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Who Cares What Works?

John Pitts

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), and its derivatives, are the central plank of the 'What Works' crusade that has transformed professional practice in youth and adult criminal justice systems, and adjacent areas of work with young people in the UK in the last decade and a half. Its lack of theoretical coherence and the paucity of evidence of effectiveness, notwithstanding, CBT continues to exert a formidable influence over practice development in these areas. This paper argues that CBT's growing centrality to work with troublesome youth derives not from its proven preventative or rehabilitative efficacy but as a means whereby government policy, state services and professional practice can be articulated to achieve politically necessary systemic change.

Keywords: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Evidence Based Practice, Youth Justice, Managerialism

A recent article assessing the impact of Home Office and Youth Justice Board cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) programmes repeats the, by now familiar, claim that CBT can be effective in reducing re-offending (Cann et al, 2006). In fact, on closer reading it is clear that the data presented in the article actually contradicts such an optimistic conclusion. Indeed, it confirms what critics of CBT have been saying for some time: that CBT-based rehabilitative programmes, particularly when administered to children and young people, seldom 'work' as intended; that drop-out rates are very high; that such dropping-out increases the likelihood of re-conviction; and that even in those rare instances where an improvement in re-conviction rates follows an intervention, we cannot tell whether or not it was CBT that 'worked', for whom it 'worked' or why it 'worked'? (Raynor, 2001; Bateman, 2005; Cann et al, 2003; 2006). So why doesn't it work?

Thirteen Problems with CBT

1. The problem of the risk factor paradigm
The theoretical basis of CBT, as it is applied in the youth and adult justice systems in the UK, derives from the 'control' and 'self-control' theories developed, most notably by Gottfriedson and Hirschi (1990), in the USA from the 1960s. The 'risks' targeted by CBT are derived from statistical correlates of factors which occur commonly in the lives of young people involved in crime, but far less so in the lives of those who are not (Reckless, 1967). However the 'risk factor paradigm' does not provide a theory of criminal causality, not least because, as UK researchers have noted, it has proved impossible to determine which risk factors are causes, which are effects and how they interact to produce a criminal act (West and Farrington, 1973; Farrington, 2003). Because of this, 'risk factors' have proved to be far

less accurate predictors of future offending than is popularly supposed. In the Cambridge study, which is the key UK reference point for the proponents of the paradigm, for example:

> *A majority of the juvenile delinquents, 53 in fact, did not belong to the high-risk group and would not have been predicted.* (West and Farrington, 1973: 94)

The problems associated with predicting future delinquency from risk factors are underlined in a recent worldwide study commissioned by the US Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Loeber, Farrington and Petechuk, 2003), which found that:

> *The majority of pre-schoolers with such problems (aggressive, inattentive or sensation-seeking behaviour) do not go on to become offenders ... Few tools are available to distinguish between those youths who will continue with behaviours that may lead them to become child delinquents.* (p.15)

As with the meta-analyses discussed below, the risk factor paradigm actually offers a far less robust basis for effective intervention than is usually supposed.

2. The problem of meta-analyses

The empirical basis for CBT programmes in youth and adult justice derives from North American meta-analyses of relevant research which purport to offer a synopsis of the key messages for practice. One of the most frequently cited meta-analyses is that undertaken by Mark Lipsey (1995) who synthesised the findings of 443 individual programmes for juvenile offenders in order to discover 'what works'. However, as George Mair (2004) has noted, this endeavour confronted many difficulties; variation in definitions, measures of success and the quality of the programmes, being not least amongst them. Beyond this, many of the studies under scrutiny dated back to the 1950s and 1960s, casting doubt upon their contemporary relevance. Moreover, because of variation between programmes, important inferences were sometimes drawn from fairly insubstantial data. As Mair (2004:7) notes:

> *While the meta-analyses of Andrews and his colleagues and Lipsey are certainly suggestive, it is difficult to see how a national programme could be constructed out of them – especially a programme that claims to be evidence-based.*

Considering developments in the adult justice system, and in particular the HMIP report 'Evidence Based Practice' (Chapman and Hough, 1998) which, despite its title, does not have much to say about practice, and the Home Office Report 'Reducing Offending' (Goldblatt and Lewis, 1998), Mair concludes:

> *It would seem then that research has had little to contribute to the development of the 'What Works' initiative. While the rhetoric behind 'What Works' would have us believe that it is firmly grounded in evidence, the reality is rather different.*

3. The problem of the disempowered subject

Proponents of CBT in mainstream psychotherapy argue that it is a more 'empowering' treatment than more traditional therapies because unlike psychoanalysis, for example, CBT locates the power to define the problem and choose the remedy in the hands of the service-

user (Hollon and Beck, 2004). They also suggest that such empowerment is a key to its success. However, in the criminal justice system the definition of the problem to be solved, as well as the methods by which it is to be solved, is placed squarely in the hands of the treatment agent or agency.

The programmes themselves are almost always prescriptive, indeed scripted, allowing little or no scope for innovation or deviation. Thus, the 'empowerment', which most CBT therapists claim to be central to its success, is negated, leaving its subjects to play a passive and, theory would suggest, ineffective, role in treatment.

4. The problem of therapeutic penetration

CBT is used extensively in the treatment of relatively minor psychological disorders, but far less so in the treatment of more deep-seated psychological problems (Hollon and Beck, 2004). Yet recent research indicates that many of those who persist in crime and, as a result, find themselves at the 'business end' of the criminal justice system, suffer from serious psycho-social disorders (Jones and Pitts 2004; Taylor, 2006). This being the case, it is at least unlikely that CBT, as currently practiced, would constitute an appropriate intervention for these young people.

5. The problem of identification

Psychologists, from Anna Freud onwards, have argued that where the psychological effects of violence and abuse are unresolved, the self-concept of the abused child may come to coalesce around a sense of powerlessness and acute vulnerability, the corollary of which is the ascription of extraordinary power to both the perpetrator and the 'generalised other'. Faced with the intolerable feelings of powerless and vulnerability this engenders, the defence mechanism of 'identification with the aggressor' may be activated, leading the child to opt for the role of perpetrator to dispel the anxiety inherent in the role of victim (Hotaling et al, 1989; Lewis et al, 1989)

Being wedded to a perspective that sees criminality as a product of a failure to develop the requisite cognitive skills for conformity, CBT, in the shape of offending behaviour and anger management programmes, focuses exclusively on the child as offender; the risks they pose to their victims and the suffering their behaviour has caused. Paradoxically, this is precisely the treatment strategy that will give comfort to the child caught up in identification with the aggressor, because it will reaffirm their identity as a powerful perpetrator rather than a vulnerable victim. Thus the problem of their criminality is compounded rather than ameliorated by the treatment.

6. The problem of evidential relevance

The CBT criminal justice programmes that provide the evidence-base for the current tranche of CBT programmes in the UK criminal justice system are those developed and evaluated at the Rideau Correctional and Treatment Centre, Ontario, Canada, which, as its Chief Psychologist observes:

> *... is blessed with two things that I think many facilities do not have. One is a strong tradition of being very research oriented ... The other thing that we have at Rideau, which lots of places don't have, is a critical mass of highly trained, highly skilled clinicians*

whose main objective is to deliver programmes to inmates. We have a 9-person psychology team and a 4-person social work team ... When you put that many people together who have all that expertise in one area, they can get very critical, and they can be quite inventive in terms of the kinds of things they start to do when they're delivering programmes to inmates. (Armstrong, 2001: 94)

Yet, in UK criminal justice practice, probation and youth justice personnel continue to take programmes 'off the shelf' on the erroneous assumption that 'one size' will 'fit all'. It would therefore seem unlikely that the programmes would produce the same results as those generated at Rideau. Even if prison or probation officers or youth justice workers were aware of the conditions for effective treatment, specified by Rideau, they would be unable to build them into their practice because of the 'performance management' regime in which they operate that above all else, appears to require uniformity of treatment.

7. The problem of radical differentiation

The early exponents of CBT-based Reasoning and Rehabilitation programmes in North America maintained that their research revealed offenders to be different from non-offenders 'in literally hundreds of ways' (Ross and Fabiano, 1988, Farrington, 1996). These differences, they argue, reside in distinctive attitudes, beliefs and modes of thought, which are peculiar to 'offenders' and derive from their incapacity to reason correctly. However, the data upon which Ross and Fabiano's characterisation of offenders is based was originally gathered from older, 'career', offenders with substantial experience of imprisonment. Curiously, over time, the alleged characteristics of this extraordinary group of offenders have come to be generalised by Ross, his colleagues and a subsequent generation of cognitive-behavioural psychologists, to an ever-larger population of offenders until, in contemporary accounts they are represented as the characteristics of offenders per se (Gardiner and Nesbitt, 1996). Moreover, it is not at all clear that the characteristics attributed to the original group of 'old lags' studied by Ross and Fabiano indicate that they were suffering from some form of cognitive malfunction. It is equally possible that these attitudes and beliefs were a product of what Sutherland (1939) called differential association.

8. The problem of differential association

A prison inmate cited by Donald Cressey (1973) explains what happens when people who have offended are thrust together in jail:

... some nebulous something happens to a man between the time he checks into and checks out of a prison; some inculcation of the essence of bitterness and social antagonism, an inculcation which is not merely a veneering process but a deep inoculation. And this something spawns a man who is invariably less desirable as a citizen than he was at the time he stood before the bar of justice (p.119).

Cressey writes:

I think the 'nebulous something' which happens to an inmate is participation in a convict subculture that has developed an esprit de corps with crime, hustling, extortion and violation of official prison rules as common interests. (cited in Cressey (ibid) p.119).

If this is so, rather than simply focusing upon the malfunctioning cognitive machinery of prisoners we should, perhaps, turn our attention to the processes of acculturation and institutionalisation fostered within penal institutions which, in certain circumstances, spill over into the communities in which some persistent offenders live (Wacquant, 2002).

9. The problem of the fallacy of autonomy

CBT is rooted in the belief that the problem of crime is reducible to the cognitive proclivities and deficiencies of the criminal. Thus, for CBT aficionados, the problems of a high crime neighbourhood must ultimately be explicable in terms of the shortcomings of the neighbours. Elliott Currie (1986) refers to this type of reasoning as the `fallacy of autonomy'; the belief that what goes on inside the heads of offenders or what happens in their families can be separated analytically from the larger socio-cultural context in which individuals and families are embedded. Indeed, as Malcolm Gladwell (2000) has observed, a child is probably better off in a good neighbourhood with a troubled family than in a troubled neighbourhood with a good family, and a growing body of US research suggests that neighbourhood of residence may well have a far more profound impact upon serious youth offending than the cognitive skills of perpetrators or the quality of their parenting. (Jones et al, 2000)

10. The problem of the categorical error

At the core of cognitive behavioural programmes is an assumption that offenders can be taught new cognitive skills which will enable them to anticipate the consequences of their behaviour for themselves and others, and make 'appropriate' moral choices. Thus, it is assumed that if they can think 'straight' they will go 'straight'. In so reasoning, the purveyors of these programmes, like the eighteenth century classicists (Taylor, Walton and Young, 1973), conflate rational, logical, thinking with moral, law-abiding, thinking and, in so doing commit a categorical error. They fail to distinguish between the cognitive 'machinery' which enables logical thought, and the ethical choices made possible by a capacity for logical thought. The assumption that people engage in crime because they lack a capacity for logical thought is, at least, tendentious. Some may, but in reality people often resort to crime, violence or deception because, in the circumstances in which they find themselves, it 'works' for them. The recent Enron scandal is, of course, a case in point. Thus such involvement in crime, while being morally reprehensible, is nonetheless rational.

