youth work with an approach which can integrate social pedagogy in a positive way?’ (p.69). This comes across as a little patronising and reveals a value base that is more akin to social work than youth work, which sees young people as deficit and is far more risk adverse than youth work which has always offered opportunities for personal growth and development through ‘risk assessed’ rather than ‘risk free’ activities.

As the author clearly states this is an ‘introductory text’ and one of its key strengths is that it does not claim to be the definitive book on social pedagogy, but it also offers suggestions for further reading. Whilst I was delighted to see a chapter on social pedagogy and youth work (which is so often overlooked) this revealed that the author did not have a sound understanding of youth work in the UK (or indeed community learning and development, as became evident in a later chapter). Instead of which he spent most of the time looking at practice in Europe.

The key thing that was missing for me in this introductory text was an emphasis on the teaching and learning. Although the suggestion of social pedagogy fostering learning opportunities was apparent throughout the text, there was no reference to exploring any of these processes. This is possibly a good ‘wrap around’ text for social workers about to embark on their degree. The exercises at the end of each chapter structure space for reflection, and signposting to other key resources and texts is something that this book does well.

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*Margaret Melrose and Jenny Pearce*

**Critical Perspectives On Child Sexual Exploitation and Related Trafficking**

Palgrave Macmillan 2013

ISBN 978-1-137-29408-1

£22.99 (pbk)

pp.198

David Palmer

THIS COLLECTION is a fascinating and wide ranging exploration of the multi-faceted nature of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). Whether an experienced practitioner or a newcomer to the field, the book opens up perspectives that not only reveal the complex nature of the field but also places the child at the centre of the debate whilst seeking to determine what policy and practice developments are best suited to address a fast moving and emotive subject.

At a time when opinions on CSE and related trafficking are largely constructed in society through headline grabbing cases, the only thing we can be certain of is that we do not know the extent of the problem here in the UK let alone in a more global context. According to the National Crime Agency the number of UK born children identified as being trafficked for sexual exploitation more than doubled in 2013. This book is a timely reminder of the increase in knowledge over the last decade but also of what work there is still to be done.

The book is very well organised and accessible, beginning with an overview of the topics covered and arguments presented in each of the eleven chapters. The sense is that we are all on a journey of discovery together; eschewing an overly didactic approach, the overall style is one the presentation of stimulating and thought provoking ideas that successfully encourage the reader to question their

own assumptions and to deconstruct some of the ideas and opinions that have gained a foothold in the debate.

Central to this is the language around CSE which Margaret Melrose contends has stretched the meaning of the term with resultant inconsistencies in its application. In this first chapter, Melrose challenges the Western-centric nature of the debate with its pervasive definitions of childhood and of female sexuality. She calls into question the construction of young people as always passive victims and argues that the individualising nature of the CSE discourse obscures the wider social and cultural circumstances that governments should be addressing as root causes of CSE and the ‘debilitating processes... such as family discord... and physical abuse’ that may drive young people into a vulnerable position (p.12). She goes on to say that the lack of options for such children may mean they act in an expedient manner in an attempt to gain control; they may just be victims of circumstances.

An intriguing chapter on gangs serves to drive home aspects of this latter point. John Pitts argues, using helpful testimonies, that gang relationships are exploitative and that ‘gangsta’ culture places great emphasis on sexual prowess. As is true with the young men, young women involved in gangs are often prepared to engage in sexually exploitative relationships as a price to pay for a degree of security and a sense of belonging as they emerge from troubling family circumstances. Pitts goes on to contrast this ‘soft determinism’ posited by Matza with the ‘hard determinism’ of Pierre Bourdieu. Pitts leaves us wanting more as he compares normal teenage behaviour with that of gangs concluding that the two are not poles apart.

These ideas are further developed by Carlene Firmin in a chapter looking at peer on peer sexual exploitation using an apposite case study to illustrate her point that the behaviour described can be interpreted in different ways and each of these may trigger a different policy and operational response. Firmin proposes a new working definition of CSE to help address the ‘multiple levels of exploitation at play’ in peer on peer abuse and sexual exploitation (p.51).