11. The problem of human reflexivity

Cognitive behavioural therapy is predicated upon the assumption that if the correct treatment dosage can be applied to the subject, cognitive-behavioural change will somehow follow. Yet as Pawson and Tilley (1997) argue, a critical component in behavioural change is the motivation and predisposition of offenders. They write:

> *Social programs involve a continual round of interactions and opportunities and decisions. Regardless of whether they are born of inspiration or ignorance, the subject's choice at each of these junctures will frame the extent and nature of change. What we are describing here is not just the moment when the subject signs up to enter a program but the entire learning process. The act of volunteering merely marks a moment in a whole evolving pattern of choice. Potential subjects will consider a program (or not), co-operate closely (or not), stay the course (or not), learn lessons (or not), apply the lessons*

(or not). Each one of these decisions will be internally complex and take its meaning according to the chooser's circumstances. (p. 38)*:*

12. The problem of the legitimation of incarceration

In persuading practitioners and sentencers that CBT could 'work' in both institutional and non-institutional settings, government, and mainstream criminology also indicated that the once discredited institutions of the 'secure estate' had, as a result of the establishment of CBT-based programmes, been transformed into settings in which elusive offenders could be profitably subjected to proven rehabilitative treatment. In so doing, government and criminology bestowed a spurious legitimacy upon these demonstrably criminogenic, and not infrequently brutal, institutions (Goldson and Peters, 2000; Wilson and Moore, 2004; Bateman, 2005). And this has precipitated a huge increase in the numbers of children and young people consigned to custodial confinement over the past decade (Bateman, 2005). Moreover, as the populations of these institutions have expanded, so the youngsters entering them have become younger and less problematic (Burnett and Appleton, 2004; Bateman, 2005).

13. The problem of whether or not CBT actually 'works'

Need and Risk

Recent Home Office evaluations have done little to settle the question of effectiveness. Simon Merrington (2004), commenting on his own evaluations, observes that there is no home-grown evidence that the two key principles, underpinning CBT:

- That criminogenic needs should be distinguished from non-criminogenic needs and should constitute a major focus for intervention (the need principle)
  AND
- That service levels should be matched to an offender's risk of reoffending, with higher risk individuals receiving more intensive services (the risk principle)

when operationalised in practice have any discernible effects on reconviction rates.

Not least of the difficulties in evaluating community-based CBT programmes in the UK has been that 'offending behaviour' groups have tended to under-recruit and even when they have recruited sufficient numbers initially, it has not been long before participants have drifted away.

Those who complete programmes and desist from offending tend to have offended less often and less seriously, are seldom embedded in a criminal way of life, and usually have jobs and stable family lives. The irony is, of course, that these are the kinds of offenders who, by definition, are least likely to be the victims of the faulty thinking and maladaptive behaviour that offending behaviour programmes are designed to correct. It is also the case that, with or without the CBT programme, reconviction rates amongst this group are low (Roberts, 2004).

In programmes with adults in a prison setting, results were initially promising. An evaluation, published in 2002, showed significantly lower reconviction rates for prisoners attending cognitive skills courses (up to 14%) than for the control groups (Friendship et al,

2002). However, two subsequent evaluations revealed that this 'treatment effect' had not been sustained (Falshaw et al, 2003; Cann et al, 2003).

Young people and CBT

Between 1999 and 2002, the Youth Justice Board established a development fund, £3.9m of which was allocated to 23 cognitive-behavioural projects. Of these, the national evaluators classified 15 as working with 'persistent offenders'. As with adult groups, an early problem was that referrals were less than a third of the number anticipated. Completion rates were also relatively low at 47%. Re-offending, by contrast, appeared to be high, with 71% of completers re-offending within 12 months (Feilzer et al, 2004).

The most recent evaluation of cognitive skills programmes, based on the largest sample, that includes a cohort of 'young offenders', found no significant differences in re-offending rates between participants and non-participants (Cann et al, 2003; 2006).

Evidential ambiguities

So how can we square these results with the Home Office's oft-citied evidence that CBT yields reductions in re-offending against 'predicted outcomes' of over 20% (Jennings, 2003), a claim echoed in YJB guidance to YOT staff?

In fact, what this study actually reveals is not the claimed 22.5% reduction in the rate of re-offending, but a fall from the baseline 'adjusted predicted rate' of 7.7%. The 22.5% is the reduction in the predicted number of future offences prevented by the CBT programmes.

Nonetheless, this would still appear to represent a significant achievement but as the Audit Commission (2004) has pointed out, these reductions are far from uniform, with most of the interventions following pre-court and lower tariff interventions with low-level, often first time offenders, where desistance rates have typically been around 70% (Audit Commission, 2004). Indeed, the more substantial community penalties, usually imposed upon more persistent or serious offenders, register a slight increase in re-offending, which the Audit Commission attributes to the relatively low levels of contact time associated with such disposals.

The distortions inherent in such studies are compounded by selective presentation of the results by the YJB, until a recent change at the top, and the Home Office. In their account of the YJB's history of 'news management', Burnett and Appleton (2004), point to the ways evidence derived from the YOTs has often been presented selectively and, on occasions, simply misrepresented, to paint a far more optimistic picture than is warranted. Aidan Wilcox (2003), in his assessment of the fate of his own evaluations comes to a similar conclusion, suggesting that the motivation behind this misrepresentation may well be the need on the part of the Home Office and the YJB, to attract continued political and financial support. Whatever else this is, evidence-led policy and evidence-based practice it is not.

The quest goes on

One might have thought that the abundant evidence that CBT seldom 'works' as intended, that drop-out rates are very high and that dropping-out increases the likelihood of re-conviction (Raynor, 2001), would drive government and its researchers 'back to the drawing board'. Yet, academics and system managers alike often dismiss these apparently formidable problems as some kind of 'teething problem'; not a failure of the 'theory' of CBT but a failure of 'implementation' (ie 'don't blame us, blame the practitioners').

These protestations notwithstanding, the evidence appears to point unwaveringly to the conclusion that CBT has been an expensive failure. Yet, if CBT does not 'work', in the sense that this is usually understood, how can we account for its continuing centrality to government policy, professional practice and criminological research and scholarship?

CBT and the Reconfiguration of the British Criminal Justice System

From the late 1970s, we have witnessed the gradual demise of what Garland (2001) has termed the 'solidarity project' and the emergence of a new kind of politics in which earlier social democratic accounts of the relationship between the individual and society and the citizen and the state have been turned on their heads (Pitts, 2003). Now, the responsibility of the state to its citizens is de-emphasised in favour of the duties owed by citizens to the state and society. Increasingly, the state eschews responsibility for creating the social and economic pre-conditions for effective citizenship while continually seeking fresh political mandates to act robustly to discipline and contain those unable to meet their civic and economic obligations (Rose, 1997; Bourdieu, 1998). Slavoj Zizeck (2000) writes:

> *Contemporary politics is similarly constrained by an unacknowledged impossibility. Tony Blair and Bill Clinton make minor changes to the style and presentation of public life but leave unanswered broader questions of how society should be governed ... genuine political action is virtually impossible now because capitalism has won the ideological war and nobody is seriously questioning its values or rules. But just like postmodern culture persuades itself that it lives in an age of freedom so politicians mask their limitations with a facade of energetic political activity.* (p.40)

These ideological shifts have precipitated fundamental changes within the criminal justice system, transforming:

* The relationship between government and the electorate
* The relationship between government and the criminal justice establishment
* The relationship between government and the criminological establishment
* The relationship between the criminal justice agency and the criminal justice professional
* The relationship between the criminal justice professional and their knowledge base
* The relationship between the criminal justice professional and the subject of their interventions

And CBT has played a decisive role in each of these transformations.

The changed relationship between government and the electorate

In this changed world, crime has became an electoral hermetic, serving to solidify and galvanise an otherwise socially disparate and politically diffident electoral constituency. Hence, in 1997, New Labour opted for an electoral strategy of 'suburbanisation', calculating that to gain and hold political power they had to get to 'Worcester woman' rather than 'Clapham claimant' or 'Jarrow job seeker'. And if 'Worcester woman' was to change her voting habits, New Labour strategists reasoned she must be made to feel that the government would contain the threat posed to her property, person and peace of mind, not to mention the educational opportunities of her children, by the roughly spoken, badly behaved young people who haunted the streets of the inner city and the estates on its periphery. Thus, youth crime and the reform of the youth justice system became a central plank of New Labour's 'covenant' with the electorate; the 'five pledges' upon which its 1997 election strategy was built.

In order to 'deliver' to 'Worcester Woman', and any number of other psephologically derived new constituencies, New Labour embraced what Mair (2000) has called a strategy of 'good governance', rooted in the idea that what matters to modern electorates is the technical and managerial competence of governments rather than their ideological commitments. Thus policy must be evidence-led and the interventions that flow from policy must be evidence-based. But, if the degree of accountability required by good governance is to be achieved, government must establish 'robust' mechanisms for ensuring that policy goes all the way down to the ground, unimpaired by managerial drift or professional self-interest. For this to happen, the prescribed interventions must be of a kind that can be micro-managed, measured and audited to establish whether government has 'delivered'. And, for these reasons, CBT-based 'offending behaviour programmes' or their derivatives have been utilized extensively to this end. And this is why such initiatives, whether presented as preventative or rehabilitative, will almost always be located within the criminal justice system where the necessary performance management machinery is most fully developed.

Of course, the political appeal of these programmes is vouchsafed by the fact that they are utterly commonsensical, having an unarguable moral purpose, to inculcate self-control and a sense of personal responsibility in their subjects. Unlike previous attempts at crime prevention, these programmes do not fudge the issues. They draw an indelible line between the law-abiding and the wrongdoer. They mobilise stigma to identify (in order to set apart) those who threaten the safety and well-being of the law-abiding, and they do so with optimal economy, efficiency and effectiveness. As ever more subjects are put through these programmes, in the rapidly expanding prison, 'community punishments' and the proliferating, quasi-judicial, anti-social behaviour industry, government is able to claim that it is fulfilling its 'covenant with the electorate'.

The changed relationship between government and the criminal justice establishment

In its efforts to transform criminal justice policy, the government has found it necessary to circumvent the various political and professional groupings that had previously shaped policy and practice in the criminal justice system. Thus, the senior civil servants, probation chiefs, local councillors, local authority service heads, criminal justice and penal professionals, criminologists, pressure groups, judges and magistrates, who once determined the shape of policy, but whom government ministers viewed as potentially resistant, if not subversive to their public sector reforms (Pitts, 2003), were moved to the margins, and charged with the more modest task of overseeing implementation.

David Marquand (2000) has written of a 'Prussian discipline' within the Labour government, enforced as often as not by a new political class, part political apparatchik, part public servant, whose job it is to establish 'robust' and 'rigorous' administrative and fiscal mechanisms for ensuring that everybody, at all levels, stays 'on message'.

Thus a 'steering and rowing' relationship has been established between central and local government and service providers in the public and private sectors, in which the managerial and professional task could be 'micro-managed' from the centre (Crawford, 2001). For this to be possible, it was necessary to institute an elaborate 'performance management framework', which would generate and monitor uniform practices and quantifiable outcomes. Because it was modularised, scripted and, by the turn of the century, virtually ubiquitous in the adult system, when linked with the assessment tools derived from the risk-factor paradigm, CBT provided the vehicle, par excellence, whereby this new form of intensive performance management could be implemented nation-wide to ensure that policy went all the way down to the ground.

The changed relationship between government and the criminological establishment

The devastating critique of their theories and methods mounted by 'critical criminology' (Taylor, Walton and Young, 1973) and the decline of the rehabilitative ideal (Martinson, 1974; McWilliams and Bottoms, 1979) sounded the death knell for the relationship which the UK criminological establishment had previously enjoyed with government. Once, these scholars advised governments, undertook their research, sat on their advisory boards and committees and not infrequently, moved into the higher echelons of the Home Office to oversee policy implementation. But if 'Nothing Works', criminologists are irrelevant to government. So it was that after a decade in the political wilderness, the first North American meta-analyses prompted canny UK criminologists to return to their data and somewhat predictably, they discovered that:

> *The outcome research of the early 1970s was capable of being interpreted in other ways than 'Nothing works'. . . This has recently led some writers, for example Ken Pease, who worked at the Home Office Research Unit in the 1970s to argue that the pessimistic conclusions drawn from this research were not necessarily justified.* (Blagg and Smith,1989:86)

This was a fortuitous, and lucrative, volte-face for criminology, coinciding, as it did, with the government's public service 'modernisation' initiative; backed, as it was, by a generously funded programme of consultancy, research and evaluation (Raynor and Vanstone, 2002).

Viewed from the 'dreaming spires'; this sudden return to relevance held the promise of a renaissance of the 'early modern' vision (c.1950) of the criminologist as a technologically informed government insider, shaping policy in accordance with the imperatives of empirical science. Not so. This was the eve of the 21st century, in a post-industrial society, with a post-political politics, in which 'what counts', politically, is 'what works'. And while new Labour needed criminology 'on side' to justify its claim to be developing evidence-led policy, criminology itself had to be re-shaped in accordance with government's moral and political imperatives. In these circumstances, the divination of the causes of crime and techniques for its reduction became a political rather than a theoretical matter. Thus, criminology's return to political relevance was contingent upon criminologists accepting the role of governmental 'handmaiden' (Taylor, Walton and Young, 1973), devising and refining the tools with which to measure the impact of policy, while bestowing an aura of academic rigour, and hence legitimacy, upon governmental endeavours. Government having now usurped the role of criminologist, offered a drastically edited account of the origins of crime and its remedy.

The Home Office consultative document *Tackling the Causes of Crime* (1996), published under a Conservative administration, draws upon the *Cambridge Study of Delinquent Development* and cites eight key 'risk factors', as being closely associated with the youth crime: 'parenting', 'truancy', 'drug abuse' 'lack of facilities', 'homelessness', 'unemployment', 'low income' and 'economic recession'. These 'risks' are similar to those cited in the subsequent Audit Commission Report *Misspent Youth* (1996); a document widely regarded as the blueprint for New Labour's youth justice strategy, jointly authored by Mark Perfect, a government economist who subsequently became chief executive of the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales. Although *Misspent Youth* also drew upon the findings of the *Cambridge Study of Delinquent Development* (West and Farrington, 1973) it divides the risk factors into 'foreground' and 'background' factors. Familial and developmental factors occupy the foreground, while factors such as family income, employment and the socio-economic status of the neighbourhood are relegated to the background. New Labour's *No More Excuses* White Paper (1998) further reduces these risk factors to three main groupings, Parenting, Schooling and Peers, with the key risk factors identified as 'being male', 'poor parental discipline', 'criminal parents' and 'poor school performance'. In 1998, as Home Secretary, Jack Straw brought this process of aetiological reductionism to its inevitable conclusion when he observed that:

> *...all the serious research shows that one of the biggest causes of serious juvenile delinquency is inconsistent parenting. We need to bring parenting out as a public issue so people feel able to talk about it. It is not easy, but one of my tenets in politics is that we should try the difficult issues.* (*Observer*, 1/2/98)

Thus it is that the relationship between criminological theory and criminal justice policy was reversed, with theory offering a post factum rationale for policy. Now the principle function of much criminological research in the field of youth justice was to put empirical flesh on the bones of what had already been sold to the public as evidence-led policy. As such,

some criminologists have assumed the role of what Gramsci (1973) has termed 'organic intellectuals', which he distinguishes from both 'traditional' and 'independent' intellectuals, in that they are:

> *... directly connected to classes or enterprises that use intellectuals to organise interests, gain more power, get more control ... they constantly struggle to change minds and expand markets; unlike teachers and priests who seem more or less to remain in place, doing the same kind of work year in and year out, organic intellectual are always on the move, on the make.'* (Edward Said, 1994, p.3-4)

Organic intellectuals are seldom, if ever, called upon to 'speak the truth to power' (Said, 1994); required only to provide legitimation for politically derived correctional endeavours. In the process, criminology itself is transformed, becoming first and foremost a facilitative, administrative or bureaucratic enterprise rather than an exercise in disinterested scholarship (Mills, 1959, Young and Matthews, 1992).

The relationship between criminal justice professionals and their knowledge base

Not least of the effects of government assuming the mantle of the criminologist has been that the disparate, and sometimes politically contentious knowledge base of youth and adult justice professionals has been whittled down to a point where, the conceptual and theoretical problems outlined above notwithstanding, the fit between its aetiological theory, the government's moral posture and its favoured modes of intervention has become seamless (see Farrington, 1996). Thus it is only those 're-moralising' modes of intervention (Muncie, 2000) that resonate with governmental commitments to 'respect' and 'responsibility' which find their way into the professional repertoire. In consequence, the relationship between professional workers and their knowledge base is changed from that of critical protagonists in a robust debate about policy means and policy ends, to one of uncritical operatives in a milieu where the ideas informing practice are 'owned' by senior managers and the scholars and researchers whose work they commission. This is a process of intellectual deskilling which frustrates, and so squanders the creativity of front-line professionals, and in so doing, compounds that pervasive sense of estrangement from the professional task which characterises 'audit culture' (Cooper and Lousada, 2005).

In an evidence-based era and an audit culture, professional practice must be readily assessable. So not only is the professional knowledge-base 'proceduralised' (Habermas, 1976), it is also 'modularised' in order to render it 'SMART' (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timetabled) (Audit Commission,1998). And so professional education is reoriented towards the acquisition of the limited range of 'competencies' necessary to 'deliver' on the SMART targets, rather than a broader range of 'value-laden', and potentially critical, concepts (cf Coleman, 1989). One of the effects of this process is to provide the means whereby the 'professional task', or more accurately the de-professionalised task, can be micro-managed. In the process, the aetiological focus of the professional knowledge base is narrowed, the range of interventions restricted and the risk factors associated with crime individualised.

Moreover, in accrediting a limited range of ideas and practices, and tying the allocation of resources to their successful introduction and execution, the 'accreditation' of CBT also serves to discredit the other ideas and practices that it has supplanted and, in doing so prevents innovation from below by practitioners.

Clearly, this rationalisation of the professional knowledge base is more than just a straightforward attempt to re-fashion practice in accordance with the dictates of scientific veracity and 'economy, efficiency, and effectiveness'. It also marks a repudiation of a set of ideas about crime and justice that have their origins in the seismic cultural shifts that took place in the 1960s and 70s. In the sphere of criminal justice Howard Becker's Whose Side are We On? (1967) and David Matza's Becoming Deviant (1969) launched a debilitating critique of the kinds of 'correctionalism' currently in vogue in the UK. These were ideas that came to inform the minimalist 'delinquency management' and 'back to justice' strategies developed by youth justice professionals in the 1970s and 1980s. Thus a further potential pay-off of the procedularisation of the professional knowledge base is to render a previously unruly workforce more manageable and to prevent it from 'going native' once again.

The relationship between professionals and their agency

Robert Ross, his colleagues, and their successors have been at pains to 'sell' CBT to criminal justice administrators on the basis that 'correctional personnel' require only a limited amount of on-the-job training to become effective treatment agents. It takes three years to train a social worker or a probation officer and six to train a psychotherapist, but those who 'deliver' CBT in the criminal justice system can achieve the requisite levels of competence within days.

Marx and Engels (1888) point to the inherent tendency within globalising capitalist economies towards 'the proletarianisation of intellectual labour' (Braverman, 1974; but see also Berman, 1982 and Desai, 2002). They write:

> The bourgoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to in reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage labourers. (Marx and Engels, 1888: 38)

New Labour's apparent ambivalence, if not antipathy, to public professionals in general and criminal justice professionals in particular has its origins in the neo-conservative critique of the welfare state that gained currency in US and UK governments in the 1980s and 1990s, according to which:

> … the true purpose of the state is to further the interests of its constituent groups. A cadre of human service professionals such as health and care personnel, social workers, psychologists, counsellors and administrators (who) would be out of work if the welfare state was abolished (Stoesz and Midgley, 1991:33)

One way to dislodge this parasitic by-product of the welfare state is to dismantle or re-configure the intellectual and administrative structures which sustain it.

The re-configuration of the professional knowledge base, and the establishment of an elaborate performance management apparatus has led inevitably to a loss of professional discretion and a concentration of control of the 'professional task' in the hands of senior criminal justice managers.

Indeed, in modern 'correctional' practice, professionalism is often presented as a barrier to effective intervention because in CBT, the transformative element is the programme itself, rather than the skills and knowledge of the personnel 'delivering' the programme.

This tendency towards de-professionalisation has been further exacerbated by increased throughput, tight time targets, the escalating demand for information and data from senior managers and government, burgeoning bureaucracy and 'initiative fatigue'. These factors have turned the 'professionals' of yesteryear into 'case managers' whose primary role is to ensure that their 'teams'; the para-professionals, who undertake the face-to-face work, hit their prescribed targets. Increasingly, face-to-face work in probation and youth justice is undertaken by unqualified, lesser-qualified or casual staff and volunteers, or sub-contracted to private or voluntary sector agencies, staffed largely by unqualified workers.

De-professionalisation holds many advantages for criminal justice system policy-makers and managers with an iconoclastic or homogenising bent. Non-professionals have little or no knowledge of alternative ways of doing things. As a result the potential for disagreement with, or deviation from, prescribed method or procedures is minimised. Thus the integrity of the Home Office accredited CBT-based 'offending programmes' is far less likely to be subverted by the exercise of 'professional discretion'. Such training as these new recruits receive is essentially practical and any ethical issues which arise can be resolved by reference to the relevant 'values statements' or codes of practice. Over time, this recruitment strategy spawns a new division of labour in which non-professionals 'deliver' the 'programmes' and the dwindling number of professional workers become, essentially administrative, 'case managers'. This produces a cheaper, more flexible, and far more manageable workforce.

The relationship between professionals and the subjects of their interventions

As noted above, CBT transforms the client-worker relationship into one in which the worker administers a largely non-negotiable programme, which the offender/subject simply undergoes. CBT, as applied to the criminal justice system, is one of the means, and arguably the major one, whereby the transformation of the relationship from professional/client to treatment agent/subject required by law and policy, is effected. This marks a move towards an even greater concentration of power in the hands of the criminal justice agency with its inevitable concomitant, a diminution in the scope for reciprocity and negotiation in the professional/de-professionalised relationship, a factor which some experts regard as central to effecting positive rehabilitative change (Farrall, 2002; Batchelor and McNeill, 2005).

Conclusion

CBT, as practiced in the UK criminal justice system at the turn of the 21st century, has performed a number of politically important functions. In the late 1980s it provided a plausible new *raison d'être* for a politically vulnerable probation service. In the early 1990s it created a pathway out of the 'Nothing Works' ghetto and back to relevance for mainstream criminology, albeit relevance achieved at the cost of its intellectual autonomy and scholarly integrity. In the late 1990s, the rhetoric of CBT has provided the rationale for the rapid expansion of youth justice, while the practice provided a shared focus for the variety of professionals who constitute Youth Offending Teams. Latterly, the rhetoric of CBT has supplied the intellectual pretext for the creation and development of the National Offender Management Service.

CBT has served to elevate New Labour's 'populist' criminal justice strategy from mere populist knee-jerk to a, decidedly dubious, scientificity, but sufficient to enable government to claim that, unlike their Conservative predecessors, their criminal justice policies are 'evidence-led'; that this evidence has underpinned the reconfiguration of correctional services, their management and their administrative structure; and that this has resulted in the capacity to exert direct control over the actions of what were previously viewed as an overly liberal, permissive and unaccountable group of public professionals, by demanding that their actions are 'evidence-based' and their 'outcomes' audited.

As such, CBT has been the means whereby the 'new public management' has suffused the criminal justice system, facilitating the 'micro-management' of the day-to-day operations of justice system managers and the face-to-face practice of justice-system 'professionals'. As a result, it has driven the de-professionalisation, we could say, proletarianisation, of a once politically volatile criminal justice workforce and shifted power decisively away from practitioners towards their managers.

Michel Foucault once observed:

> I fail to comprehend how the discourse of criminology has been able to go on at this level. One has the impression that it is of such utility, is needed so urgently and rendered so vital to the working of the system, that it does not even need to seek a theoretical justification for itself, or even simply a coherent framework. It is entirely utilitarian. (Foucault, 1980 p.101)

In the case of CBT, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that because it has been of such utility to politicians, senior criminal justice system managers and criminologists, in their efforts to elaborate a more pervasive and more politically plausible criminal justice apparatus, it simply has not mattered whether it 'works' or not.

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'Minding the gap' between policy visions and service implementation: lessons from Connexions

Scott Yates and Malcolm Payne

From 2001, Connexions was phased in across England to meet policy visions centred on uniting youth-oriented services into a coherent whole, and providing universal advice and guidance alongside targeted support. Recent evaluations suggest that the service was not fulfilling these visions successfully, and current policy remains focused on implementing a new co-ordination of services to meet broadly similar visions.

This paper draws on research evidence to explore the reasons for this failure in Connexions. It highlights a range of problems in service implementation from initial contact and assessment through to final interventions. It locates these problems in the political, bureaucratic, financial and social contexts in which the service existed. Notably the requirements to pursue a broad remit and meet hard targets with limited resources, instigate joint-working across existing professional boundaries, and unite and adapt disparate working paradigms presented significant challenges that are likely to remain relevant for future services.