The centrality of consent as a concept is a common but largely invisible thread in much of the foregoing work. Jenny Pearce argues that too often young people feel they are blamed by society for their abuse and that part of that culpability revolves around the fuzziness of the term ‘consent’. A ‘young person’s capacity for consent can be abused, exploited and manipulated’ (p.53) and Pearce goes on to propose four categories of abused consent which increase the vulnerability of a young person, then proposes a social model to help practitioners begin to contextualise consent.

In Chapter 5, Helen Beckett uses research data from Northern Ireland to focus on a specific group that are disproportionately represented in statistics on CSE – looked after children. She is at pains to point out that while there are systemic changes that will help protect children, the true blame lies with those who would seek to harm children. Beckett looks at some of the factors, and the

reciprocity between them, that predispose children to the possibility of abuse (a theme taken up in the following chapter in which Isabelle Brodie looks at CSE policy development in Scotland). Beckett skilfully gets under the skin of statistics and policy to establish the centrality of the individual child and the importance of their voice in any intervention. An excellent chapter by Lucie Shuker further pursues these themes, arguing that a holistic approach to a child's security is needed if concern for their physical safety leads to them being denied relational and psychological security. She proposes a model of safety for young people in care affected by sexual exploitation.

The wide ranging nature of this volume is further exemplified through Nicola Sharp's chapter probing the position of black and minority ethnic women within the discourse. She argues that the particular lived experiences of these groups are less well understood given the uncertain nature of statistics around forced marriage, young runaways and children that 'go missing', circumstances that lead to a heightened risk of CSE.

Recent discourse around vulnerable children has explored the nature of young people's agency when decisions are being taken about their future well-being. Camille Warrington's chapter makes an appeal for agency for a group of people whose lives have been defined by 'limited choices and abuse of power' (p.111). She highlights the astounding fact that within the context of CSE, 'there is currently no literature or research focussing on young people's experiences of receiving support'. Using personal and insightful testimonies from young people, Warrington challenges current practice.

The final two chapters offer interesting perspectives on CSE and trafficking. Lorena Arocha is particularly adept at illustrating how governments address the symptoms of a wider malaise (global social problems) by treating them as single policy goals thus avoiding the policy decisions that might address CSE and trafficking at source. Patricia Hynes examines the role of organisations embedded within ethnic minority communities in helping to understand the more nuanced conditions within which CSE can develop. Interesting quotes and case studies assist our understanding, with a reference to the Victoria Climbié case when interventions in a neglect case did not occur due to the misunderstanding of cultural issues.

This book cleverly offers multi-disciplinary appeal while maintaining a freshness that is both stimulating and challenging.

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*Peter Kraftl, John Horton and Faith Tucker (eds.)*

**Critical Geographies of Childhood and Youth: Contemporary Policy and Practice**  
Policy Press 2012

ISBN: 978-1-84742-845-5

£24.99 (pbk)  
pp. 296

Graeme Tiffany

THE INTRODUCTORY statement, ‘that researchers, policy-makers and practitioners working with children and young people should be aware of how spaces are important in/for their work’, is identified as one of the key challenges emerging from children’s geographies. This book takes on this challenge passionately and effectively. On reading, those who work with children and young people will undoubtedly conclude geography matters. It matters because, as is convincingly argued, this work is better understood when it considers the spaces and places in which it takes place, and, especially, how, and by whom, these spaces are controlled. Other concepts, such as scale, networks and mobilities, also feature. All can have a profound significance in the lives of young people. But there’s complexity also, which is why geography has engendered so many sub-disciplines: from the human, to the social and the cultural, and beyond. A strength of the book is in showing that these geographies act as windows to other understandings, from how time works, to politics and economics too. This means the reader does not need to be a geographer to value its findings. But its greatest contribution is in bearing witness to the realities of childhood and youth in society, and how these lives are affected by policy and practice.

Several chapters expose worrying effects; others are testament of the good. As might be anticipated, the former outweigh the latter. Notwithstanding, they enlighten us, which is important when the drip, drip, drip of policy affects practice in ways we may not have recognised. Most startling is the impact of neoliberalising trends across the education and welfare landscapes. Neoliberalism is, without understatement, extraordinarily difficult to pin down and has some immunity to criticism because of this. But, as Gus John (2006) persuasively argues, it is by analysing examples of what actually happens in practice that the workings of power and hegemony can be revealed.