Keywords: Connexions, NEET, targets, policy implementation

The past decade has seen a previously unprecedented focus within public policy in the U.K. on the lives of young people and the implementation of services to work with them. Much of this focus has been guided by over-arching strategic visions outlining new ways of working with young people. Most notable was the much-vaunted 'vision for the new millennium' (DfEE, 1999) during the first term of the current Labour government, which was embodied in the formation of the Connexions service (SEU, 1999; Connexions, 2000).

Severe problems were noted relating to the numbers of young people who were socially excluded or at risk of becoming so, and support and guidance was 'patchy' (DfEE, 1999:17), with a fragmented system of services providing varying levels of help of inconsistent quality. These issues influenced a new strategic vision calling for a 'radical approach' to youth services that would bring together the systems for local delivery of support, end institutional fragmentation, and provide a comprehensive, socially inclusive full-service advice and support function to all 13 to 19 year olds (SEU, 1999:9-14). This new service, the heart of the strategic vision in question, was Connexions.

Connexions began with the express intention of bringing the range of services supporting young people into a 'coherent whole' (Connexions, 2000:6), and providing a universal service of advice and guidance for all young people to enable them to make a successful transition to independent adulthood, and also providing intensive, targeted support for those with specific problems. This mix of advice and guidance with intensive support would

thus 'contribute to greater stability in the lives of young people' (Connexions, 2000:12), and tackle problems linked with an identified 'cycle of deprivation and dependency' such as long-term unemployment, lack of post-16 education and training, poor health and criminal behaviour.

More than four years after Connexions was phased in around England, it was noted that there had been some success in its achievement of these aims. However, the 2005 Green Paper, *Youth Matters*, noted that still 'the various organisations providing services and help for young people do not work together as effectively or imaginatively as they should' and 'not enough is being done to prevent young people from drifting into a life of poverty or crime' (DfES, 2005a:4). The new strategic vision outlined in the paper contained responses to many of the same 'challenges' that were cited for action in the prior policy documents, such as integrating disparate services into a coherent whole, providing advice and guidance to help young people make effective decisions about their future, and instituting a system of tailored and intensive support for young people who have more serious problems (DfES, 2005a).

These acknowledged failures to achieve what was envisioned and the fact that such similar challenges appear as keystones of two consecutive strategic visions for services suggest that there has been a gap between the creation of policy strategies and the operationalisation required to implement them effectively. Indeed, our recent Connexions Impact Study (Hoggarth and Smith, 2004) noted that whilst there were local successes and some evidence of general good practice, there were also a range of problems which meant that in practice goals outlined in the strategic vision underpinning Connexions were not met, and desired impact on the lives of young people was failing to take place.

This paper will draw and expand upon evidence from the Connexions Impact Study, with which the authors were centrally involved, to explore some of the main problems which contributed to failure to fulfil the strategic vision behind Connexions. It will aim to consider both the strategic vision itself and the context in which it was implemented (Munton, 2006). It will contend that the major problems should be considered in the broader political, social, institutional and financial contexts within which Connexions existed, and will conclude by considering the lessons this might hold for future services aiming to meet similar policy visions.

The research evidence

The Connexions Impact Study carried out 855 interviews with young people and 444 with Connexions personal advisers (PAs) and other adult workers between April 2003 and July 2004 with the aim of examining the implementation of Connexions and its impact on the lives of young people. Analysis of the interviews drew upon both qualitative and quantitative analytical approaches.

The young people interviewed ranged in age from 12 to 23 (three-quarters of participants were 15 to 17, nine per cent were 14 and nine per cent 18). Sampling was purposive, targeting young people in Connexions Priority Groups I (PI) and II (PII): those deemed to

be facing substantial problems (such as school resistance, underachievement, substance misuse, offending, living in care, not being in employment, education or training, young parents), needing intensive support, and those considered 'at risk' of not participating effectively in education or training (DfES, 2001a, 2001b). Young people were selected from those designated as PI and PII on Connexions cohort lists and by making contacts through PAs and agencies (eg. Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), Drug and Alcohol Action Teams (DAATs), foyers, health projects) with young people with specific problems (eg. substance misuse, offending, school resistance – see Hoggarth and Smith 2004) likely to put them in Connexions priority groups I and II.

51 per cent of the young people were male and 49 per cent female. 4.6 per cent classified themselves as belonging to Black ethnic categories, 3.4 per cent Asian, 3.4 per cent mixed or other categories, and 88.6 per cent White categories. Approximately 17 per cent were not in education, employment or training (NEET) when interviewed.

Of the adult workers, 252 were Connexions Personal Advisers (PAs), 36 teachers, 22 youth workers, 16 voluntary sector workers, 11 educational social workers or welfare officers, 7 Department for Education and Skills (DfES) staff, and the remaining 100 from other roles, including health professionals, learning mentors, counsellors, YOT and DAAT workers.

Processes in service implementation

The Connexions Impact Study drew on Connexions management data and interviews with PAs and young people to produce an 'abstract and idealised' (Hoggarth and Smith, 2004:55) model of the processes by which young people enter and move through the service, from referral and initial assessment, through trust-building, advice, guidance and support, through to case closure and follow-up. This process model proved useful for conceptualising the different types of interaction that occur throughout Connexions' work with young people and for examining how impact is made or lost with young people at different stages.

For the sake of simplicity and a wider relevance, this paper will consider service implementation in three general stages: referral pathways and entry into the service; assessment, relationship building and support; and follow-up and case closure. These stages, and the problems with their implementation, are ones that, although discussed here in the context of Connexions, will be relevant to future services seeking the kind of impact outlined in the strategic policy visions discussed above.

1: Referral pathways and entry into the service

The Connexions strategy of providing an integrated system of universal support, advice and guidance for all young people alongside targeted and intensive support for those in need of it, is implemented in the first instance through direct delivery of guidance and support by PAs deployed in various settings (eg. schools, colleges, 'one-stop' shops and centres, YOTs, outreach settings). This is supplemented by brokering support, making referrals and working

in partnership with other youth-oriented agencies when required.

Clearly, if Connexions (or any service superseding it) is to fulfil this remit, there must be effective means for getting young people into contact with the service and assessing their needs, or for young people with identified needs to be referred to the service to receive the intensive support that they need. However, there was no clear match between the degree of risk young people displayed and the degree of support received from Connexions[1]. Indeed, those at highest risk (having 3 or 4 risks compounded) were roughly twice as likely to have seen a PA only once, twice or never at all as they were to have received ongoing, intensive support.

The reliance on school-based PAs
One key observation was that, although there are ideally a number of ways for young people to come into contact with Connexions (including outreach, self-referral, and referral from other agencies), the universal provision in schools formed the major experience of Connexions for most young people[2], and there was a disproportionate reliance on school-based PAs to make first contact with them towards the end of their compulsory education.

Over two-thirds (67.5 per cent) of young people interviewed who had heard of Connexions had done so through school. The proportion of young people of school age having no contact at all with Connexions was around 50 per cent at age 13, 22 per cent at 14, 17 per cent at 15, and only 10 per cent at 16. This bears out a recurring observation from the interviews: young people were most commonly initially targeted for contact during their last two years of compulsory schooling, typically through short individual interviews undertaken with a whole year group in turn.

Due to this focus, however, the service failed to bring in many young people who, nominally at least, were priorities for targeted and potentially preventive intervention, but under or over the age at which these meetings occurred, or not in school.

One illustration of this is in the following extract from an interview with a 13 year-old male with mild learning difficulties who, despite a notable history of academic underachievement amongst other emerging problems, and the obvious presence of Connexions in his school, including a dedicated Connexions lounge, had not had any contact with them:

> I: When was the first time that you heard the word 'Connexions'?
> R: I might have seen a leaflet on it or something... but I don't know anything about it to be honest.
> I: OK. What do you think it's about?
> R: Connecting people like the Nokia advert.
> I: (Laughs) Right. [...] So you haven't spoken to any classmates or friends that know anything about it?
> R: No.

Some young people who encountered problems after leaving school similarly did not come into contact with mechanisms which could draw them into the service – as one remarked, 'Since I've left school, they just don't wanna know!' Also significant is that young school

resisters (those who regularly deliberately miss parts of their pre-16 education) were frequently lost to the service, and there did not seem to be reliable mechanisms to bring them into it[3].

These problems should not be seen merely as an *oversight* in implementation. It has long been known that the presence in schools of young people most at risk is unreliable, and that their appearance on official cohort lists problematic (eg. DMAG, 2005). The attempt must be made to understand these issues in the context of the political reality within which the service was implemented. For instance, it is important to acknowledge the vast and complicated remit and comparatively limited resources that it had. Whilst Connexions had around twice the budget of the previous careers service, its remit was massively wider and caseloads much more demanding (NAO, 2004; DfES, 2005b). Significantly, Connexions had to work to a budget allowing for the employment of only around half the number of PAs envisaged when original estimates of required staffing levels were made. This was simply not sufficient for Connexions to fulfil its remit as both a universal and a targeted service (Hoggarth and Smith, 2004; DfES, 2005b). In 2004 the total number of PAs in post was considerably fewer than estimates indicated would be needed just to support those requiring intensive support (NAO, 2004).

It is thus perhaps reasonable to see reliance on final- and penultimate-year school-based interviews to make initial contact as reflective of a climate in which Connexions had to marshal scarce resources at a point when a large proportion of young people were likely to have need of them, and thus fulfil a part of its remit (universal advice and guidance) as broadly as possible. Young people's lives can be complex and changeable, however, and focusing contact-making efforts in this way, via one specific route into the service, operates at the expense of others and risks leaving many who need targeted, intensive support to fall through the gaps and go unsupported.

Problems with inter-agency referrals
Although there are problems with the degree to which school-based PAs were relied upon, these were not the only means by which young people could be drawn into Connexions. Another possibility was referral from other agencies or institutions. However, this process was frequently hampered by inadequate sharing of information and joint working between agencies[4].

As pointed out early on in the assessment of Connexions (Smith and Hoggarth, 2003), the cultural and structural changes to working practices required to integrate, co-ordinate and streamline services and take up joint work and planning were massive, and this was always likely to be a long, difficult process. Interviews with PAs and other workers revealed varying degrees of uncertainty and occasionally mistrust along pre-existing professional boundaries[5].

In many cases, people in different services were unsure of protocols for sharing information[6]; in others poor inter-agency relationships meant that services which would ideally co-ordinate their efforts instead worked (often with the same young people) in isolation. The disturbance of professional identities and working paradigms presented significant problems. Differing ideals for working existed between Connexions and other services and within Connexions between PAs in different settings and from different

professional backgrounds. Varying degrees of recalcitrance, poor relationships and strategies of professional resistance were noted along these boundaries, including refusals to accept management priorities and subversion of system processes to accommodate personal ideals of working[7].

PAs and other workers complained to researchers of the difficulties of working with other services, commenting, for instance, that important information about young people's needs (such as health, special educational needs, or substance misuse) would not be routinely shared; that there were perceived power imbalances between different workers' roles (especially surrounding Connexions' interactions with social and mental health services); that services would often refuse referrals that Connexions had no other ways of working with; or that different services actually served in practice to undermine rather than complement one another.

This should not be seen solely as a problem originating within Connexions, however. Existing agencies initially often perceived Connexions as a potential threat[8]. This, and concerns about withdrawal of independent resources and poor local inter-agency relationships formed at least part of these barriers to joined-up working (NAO, 2004). This is more an indication of the inherent difficulties of forming effective partnerships across existing professional boundaries than a direct criticism of any one service.

These observations bear out the acknowledgement (noted earlier) in the recent Green Paper that services 'do not work together as effectively or imaginatively as they should' (DfES, 2005a). Whilst there may remain a strategic vision to create coherence among disparate services, there needs to be an awareness of the practicalities and political realities involved in this. Without careful attention and (perhaps) time allowed for new working arrangements to bed in and problems worked through, it was always unlikely that the difficulties around this aspect of service implementation would be resolved.

Problems with self-referral and drop-in
Another route into Connexions was self-referral or drop-in by young people themselves. One problem here was that Connexions' promotional activities did not impart a clear message about the service, leaving many young people confused about its nature. The emphasis on careers in Connexions' branding exacerbated this, leading to common perceptions that it was only 'there to help us along and… find work where you live' or was a 'job-centre for young people.'

This problem of uncertainty was pervasive, but other connected factors also discouraged self-referral and drop-in, including young people feeling over-scrutinised in Connexions shops and centres ('there's two desks right as you come in… you feel they know exactly what you're doing… if you're looking at sexual health brochures and that'), poorly located settings (away from places young people generally spend their time), and limited opening hours detracting from the impression that young people are welcome to drop in.

It is significant to consider here that Connexions initially took on most of the staff of the old careers service, and made use of its places of operation for its new shops and centres (Watts, 2001; Smith and Hoggarth, 2003). However, the layout and working culture of

a shop for careers guidance is very different from what is required from a shop or centre where young people can drop in to find advice and support on a much wider range of (often sensitive and personal) issues. Overhauling and re-structuring such settings would clearly require a lot of time and investment, and at the time of the research not much had been done in many settings to change the environment from a careers-style shop to one offering universal and targeted support. As one young person put it, it was often all too clear that these settings are 'the old careers shops re-branded.'

2: Assessment, relationship building and support

Once contact is established, needs must be assessed and a relationship established through which interventions and support can be provided. There were again several problems relating to these processes in Connexions.

School-based interviews and targeted support

A major problem was that contact with school-based PAs was frequently not effective in feeding into ongoing contact and targeted support for a variety of reasons[9]. Indeed, of those young people attending school and displaying one or more of the educational risks discussed above who had met a PA at least once, only 46 per cent went on to establish a pattern of ongoing contact. The remaining 54 per cent either had only one further meeting with a PA or dropped out of contact entirely.

This was largely due to PA interviews and presentations in schools focusing disproportionately (often exclusively) on careers, education and training options, and failing to communicate the holistic nature of Connexions, to detect young people's non-career related problems and plan appropriate interventions or referrals. The following interview extract illustrates this:

> I: Can you remember how you first heard about Connexions?
> R: Well, the first time I heard about Connexions was the day I got expelled. That was the first day they came to see us, and I got a folder and that off them [...] they came to the school, the X School. It was the first day, and then I got expelled about an hour after.
> I: So did Connexions know you were going to get expelled?
> R: I told them what had happened ... I can't really remember what they said [...]
> I: So what did they talk to you about?
> R: Um, about what I wanted to do when I was older, things like that. Jobs.

This was typical of a number of cases in which young people attended Connexions interviews in school at a time when they displayed one or more risk conditions linked to the likelihood of becoming NEET or socially excluded (SEU, 1999) – in the above case, school exclusion, substance misuse and academic underachievement. However, although such young people are high priorities for targeted and intensive support, their meetings with PAs often covered only careers-related subjects, with the result (as above) that their risk issues were not discussed and they did not enter the process by which targeted support could take place.

These observations resonate with the earlier point about different working cultures. As noted, Connexions took on members of staff and work settings from the careers service. Considerably more school-based PAs had a careers background than any other (over 40 per cent of school-based PAs interviewed for whom background information is available). However, Connexions aimed to address the needs of young people in a holistic way, and this style of working was often grafted onto professionals with expertise, experience and working styles fostered in narrower and more specific roles. The move from specialised roles to the much broader PA role is a challenging one, involving radical changes, the difficulty of which should not be underestimated (Smith and Hoggarth, 2003). For instance, one PA said, quite frankly, that, coming from a careers background, she lacked training and experience in dealing with many of the issues (particularly substance abuse) that young people face, and that she did not feel comfortable broaching these subjects in meetings[10].

It is clear that there was some awareness of the need for cultural change necessitated by the creation of the PA role and the requirement to link up universal and targeted provision, testified by the multi-million pound training scheme for PAs. One problem was take-up of training. The potential drain on already stretched capacity meant that managers had difficulty balancing caseload management and releasing staff for training, and many PAs remained less than fully trained (NAO, 2004).

Other problems lay in the sheer scale of the difficulties of embedding the radical structural and cultural changes inherent in the advent of the Connexions service, and in defining and co-ordinating new roles and practice. This might in part be due to the complexity of the PA role and its natural evolution through practice. Widely differing conceptions of both the PA role and Connexions itself were held by PAs, specifically concerning the roles of PAs in schools and their links to other services and the links between universal and targeted aspects of the service[11]. The fact that there remained a statutory duty to provide careers and educational guidance combined with potential pressures on school-based PAs by head teachers (Watts, 2001) can be expected to have complicated this further.

Establishing trust and rapport
Other key problems concerned the failure to establish a trusting relationship between young people and the key person working with them. The interactions between young people and adult worker(s), specifically the establishment of an effective rapport, are crucial. This was identified as the key mechanism through which impact is achieved, and one that is essential if advice, support and referrals are to be successful (Hoggarth and Smith, 2004).

However, it is often difficult to build trusting relationships with young people, especially those with multiple and profound risks or difficulties who may already possess negative orientations towards professional services – where 'orientation' refers to attitudes, opinions, prior expectations, desires and goals. Building trusting relationships occurs in the context both of the young person's orientations towards services, and how service workers respond to them.

Many of those targeted for interventions by services (for instance, young parents, young offenders, substance abusers) have a number of sensitive, personal issues they may be wary about discussing with strangers, especially adults in apparent positions of authority.

One notable cause of failure to establish trust and rapport early on in PA-young person relationships was premature use of official assessment tools (such as Connexions' Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review framework – APIR) or asking personal questions at too early a stage of interaction, before the appropriate level of trust has been developed[12].

Whilst it is important to assess accurately the needs of young people as early as possible, this must be balanced against the real possibility of such assessment being negatively perceived as too intense or personal and damaging the vital fledgling relationship. It could be argued that, as a new service, Connexions did need to ensure the widespread and consistent use of its new assessment processes, but this (compounded by PAs new to their roles and sometimes lacking training, experience and/or confidence in the style of work required) often undermined the flexibility required to allow relationships to develop and led to many young people experiencing PA contact as intrusive, insensitive and unpleasant[13].

Hard targets and service responses
Another problematic issue was the targets that Connexions was assigned to work to, centred on reducing the proportion of young people in partnership areas who are NEET[14]. Given the limited resources, increasing case loads and shortage of available staff hours[15], these targets often led to a heavy-handed focus on carrying out target-orientated interventions without full consideration of their suitability for the young person involved. This often worked to the detriment of building an effective, trusting relationship with them (Yates and Payne, 2006). Elsewhere, this has been seen as creating an 'enforcement counsellor' role (Jordan and Jordan, 2000) in which the primary concern of service workers becomes compliance with a social policy regime and 'co-ordinated *surveillance'*, rather than meeting the client's real needs and providing 'co-ordinated *support'* (Watts, 2001:171).

Young people are often sensitive to feelings of not being listened to by adults, and a premature or indelicate focus on target-meeting outcomes rather than establishing trust and an individually-tailored response can give the impression that the key worker is not interested in needs that young people experience as urgent or pressing, or in finding interventions or destinations that are properly suited to them (Yates and Payne, 2006).

Targeting priorities also acted to focus attention more on young people who could relatively easily or assuredly be moved into EET destinations at the expense of others who might have more urgent need of intervention, but thus did not receive attention. The young people most likely to receive less attention due to this are those who will not easily be moved into EET destinations, often because of profound or complex problems or risks they face which will affect their ability or willingness to do so (Yates and Payne, 2006). It is telling that one PA commented that she and her colleagues do not think of young people with the most pressing needs for support as 'highest priority,' but, in the climate of pressures to meet targets, as 'hardest to help.'

In one sense, such targets form a key part of the means by which the success of services can be measured. However, when they are applied in a crude manner, they can discourage important preventative work and work on non-target-related outcomes, and undermine the flexibility through which youth work most productively functions (e.g. Spence, 2004;

Bessant, 2004) and which is required to build trusting relationships, produce individually-tailored responses, and focus on long-term goals (Hoggarth and Smith, 2004; NAO, 2004; Yates and Payne, 2006).

3: Follow-up and case closure

Some final problems occurred after interventions had begun, when weaknesses in following-up cases, sustaining interventions and maintaining contact could still cause impact to be lost.

Tracking young people through transition
Transitional points, where young people leave school, enter alternative education, or move geographically, need careful attention to avoid loss of contact. Geographical movement in particular made following-up and maintaining contact with young people difficult for Connexions, especially when they did not inform the service of their move. A number of alternative education providers told researchers than when they were not in the same catchment area as the original school, it was difficult to pass cases on to Connexions teams in the new area.

Other types of transition include young people entering or leaving custody, completing a YOT-supervised community sentence, leaving drug counselling or treatment, or leaving care. Where these were not tracked carefully young people missed out on contact with services at a time of extreme vulnerability. One young person illustrates this. After being expelled from school, and with a history of violence, he eventually received a six-month custodial sentence. However, despite having ongoing contact with the PA attached to the YOT during his sentence, he told researchers, 'from the time my license stopped... I didn't see nobody,' and he was lost to all services at a time when he says, 'I had no school placement or nothing, and I was just getting bored not doing nothing.'

Tracking young people's cases through geographical movement or change in life circumstances is crucial if a service is to provide an integrated and holistic system of support and guidance. There needs to be an effective sharing of information and inter-agency working between services (such as between YOTs and Connexions in the above example) and of co-ordinating the transfer of cases between different areas or partnerships. As has been shown, ideals of information sharing and joined up working are marred by human factors such as uncertainty, mistrust, and pre-existing professional boundaries – although there is evidence that things were improving in terms of co-ordinating databases (NAO, 2004). Aside from that, however, the co-ordinated management of the whole population of young people, many of whom lead transient lives, is a task of extreme logistical complexity, requiring considerable innovation in how existing databases are managed and feed into practice (Smith and Hoggarth, 2003).

Weaknesses in follow-up and monitoring
Additionally, it was often observed that cases of young people who had moved onto targeted destinations were closed without adequate follow-up and monitoring – perhaps not surprisingly given Connexions' scarce resources and tight targets. Pressure on PAs

to meet operational targets was connected to great effort to place young people in EET destinations, but this was frequently not matched by the effort required to sustain them in these destinations, follow up their progress, and intervene to address problems. When the work done to secure these moves or interventions was not matched by monitoring their suitability, sustaining and following-up their progress, there remained a risk that the young person would find the destination or intervention unsuitable or drop out when problems arose. All of the work put in to build a relationship, assess need, and negotiate support could thus be undone (see Yates and Payne, 2006).

Discussion

This paper has demonstrated a degree of disconnection between the overall strategic visions behind Connexions and what, at the time of the study, the service had achieved. There were problems throughout the process by which the service worked with young people, from initial contact-making to follow-up and case closure. These realisations are timely in light of proposals for youth services in the recent Green Paper (DfES, 2005a), which sets out a radical reorganisation of services for young people in England, to be co-ordinated through new Children's Trusts but maintaining Connexions in areas where it is performing well whilst ensuring that support and guidance services currently provided by Connexions 'go local' where possible.

The goal of this paper has been to situate the problems and failures that beset Connexions in the context of a specific set of challenges posed by the remit set out in the Connexions strategy, and the political, financial, social and institutional reality within which the service (and, one might add, future services succeeding it) had to operate.

One possible reason behind many of these problems and the failure of Connexions overall to deliver what was envisaged in the strategy behind it is that, as Watts (2001) suggests, its original design was flawed. Watts (2001) has argued that the design of Connexions followed an illogical path in subsuming all services for young people under a general concern for social exclusion, and conceptualising a service response for targeted interventions around which a universal service was conceived as a second-order consideration.

On the evidence presented here, it might be considered possible also that the breadth, nature and scale of the challenges facing Connexions were not fully anticipated, and that significant improvements might have been seen given more resources and more time to establish effective practice and evaluate and respond to problems. For instance, despite initial problems with PAs undertaking necessary training, increasing numbers were moving towards full training (NAO, 2004; Hughes, 2005). Also, as Hoggarth and Smith (2004) argue, at the time of the research the conception of the PA role was still evolving, both in policy statements and amongst PAs themselves and those they work with, and this might account for some of the confusion and inconsistencies that were observed surrounding it.

With respect to the challenges of creating new roles spanning existing professional boundaries and instigating new roles and joined-up working across previously separate

organisations, many of the problems relating to this might be seen as the 'usual penalties' (Hoggarth and Smith, 2004; p.51) of major reorganisation. Any large organisation undergoing a similarly large-scale series of changes might be expected to embody similar patterns of behaviour, with professional recalcitrance and resistance expected to be high in the initial stages. Time is needed to bed in new working practices and partnership arrangements and to work through presenting cultural and structural problems (Hoggarth and Smith, 2004).