This book offers examples aplenty. Contributing geographers show how the abandonment of Building Schools for the Future (BSF) was synchronous with the promotion of Free Schools (in effect, a deliberate strategy to liberate the state from spending on new educational spaces). Free Schools’ use of existing buildings might seem like a virtuous take on austerity, but what happened to the rationale that classrooms can be profoundly important in shaping the lives of individual children and young people? Then, evidence of how policy increasingly moves youth work into school. Isabel Cartwright illustrates a consequence: ‘informal education may be constrained by the policies embedded in formal education settings’. (If it looks like a duck and walks like a duck...) Yet more examples demonstrate policy’s preference for a future-oriented conception of childhood. Based on constructions of the child as in deficit, as an incomplete adult, in need of development, a person not yet realised as human capital, the rationale is created for the ever more stringent control of children and young people’s education, invariably through the governance of the spaces they inhabit. Even the linguistic turn in policy from ‘enabling aspirations’ to ‘raising aspirations’ is,

when subjected to geographical analysis, revealed to have these behaviour management tendencies.

The book also takes us further afield: to the externally influenced youth policy environment of Malawi, to policy on HIV/AIDS affecting children in South Africa, and to young offender institutions in America. Nowhere escapes these neoliberalising trends. Closer to home, consider the euphemistically labelled school 'stay-on-site' policies: are they a defensible response to the 'junk food mothers' who incurred our opprobrium as they, seemingly, put two fingers up to Jamie's School Dinners in passing food through the school fence? Or, as often happens when the threads of detail emerge, was this a desperate response to the lack of participative geographies in 'institutions characterised by hierarchical, disciplinary and ritualised relations in enclosed sites' (p.31)? (In this case, parents were excluded from the space of the 'School Nutrition Action Group').

What is not better informed by the geographical concepts of space, place, territory and mobility? And yet it's the identification of 'spatial injustices' that is most disturbing. Talk of social mobility clearly masks social immobility: what does it say about efforts to widen participation in our universities when less than a fifth of entrants come from disadvantaged areas and fully sixty percent come from the most advantaged? Conversely, youth homelessness policies insist the vulnerable move from their localities, with the effect that support networks are fractured and the stigma of problematic outsider is cast upon them. Stigmatisation is compounded by place; many 'locals' distance themselves from consultation regimes, and retreat into the private sphere (Slater, 2013). How authentic then is the claimed commitment to regeneration and community development, especially when neoliberalism's subliminal narrative, that you 'have to get out to get on', works its magic?

We see how school choice policies influence the leap-frogging of local provision; walking to school becomes a thing of the past as the car becomes needed to get there. Fear and authority conspire to constrain children's freedom to play outside, the youth's mere presence in public space now a problem. How ironic then that the 'macro spatial effects' of these restrictive policy geographies are likely to contribute to, rather than prevent, the obesity time bomb, inhibit the development of street literacy, and exacerbate other social ills? We can conclude: social exclusion is a geographical concept. Which makes it all the more worrying when we realise that, whilst policy has a centrist, national, spin, the scale of operation of youth participation is invariably the local. Have we been seduced, has our capacity for influence been diminished, by localism?

Thankfully, we are treated to examples that remind us that 'local engagement is never just local'. There is some solace in that. But are these examples too few in this book? Might it be a little ambivalent? Certainly it offers hope. But this appears, somewhat ironically, to be limited by an apparently self-imposed geography of ambition: in its concluding remarks the book asks if we can find and create new spaces but also opportunities within existing policy frameworks that enable progressive values to flourish and 'find moments of joyfulness or compassion within them'.

Therein the frustration, might we have to settle for only moments and the occasional space within all of this to act in a progressive way? A greater play of the conclusion that policy is, at best, inefficient and, at worst, detrimental to young people could have laid the foundation for where we go now. But perhaps it is there in this important book. In exploring the many geographical wrongs (and some rights) the signal exists to make geography public, social, participative and democratic. Thus, the citizenship education of (and that is) informal education comes out peculiarly well-placed to inform a more hopeful future. It has the potential to resist, challenge and reclaim the policy spaces in which participation has been reduced to mere taking part in an economic project judged inviolable by its adherents. Informal education can, and does, work through the local, by encouraging and enabling mobilities and an 'outward-looking education'. And it can, and does, inform and affect that beyond. A concluding, if perhaps odd, injunction is made: 'in whatever form might be appropriate in whatever contexts'. This seems to invoke the spirit of both radical geography and informal education, that nothing is definitive and that the world is all the better for that.