With time and capacity to allow for the natural evolution of practice and confront early problems, more time and resources to recruit staff to levels predicted necessary, and negotiation and adaptation of working targets to take account of 'softer' outcomes and lighten political pressure to focus so strongly on hard targets, it is perhaps not unreasonable to imagine that Connexions might have achieved significantly wider successes. In this sense, the wholesale nature of the changes to the organisation and remit of services for young people in England might be argued to be somewhat premature. It certainly seems unlikely given the challenges described here that Connexions was ever realistically going to fulfil its substantial remit inside four years given the scale of the challenges it faced, however finely its implementation was managed.

This invites the question of what the potential implications are of the problems and challenges discussed for the new organisation proposed for services (DfES, 2005a). This is particularly important, as the proposed changes seem aimed at addressing Connexions' failures through a reorganisation of service structures and implementation whilst, as has been commented, largely retaining the focus of the broad strategic policy visions behind them.

There remains the general goal of providing universal and targeted support through integrated services – through new working arrangements, partnerships and multi-disciplinary teams co-ordinated through Children's Trusts (DfES 2005a; ECOTEC 2006). It remains to be seen exactly what effects these changes will have in the long term, but the issues described above will hold relevant lessons for services currently or imminently in operation, as many of the same goals and challenges remain at the heart of the strategic vision underpinning them.

Firstly, the logistical challenge remains of maintaining a database of information about young people, tracking them across varied and unpredictable transitions, and ensuring that such information is accessed by those who need it and feeds effectively into practice. One could argue that this challenge actually increases with further changes to the structural organisation of services, more agencies being brought in, and children as well as young people entering the strategic remit (see DfES 2005a). Indeed, there are some early indications of difficulties in this area, with uncertainty emerging over how tracking is to be maintained and how systems compatibility can be managed across the databases of different agencies (ECOTEC, 2006).

Similarly pertinent is the issue of resources. Clearly, any service is limited in what it can feasibly deliver by its personnel and the financial resources allocated to it. For a service (or set of integrated services) to fulfil the broad policy vision of providing integrated support by

co-ordinating universal services for all young people and targeted support for those in need (DfES 2005a), a shortage of finances and personnel is likely to hamper severely its ability to function as required. Such problems were clearly demonstrated in Connexions.

It is uncertain at this stage, of course, to what extent financial constraints will impact upon the new service structure. There are already concerns, however, that there is a current shortfall of professional advisers across services for children and young people (Hughes, 2005) which may be exacerbated by increasing difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff due to loss of motivation entailed by large-scale changes to working arrangements and uncertainty over future roles (ECOTEC, 2006). It thus might be assumed that many of the challenges noted in connection with these issues will also remain.

It is also significant that alongside a concern for recognising the broad, holistic needs of young people, there persists a focus on hard 'performance indicators' especially targets for reducing the number of NEET young people (DfES, 2005a). As has been argued here and elsewhere (Yates and Payne, 2006; see also Bessant, 2004; Spence, 2004), strong pressures to meet hard performance targets are apt to undermine the processes of participative engagement, flexibility and work on 'softer' outcomes through which work with young people most productively functions.

The new vision for services also remains centred on ideals of co-ordinating and integrating services to provide a universal system of holistic and targeted support. There are thus likely to persist similar challenges to those noted with introducing new infrastructures, cultures and paradigms of working to different settings and professionals from a variety of backgrounds, creating and training for new professional roles, eroding previous professional boundaries, and requiring joined-up working across services. Initial difficulties have indeed been noted with integrating different working cultures, staff uncertainty and resistance to organisational change, dissatisfaction with proposed new roles, and the need for new, multi-agency skills (ECOTEC, 2006). As argued, overcoming these factors is likely to be a difficult process, requiring time and attention – time which is often not allowed in practice by the political realities in which services operate and by which they are judged.

Whatever organisational problems Connexions may or may not have had, it is notable that the challenges discussed here do not arise simply out of specific service delivery problems that could be relatively easily solved by reorganisation. Rather, they should be seen in the context of the strategic remit for services and in the political, structural, financial, institutional and socio-cultural contexts within which this strategy must be delivered. It thus seems that the challenges outlined here are likely to remain for future services aiming to fulfil the ongoing strategic vision for provision of advice, guidance and support for young people in England. Further reorganisation itself, in fact, may be expected to pose its own additional difficulties.

Notes

1   'Risk' here is defined as the number of measured educational risk factors (school resistance, underachieving, learning difficulties, and emotional or behavioural problems) exhibited by young people. Hoggarth and Smith (2004), pp.70-73
2   Ibid., p.12, 80
3   Ibid., pp. 173-4
4   Ibid, pp. 48-50; also NAO (2004), p.23
5   See also NAO (2004) p.23, 42, 44
6   Noted throughout Hoggarth and Smith (2004): p.42, 50-1, 80, 85, 94, 147, 152, 181. See also Smith and Hoggarth (2003), p. 64, 67-8
7   See Hoggarth and Smith (2004), pp.50-51, 54-55
8   NAO (2004), pp. 42-44. Also, there are indications (DfES, 2005b) that from the outset there were active lobbies against Connexions' roles in schools and the loss of professional identity of the careers service.
9   Hoggarth and Smith (2004), p.12, 80
10   For other examples, ibid., 139-141
11   Ibid, pp. 12-13, 48-52, 75-81
12   Ibid, pp. 133-4, 192
13   See also the discussion in Yates (forthcoming)
14   There were also other cross-government targets applied to Connexions, such as increasing levels of employment, education and training for specific groups (care leavers, young offenders, teenage mothers), and referring all young substance misusers to specialist support (NAO, 2004; pp.28-29).
15   These issues, discussed earlier, were noted in Hoggarth and Smith (2004), p. 47, 54, 79, 167, 173, 207, and NAO (2004) p. 7, 31-32, 42

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For the Benefit of Mr Kite: Some-assaults on Connexions

Bob Coles

This article is based on two research projects which sought to examine the challenges faced by the Connexions Strategy in England. It traces the ways in which the research was put in the public domain and the evidence collected used in the political process culminating in the Green Paper 'Youth Matters'. It summarises what research had to say about both the successes and failures of Connexions. It documents how, when it became clear that for political reasons the Connexion Strategy was to be abandoned and the Service marginalised, researchers and practitioners rallied together in an attempt to put the record straight about the weight of evidence regarding its successes. The article laments others who seek to re-write history.

Keywords: Connexions, policy development, research and the policy process

There have been a number of different 'evaluations' of the Connexions Strategy and Service in England using a variety of sources of 'evidence' and conducted under the guise of a range of vested interests. The DfES sponsored surveys of key partners across Connexions partnerships and of its customers – young people aged between 13 and 19 (Brunwin et al., 2004; DfES, 2005; Dickson, 2004). The results of these suggested something of a success story. Yet these surveys were 'horizontal' snap shots of opinion across the different layers of Connexions operations rather than any detailed analysis of the success of the processes through which Connexions workers attempted to intervene in the lives of young people. Other research supported by both the DfES and other, more independent funders sought to examine the effectiveness of interventions and subject the Connexions process to critical analysis (Hoggarth and Smith, 2004; Coles et al., 2004).

Part of the reason for writing this article is that one Minister is still declaring that Connexions was, by 2004, 'known to be a failure' and that this lay behind some of the proposals contained within the Green Paper *Youth Matters* (DfES 2006a). This claim remains somewhat of a mystery. Much of the research evidence on Connexions prior to the Green Paper was very positive. To be sure, some researchers (including those reporting in this volume), were fairly critical of several 'implementation issues' which still needed to be adequately addressed (Coles et al., 2004: Hoggarth and Payne, 2006). Yet this article wishes to put on record how the findings of both the research projects in question became known to senior managers within both Connexions and the DfES and to offer an interpretation as to why and how these may have been used (wrongly) as evidence of Connexions failures. The article also seeks to shed light on how the Connexions Strategy, announced at the turn of the century by a prime minister as 'our front line policy for young people' could, within five short years, be undermined by relatively junior (non-cabinet) ministers.

Flying the kite: strained beginnings

The origins of the Connexions Strategy and the differences in the structure of the Connexions Service have been outlined in this journal before (Coles, 2005). But some reminders are in order so the reader is clear about some of the key issues to be discussed; the relationship between the Connexions Strategy and the Connexions Service; the main 'problems' being addressed; some of the main agencies involved and some of the tensions between vested interests present within Connexions from the very beginning.

Heralded by both the Social Exclusion Unit report *Bridging the Gap* and the White Paper *Learning to Succeed* the main 'problems' the Strategy sought to address were the routes into social exclusion for young people which led to their disengagement from education, training and employment between the ages of sixteen and eighteen (DfES, 1999; SEU, 1999). As the SEU report documented, NEET (not being in any form of education, employment or training) at this age was associated with previous educational disaffection and disadvantage and was a predictor of later bouts of unemployment. To combat this, the Connexions Strategy proposed sub-regional partnerships covering education, careers education and guidance, employment and training, health, drug-related services, the police and youth justice. At the centre of the delivery of the strategy was the new Connexions Service. The service employed a network of Personal Advisers to provide support and guidance to all 13-19 year olds. Absorbed into this, was the statutory responsibilities for the provision of careers education and guidance (CEG), previously fulfilled by careers companies, many of which had been privatised in the early 1990s. Importantly, already existing careers services were not disbanded. The companies and its employees merely worked to new contracts with Connexions. Most of the employees, however, were renamed 'Personal Advisors' for which they were given additional training, even though many of them continued to do the same job in the same place as when they were careers officers. A distinction was commonly made between the Connexions 'universal service' PAs offering mainly CEG through schools and colleges, and the 'targeted services' offering more intensive support for young people with more complex needs requiring more specialist support. Within some careers companies, many staff (both senior managers and front-line) remained aggrieved and resentful of the new arrangements. Furthermore, schools and colleges expected the extra resources going into Connexions (around twice that going to careers companies before the creation of Connexions) to result in enhanced CEG provision and better pastoral support. This did not materialise. Raised expectations in schools and colleges and slumbering discontent within the ranks of one of the major partners (careers companies) was to form one of the tensions which led to a call for radical reform in 2004 by which time many partnerships had hardly had time to establish themselves.

A second basic potential flaw in the design of Connexions related to the ownership and control of the sub-regional partnerships. The forty seven Connexions partnerships did differ in their 'ownership', the ways in which PAs were employed, and how and where PAs carried out their roles, something which is explained in detail elsewhere (Connexions, 2000; Coles et al., 2004; NAO, 2004). However, whatever model was chosen, most partnerships had to encompass, and operate across several adjacent local authority areas. Many of the partnerships covered local authorities with no track record of co-operation and often these were formed very unwillingly, and across authorities with very different

political complexions and reputation for efficiency and effectiveness. Furthermore, asking an independent Partnership Board to preside over the distribution of scarce resources between local authorities and agencies provided a background for suspicion, jealousy, hostility and resentment (For examples of these tensions see the Appendix in Coles et al., 2004).

There were, however, layers of organisation beneath the Partnership Boards where some local authority control and autonomy could be wrestled back, depending on how the structures worked in practice. Each local authority within the sub-region had its own Local Management Committee (LMC) charged with the supervision of Connexions locally. Sub-regionality did offer opportunities for specialist services (such as rural outreach) to be 'shared' but even this had inherent dangers if not carefully negotiated. It also offered opportunities for the fledgling Connexions Strategy to play politics across the sub-region, and to use ownership and control over sub-contracts to challenge complacency. But such opportunities were not without potential costs. The Connexions sub-regional structure was the Achilles heel when Children Services became reorganised within single tier local authorities following the Green Paper *Every Child Matters*, something to which we will return later.

Researching (and making appropriate) Connexions

This article is based on the experiences and findings of two projects funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF). The first piece of research, *Missing Connexions*, was largely about the major challenges being faced by the Connexions Strategy (Britton et al., 2002). The fieldwork took place whilst Connexions was being planned and piloted, but had not yet begun its full operation in the two research sites we studied. It also gave us the first inkling of the ways in which well-meaning research sometimes gets caught up in the messy processes of politics.

This first research project on Connexions suggested that the Connexions Strategy had huge challenges ahead, particularly in identifying and helping minority ethnic young people who, for a variety of reasons were detached from careers companies (Britton et al., 2002). Although the study involved both quantitative and qualitative methods, the bulk of the analysis was based upon an in depth study of 64 young people from two areas in England, one in the metropolitan south and one in a large northern city. Both were multi-ethnic areas and we deliberately over-sampled members of the black and ethnic minority communities (41 out of the 64). We also recruited half the sample from agencies (mainly in the voluntary sector) other than the careers service so we could examine the possibilities of minority ethnic young people being detached and unknown to mainstream services. The aim was also to explore welfare dynamics over time by interviewing the young people twice, approximately six months apart, although, as expected, we had difficulty in tracing several members of our sample for the second interview.

In the *Missing Connexions* report we argued that many of the young people we talked to were 'missing Connexions' in several senses. Firstly, significant numbers of young people were, indeed, unknown to official agencies. In the Northern city, 16 of the 32 had no record with the careers company, with young people from the black and ethnic minority

community four times more likely to have no record than the population composition would lead us to expect. Secondly, where careers companies did know about, and were working with young people, little connection was being made between problems at school or in the training and labour markets, and problems young people were dealing with at home. An holistic understanding of their needs seemed some way off at the time of our study. Thirdly, even where a young person initially did have a careers service record, the research documented how many of them became disconnected from, and lost to welfare services with their 'destination' often recorded as 'unknown' by careers companies. Examples of this occurred when young people moved address, became homeless or were committed to a young offender institution. Our research located them mainly with the aid of voluntary sector organisations who seemed much more adept at outreach and detached work than careers companies. Fourthly, young people 'were deemed to disappear' where they resisted contact from careers officers. There were a variety of reasons for this but often it was because they regarded what careers constantly offered them to be not really what they wanted. They wanted jobs; what careers offered were yet more courses, or training programmes in which they had little interest.

Our conclusions in *Missing Connexions* suggested that Connexions faced huge challenges in attempting to re-engage the disengaged. Although in the late 1990s careers companies had increasing been re-focused on this group, our research suggested that this had not been successful, particularly with young people from black and minority ethnic groups. We were not optimistic about this being achieved quickly in the near future concluding that:

> *The responsibilities heaped on Connexions suggest that a more holistic approach to young people's welfare is critical to its success. (But) There is little sign from this study that the elements are yet in place to support such an holistic approach. If Connexions is to prove effective it will need to ensure that provision reflects the complexity of young people's lives.* (Britton et al., 2002:48)

We further argued that the roots of this complexity were buried deep in:

> *'systems' (care), 'institutions' (schools and colleges) and 'sub-cultures' (include drug misuse, crime and life styles)*

and warned against the dangers of interventions based upon:

> *a psycho-pathological model of the 'individualised' nature of their problems.*

Perhaps, with hindsight, these warnings were too strident and our faith in the ability of the Connexions strategy to teach old dogs new tricks too pessimistic?

The news reporting of *Missing Connexions* was slight, but one newspaper article did cover it (*Guardian*, 2002). In both the headline and the content there was a concentration on the negative and the dramatic; reporting, for instance that:

> *for the scheme to succeed, the working methods of the old careers service require a 'major cultural shift'.*

Unfortunately this publication occurred on the same day as a meeting in the Treasury as part of the Comprehensive Spending Reviews on future Connexions spending. The headline on the table greeting the minister at the Review was 'Broken Connexions'. Misinterpretation by the media brought huge embarrassment both to the minister and to the researchers. The contact between politicians, (not-very-) civil servants and the research team was immediate and brusque. We learned our first lesson – that the links between research findings and political influence is far from straightforward.

In response to this experience, and in line with the broad objectives of JRF to work with policy makers as far as possible, our second project deliberately included links to the Connexions Service National Unit and the appropriate divisions within the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) through membership of its advisory group. JRF advisory groups are precisely that – 'advisory' – maintaining the ultimate independence of researchers over decisions about the research design, the conduct of the research and the contents of its findings and final report, even though this may be discussed with JRF elsewhere. Advisory groups are not the 'steering groups' often preferred by government departments. Membership of the advisory group did, however, ensure that the research team were kept fully aware of parallel research on Connexions sponsored by the DfES itself and other related projects.

Researching Multi-Agency work under Connexions

The second project had as its focus multi-agency partnerships within the Connexions Strategy. It was based on a study of three Connexions partnerships reflecting the three different structures through which partnerships were being forged. The partnerships also differed in when they started, the type of location in which they operated, and the complexity and number of Local Authorities involved. The research design involved taking a vertical slice through each of the three partnerships. First we interviewed members of the Partnership Boards and Local Management Committees about their plans for, and experiences of planning and delivering multi-agency work. We also interviewed PAs and their managers about their work and its organisation. But the largest and most important part of the fieldwork involved taking a series of matched case studies of young people with acute and complex needs. Those selected included care leavers, young carers, asylum seekers, teenage parents, young offenders and those misusing drugs as well as young people truanting or excluded from school prior to the age of sixteen or NEET after that age. The case studies involved multiple interviews minimally with the young person selected and their Personal Advisor, but in most cases also including interviews with other professional workers working with them. In many cases we were also able to compare these accounts with what was kept on official records both within Connexions and in other agencies.

Given the challenges identified in our first Connexions related research project, it would have been highly surprising if, only two short years later we were able to report that everything was operating smoothly and effectively. The three partnership areas had been fully functional for differing periods of time. One (Midland) had been part of the first pilots in 2001 whilst the other two had not started to operate until the summer or autumn of 2002. In the LMC area of Northern Connexions in which the fieldwork took place, some

of the contracts for PAs had still not been issued when our field work came to an end in the Spring of 2004. There were, therefore, marked differences in the extent to which the partnerships had protocols on joint working and information sharing in place. As also noted by the National Audit Office report, there were also significant differences in the degree to which PAs had completed their training and this too had an impact on their knowledge and experience of working effectively with hard-to-reach groups (NAO, 2004).

During the course of our fieldwork it became clear that significant policy development was taking place at both a national and local level. In all three areas in which our fieldwork took place, the development of Children and Young People Strategic Partnership Plans was well advanced. These plans were important because they signalled a long-standing intention of LAs to engage in joint planning and commissioning of services for children and young people within their areas. Whilst Connexions partnerships had been involved, it was clear that they were much broader than those developed within Connexions, in part, because they covered a wider age group. These plans were also in tune with the proposals initially made in the Green Paper *Every Child Matters* and made more formally in the Children Act 2004. This Act signalled a root and branch re-organisation of services for children and young people. Co-ordination in national government was through the Minister for Children, Young People and Families with her responsibilities widened, following the Act, to include areas previously retained by the Department of Health, such as care and care leaving and teenage pregnancy and parenthood. A more holistic and 'joined-up' approach within Local Authorities was signalled by all LAs being required to have a single Director of Children's Services (a combination of services previously covered by social services and education). All services for children and young people (across all sectors, including the voluntary sector) were to be commissioned and co-ordinated by 'Children's Trusts'. This 'joined up' approach was further mirrored politically through the requirement of a single councillor (of cabinet rank) to take lead political responsibility for children's services. Co-ordination of services within local communities was to be fostered through the development of 'Sure Start Children's Centres' and full service 'Extended Schools' which would also facilitate the co-location of professionals working with children and young people.

At the suggestion of our JRF Advisory Group the final chapter of our research report examined the implications of these developments for the organisation and delivery of Connexions. The publication of the DfES Five Year Plan in July 2004 confirmed the intention that Children's Trusts should also take on the role of Local Management Committee for Connexions partnerships, and that the sub-regional partnerships should make full and transparent delegation of powers and budgets from the sub-regions to local authorities (through Children's Trusts) (DfES 2004b). Clearly the balance of powers was due to change. Minimally, Connexions' structure and organisation would have to be reconfigured.

In the light of this and our research findings, the final chapter of our final report made twenty specific recommendations about the reconfiguration of Connexions. Some (R7-9) sought to build on the achievements of the targeted PAs and ensure clearer and stronger management support for their role as advocate for young people. Yet others called for more helpful government guidance on crucial issues such as information sharing. R16, for instance, called for 'Exemplars from government on protocols for information sharing and guidance on the circumstances in which "need to know" criteria are triggered.' We

recommended early discussion with Children's Trusts on roles and responsibilities and delicate negotiations (to allay fears) about how decisions about 'lead professionals' would be reached (R17 and 18). Others recognised the significance of decisions about pooling resources under the new arrangements: 'R15 Direction must come from government about the extent to which pooling of budgets within Children's Trusts will be mandatory or discretionary' (Coles et al., 2004).

The final meeting of the project's Advisory Group met to discuss a first full draft of our report in May 2004. One representative at that meeting was also involved in the steering group for other DfES project funded by the DfES. He noted broad similarity of findings, even though the two projects had had no direct communication during the course of the research. It was, however, thought appropriate to arrange for an early sight of the findings from the JRF research to be made available across government and especially within the relevant divisions of the DfES. Agreement was also reached to hold a seminar in Sheffield early in July 2004 and that members of the DfES funded research team should be invited to the seminar, so they could also be aware of our findings as they drafted their own.

Putting our 'findings' into a more public domain

The structure and substance of our Sheffield seminar presentation to the DfES in July 2004 were largely the same as those contained in the final report published in December and that used in later dissemination events. As in other reporting, we anchored our discussion around case studies of young people deemed to have complex needs and often requiring specialist support to be brokered in for them (see also Coles, 2005). These were used to highlight more substantive issues concerning the delivery of the Connexions Strategy and the various processes associated with successful interventions. These were discussed under a series of headings associated with the Connexions process: determining inter-agency networks; the basis of effective intervention (building a relationship of trust); referral procedures and processes; what Connexions workers actually do (including assessment of needs, brokerage and advocacy; the confusion of roles; divisions of labour and information sharing; confidentiality and record keeping. The coincidence of our findings with those of the DfES research project is remarkable.

Some of the major findings of our study could be read as quite critical of Connexions. There was clear evidence that the multitude of different roles within the service all being called 'Personal Advisor' was confusing to many partners. We called for much greater clarity of these with some consideration being given to allocating different job titles. We also pointed to problems occurring in systems of referral and poor information sharing, especially between PAs with large case-loads largely delivering the universal service, and PAs able to offer more intensive support. We reported that, whilst protocols or agreements on interagency work were increasingly being put into place, where this had not been done, it remained an important structural barrier to effective intervention.

One of the most positive roles played by Connexions PAs was in acting as advocate for vulnerable young people in the face of non-compliance of other agencies with their

responsibilities. Yet even in this most vital role, we provided evidence of structural weakness where front-line PAs were repeatedly having to play this role which could and should have been resolved by managerial negotiation about proper functioning of agencies. Indeed, in contrast to the 2004 National Audit Office report (see below) we argued that there was still structural and systemic weakness in delivering the Connexions Strategy, particularly, in the management and supervision of front-line PAs, and particularly in the playing of the crucial but sensitive role of advocate.

'Partnership' was once defined by the minister responsible for Connexions at the time, Ivan Lewis, as 'the suppression of mutual loathing in pursuit of government money' and there were clear lines of mutual suspicions and outright antagonisms present within Connexions partnerships. The more successful partnerships in our research were the ones where time and effort was spent in explaining the Connexions mission and in allaying the fears of potential partners. In this sense, partnership was a 'practical accomplishment' to be worked at if it was to be sustained, rather than simply a taken for granted. The least successful were ones where hostilities and suspicions thrived, conflict became the dominant sport, and where there was a constant flow of 'events' which fuelled paranoia (Coles et al., 2004, Appendix).

At the request of the DfES, further case study material was also made available to the DfES ahead of publication as it was felt it might help ministers to appreciate better the work done by Connexions Personal Advisers. We have no details about how, or indeed if this was used. But a poor understanding by ministers of the working of Connexions, and a misunderstanding of the weight of evidence about its successes and failures are clear in the ensuing Green Paper *Youth Matters*.

From public accountability to political hostility

Whilst we were writing the first draft of our research there was an important report on the Connexions Service by the National Audit Office published in March (NAO, 2004). Much of that report was positive and benign. It concluded that Connexions was well on its way to achieving its main objective and the targets for reducing the proportion of young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) by ten per cent between November 2002 and 2004. It was also reported to have improved the quality of information about this group, to have good systems for identifying them and had invested significant time and effort in supporting them. On multi-agency partnership, it reported that partners did not feel there were 'any structural reasons' which would prevent effective partnership working at a local level. It did however point out that schools did not think that they were adequately resourced to provide appropriate levels of careers education and guidance, and that many careers *teachers* (employed by schools rather than by careers companies or Connexions) were often non-specialist and untrained. Part of the reason for this, it claimed, was the result of Connexions operating with less than 8,000 Personal Advisors, rather than the 15,000 initially estimated as necessary to achieve its aims. So, whilst the report was overwhelmingly positive, there were small hostages to fortune.