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*Kate Sapin*

### **Essential Skills for Youth Work Practice**

Sage 2013

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£24.99 (pbk)

pp. 280

Paul Davies

AT A TIME where the future of youth work as a distinct service seems a pipe dream and those who remain with the profession adjust to new ways of working and unexpected changes in careers, it becomes easy to forget that at its root youth work is a unique, exciting and yet simple way of working with and alongside young people. Kate Sapin's second edition of the *Essential Skills for Youth Work Practice* therefore is a real tonic for the troops.



The main purpose of this text is to provide insight and a reference to students of youth work. This is not a radical text by any means, rather an A to Z of youth work the equivalent of one of those iconic car manuals. It focuses upon the basic skills of youth work from starting a relationship through to managing a youth work project. Perhaps in the hope that the current state of affairs will pass promptly, the writer carefully avoids any reference to the current state of youth work, though it does highlight the difficulties of delivery within the restrictive practice of targeted work and the ever increasing variance between the practice of youth work and the demands of central and local government. The question is, with youth work facing an uncertain future, does this book remain relevant to the modern student?

You will find the usual staples of any good youth work textbook including Maslow, Tuckman, Johari's window et al, sprinkled with contemporary references from Banks, Davies etc. It is very easy to become churlish or cynical, although as an experienced youth worker who has perhaps lost touch with the initial reasons for choosing this profession it is rather comforting to read. Too often youth work seeks to defend itself by proclaiming itself to be something unique, almost magical, and beyond the understanding of mere mortals. In fact as this book confirms it is a fairly straightforward process and when practised at its best can be the most effective method to engage young people.

What Sapin emphasises well is the need for youth work to be set within both an ethical and professional framework. She is clear that all youth work starts where the young person is and is strengthened through building a relationship of mutual trust and respect. At the same time Sapin is clear to point out the need to retain professional boundaries and to create support structures which both protect and challenge the individual youth worker. As youth services are cut and the management of services placed with different professionals, some with no background in working with young people, it is this which probably concerns me most. Sapin constantly reminds us of the need for good supervision even including a chapter entitled 'Using Supervision'.

The book breaks down into three categories, 'Building Relationships', 'Working Together' and 'Sustaining Development', each consisting of four to five chapters. This takes us on a journey from engaging young people, through developing group work through to the skills needed to maintain a project. Its orderly process makes this a straightforward book to follow and easy to dip into thus aiding the busy student to locate the relevant section. Sapin uses numerous diagrams and text boxes to explain or list essential items and also makes good use of practice examples to emphasise her points. I was particularly impressed by the fact that she has included examples of poor practice, such as the worker subconsciously judging young people in their project and another who sought funding even when the outcomes required did not match its project. Being aware that we are all prone to these types of mistakes is warming in a competitive environment when workers are often fearful of expressing their failures.

When I was starting out on my youth work career this book would have been a very useful read. Indeed I would say that it is 'essential' and therefore does achieve the objective of its title. The difficulty is whether there are workers looking to build a career in youth work. As Programme Director for Community and Youth Work Studies at the University of Manchester I suspect that Sapin is better placed to answer that question than I (though maybe the fact that the course has subsequently been dropped by the University is evidence to the point). Personally, whilst I remain passionate about youth work and am saddened to see the devastation that has been heaped upon it over the past few years in the name of austerity, I am uncertain whether I would choose it as a career option at this stage.

Therefore in conclusion I would suggest this is a very enjoyable read for all new youth workers and some old jaded experienced youth workers to use as a barometer against their own practice. Whether it will find a market, only time will tell. Presumably as it is a second edition it has already been a success and maybe future sales will be an indication of whether youth work is still something to study. I hope it does as it deserves it.

**Paul Davies is a qualified youth worker who has worked for both Havering and Westminster councils. He currently works as a commissioner with Lambeth Council.**

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