Following close on the heels of the NAO report was an altogether less benign inquiry

by the Public Accounts Committee. This took evidence in May 2004 but did not publish until November (Public Accounts Committee, 2004). The Select Committee adopted a more hostile approach to the evidence assembled by the NAO. Its Chairman took a dim view of the cost of Connexions being on course to achieve its main target. Rather than see this as providing long term value for money, he appeared to claim (naïvely) that its £450million budget (the total budget for Connexions) meant it was costing £25,OOO per NEET reduction achieved (albeit the NEET group being only a small part of its overall responsibilities). He also picked up on evidence in the report that schools thought they were not getting a particularly good deal out of the new arrangements. This 'schools-lobby' attack was further re-enforced by what reads like a rude and impatient intervention by Gerry Steinberg MP for Durham, (very significantly an ex-head-teacher). He reported angrily that a young woman in his constituency had told him that she was appalled at the quality of advice she had received when she had enquired at school about a future career in chiropody. What should she do about it? Interrupting and hectoring Anne Weinstock (representing Connexions), he concluded (largely on the basis of a single would-be chiropodist) that schools were being badly let down by Connexions. Politics and 'hear-say stories' were clearly becoming more important to the political fortunes of Connexions than any dispassionate distillation of the available 'evidence'!

In the summer of 2004 the DfES held three (supposedly) related policy reviews. One concerned careers education and guidance, the so called 'end-to-end' review, finally published alongside *Youth Matters* (DfES 2005b). This covered the universal service under Connexions. A second review concerned attempting to re-invigorate youth work – under a mantra of 'things to do; places to go' – a belated recognition of the erosion of youth work over the years. This apparently had the blessing of the Prime Minister and was designed to put flesh on the idea of a new 'youth offer' floated in the DfES Five Year Plan (DfES, 2004b). The third review concerned support services for vulnerable young people, and therefore covered Connexions targeted support. This third review covered both children and young people's services with an aim of developing a Common Assessment Framework (across professions) and the role of a 'Lead Professional' responsible for co-ordinating wrap-around support. Whilst all this may sound like the Connexions Strategy, neither the 'C' nor the 'S' word found their way into the papers on the *Lead Professional* also published simultaneously with *Youth Matters*. Indeed, by 2004, we researchers were reliably informed by insiders, that 'no-one' even mentions the word 'Strategy' linked to Connexions any more. Whatever the intention behind these reviews, it signalled that the Connexions pot was being vigorously stirred and a whole host of vested interested started to circle around, either to gloat about its potential demise, or to seek a share of the resources in any future re-configuration.

From counter-briefings to communiqué

Early in 2005 reports began to appear in the educational press and on the internet about 'the much delayed Youth Green Paper,' and what was, at the time, alleged to be the imminent demise of Connexions. This included briefings which appeared to come from the then Minister, Margaret Hodge (Rogers, 2004). In a web piece for *Infed* Mark Smith, a long standing sceptic of Connexions, repeated some of the main charges made by the Public

Accounts Committee (Smith, 2005). He also drew upon comments on the links between Connexions and the alleged deterioration in careers education and guidance made by long-standing member of the Careers lobby, Tony Watts (Watts, 2005). Smith concluded that Connexions 'had few friends amongst senior ministers and had annoyed some key lobby groups ... the most significant of these ... head teachers.' Connexions, he writes, was 'deeply problematic', that 'flaws in its organisation, execution and focus' were a political issue, and the forthcoming Green Paper seemed a good way of dealing with it.

Because of the mischief being created ahead of the Green Paper, in association with JRF, a dissemination conference was arranged to counter some of the misunderstandings of the achievements of Connexions, together with the areas of weakness identified by the research. We invited the DfES to join us in this but when they felt unable to do so, arranged for members of the research team they had sponsored to share the platform with us. We also invited responses from within Connexions itself through the National Association of Connections Partnerships (NACP) and Careers Education and Guidance (through 'Careers England') and youth services more generally through the National Youth Agency. The conference had space for around a hundred delegates who were invited from across a whole range of relevant services.

All delegates were supplied with information from the various briefings on the Green Paper and so were aware of potential threat. One of the most unusual features of the conference was the high level of consensus reached from such a diverse audience. Delegates soon agreed that many of the Green Paper proposals being leaked to the press would be highly undesirable and if implemented, would result in a significant weakening of services for young people. Indeed, such was the strength of feeling that it was agreed that a conference communiqué should be sent to the DfES. Given the unanimity, to which both the JRF and DfES research teams gave their assent, it is important to quote from the communiqué at length:

> *There was recognition by delegates of the considerable achievements made by Connexions in a number of areas and sympathy that this had not been adequately recognised in some of the press reports of the Green Paper. This was especially true of the targeted service where the distinctive and important role of the PA as advocate needed to be protected. To many delegates this suggested that a more appropriate response to Connexions may be:*

> • *To preserve what is good ('If it ain't broke; don't fix it') as distinct from embarking on an untested agenda of radical reform. ...*

More specifically many delegates:

• *Questioned how robust the evidence base was for some of the proposals for change for Connexions 'leaked' ahead of the Green Paper.*
• *Thought it wisest to base any reform on the strengths and achievements of Connexions.*
• *Argued that there was a need for Government to recognise that building effective partnerships required patience, resources, and above all, time to consolidate. There*

was awareness that, in the past, much time had been spent on being overly-critical of services, and this had done little to develop an atmosphere of trust.

… Most strongly, and perhaps unusually for a conference of this size, there was:

- *Unanimous agreement (100 per cent of delegates with no abstentions) that schools or colleges should NOT be given control of the universal service ... Delegates argued that to do so would be in complete violation of the important principle of impartiality on which such advice should be based. There was also concern that schools' duty to co-operate in collaboration was not recognised within the 2004 Children Act and that this formally affects their levels of commitment to working in partnership with other agencies.*

We did get a polite response from a junior minister but it was clear that the weight of both evidence and opinion expressed in the communiqué would be ignored by government when the *Youth Matters* Green Paper was published. And so it came to pass.

Initially, the Green Paper spelled out a short and declining future for Connexions:

Children's trusts will decide which of their existing services need to remain in place... We expect this will involve streamlining accountability, collapsing management chains and merging the functions of separate services ... (but) will want to take account of the quality of existing provision including through high-performing Connexions Services. (DfES, 2005, para 217) We will encourage Local Authorities to retain the Connexions brand ... (para 257) Our proposals have direct implications for the workforce .. (including) potential changes when funding and responsibility for Connexions work passes from Connexions Partnerships to Local Authorities. (para 270).

These and other paragraphs in the Green Paper do seem to suggest the death-knell for Connexions. So why this initial political decision of ministers to turn their backs on the Connexions Strategy?

The answer lies in the nature of politics. Every rising politician looks for an opportunity to enhance their power and influence. Every waning politician looks to establish their legacy in lasting achievements. And in the *Every Child Matters* agenda relatively junior politicians at the time saw a veritable juggernaut where Connexions (ambitious though it was in 2000) had dwindled in its glamour to that of a small white van. And the latter could quite easily be parked inside the hanger that would be necessary to house the fleet of initiatives proclaiming 'Every Child Matters'. Politics is also adept at picking and choosing 'evidence' to justify its lofty decisions. What is sad is that often researchers and civil servants allow them to get away with it.

So let us be clear. The Green Paper *Youth Matters* was 'an evidence free zone' (Coles, 2005). The evidence of Connexions successes was politically 'buried' (Hoggarth and Payne, 2006). The Green Paper does represent a 'disempowering' of the very vulnerable young people Connexions sought to protect and support (Coles, 2005). But this was brought about by political manipulation rather than the weight of research evidence. What has been perhaps

most surprising is the way in which some have chosen to join the political circus, to perform single-twist-about-face somersaults and pretend they had been heading in that direction all along, and thereby attempt to re-write history.

Sum assaults and somersaults?

The past several years have seen the marginalisation of Connexions and its achievements. I was not, like many other critics, opposed to the Connexions Strategy from the beginning. Indeed I was broadly welcoming of its ambitions whilst not wanting to underestimate the challenges it would face (Coles, 2000; Britton et al., 2002). Some within Connexions thought our initial research in *Missing Connexions*, unfairly hostile, and that this helped fuel a momentum which gave Connexions a political profile far less positive than its fellow travellers such as the Teflon coated precocious child, Sure Start. In those early days we probably were guilty of saying that the glass was half empty, when it was, remarkably, already half full. But not to recognise the distance Connexions would have to travel to be truly successful would have been naïve in the extreme and we sought to bring realism to what we thought would be a long haul.

Perhaps it is premature to conclude that the haul was nasty, brutish and short. For the moment Connexions seems to trundling along as if the Green Paper hadn't happened. Certainly many thought that although attempts would be made to retain the Connexions brand, once powers and resources were delegated to Children's Trusts in 2008, little would be left of the power and authority of the Connexions Strategy, or the authority and support for the advocacy role being played by PAs. But *Youth Matters: Next Steps* can be interpreted as adopting a quite different tone towards Connexions. To be sure, much is still being made of the 'brand' associated with high levels of customer satisfaction 'a valuable asset which we do not want to lose'. But there is much more than that:

> In many areas it is the Connexions Partnership which has expertise in delivering high quality information, advice and guidance; involving young people; providing integrated targeted support; tackling NEETs; and tracking and providing vital planning information on young people. (DfES, 2006b, para 8.13).

Are we seeing another spectacular 'somersault'; from the briefings of its premature death, to allowing the good ones a stay of execution, to promoting its achievements more generally? Perhaps, (but only perhaps) Connexions can escape the executioners axe. To be sure, some local authorities have declared their intentions to absorb Connexions Personal Advisors into their own youth support service. But not many local politicians have been leaping up to declare their local Connexions complete rubbish – well, except the ex-MP for Durham and the would-be chiropodist, and they are history, (re-written or not).

For the benefit of Mr Kite – what's in a logo?

Sadly both *Youth Matters* and *Next Steps* agree that we should keep the 'Connexions' logo. I never have liked it (Coles, 2003). In the Seebohm Rowntree Building where I work there

is a lift made by a firm called 'Kone'. This also has an automated communication system to help identify which floor you are on. This aid for people with disabilities of vision is called 'Konexions'. I have often thought this (or even better 'Konnections') might have been a better logo for the Connexions Strategy, with a proper kicking-K at the front instead of that big wacky kiss in the middle. Perhaps Children's Trusts could borrow 'KoneXions' as their logo for their sad re-launch of a youth support service addressing the same old problems confronted between 2000 and 2007. Although I usually walk up the stairs to my office on the second floor – I do occasional ride with my good friend Mr K. At least he is responsive, accurate, seems to know where he is, where he is going next and why.

> **REPRISE**
> *For the benefit of Mr Kite*
> *There will be a show tonight*
> *On Trampoline ...*
>
> *What a scene.*
> *Over men and horses*
> *Hoops and garters*
> *Lastly through a hogshead of real fire!*
> *In this way*
> *Mr K*
> *Will challenge the world!*
>
> *(BUT)*
> *Mr H will demonstrate*
> *Ten summersets (sic) he'll undertake*
> *On solid ground*
>
> *A splendid time is guaranteed for all.*
>
> (The Beatles, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, 1967)

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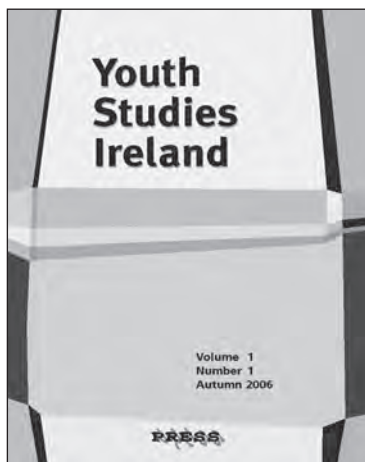
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A complex but increasingly coherent journey? The emergence of 'youth policy' in Europe

Howard Williamson

The story of 'youth policy' development at a European level has been one of complexity and incoherence. The two major European institutions, the European Union and the Council of Europe, have both become increasingly committed to a youth agenda but their focus has often been on very different priorities. Not until after the turn of the millennium did they start to work more collaboratively on a framework of 'youth practice' incorporating youth work and training, youth research and youth policy. This paper charts the range of disparate initiatives that have slowly converged into that framework – which may, with some legitimacy, now be considered as a youth policy framework for Europe. New partnership arrangements between the European Union and the Council of Europe hold the promise that such a framework can be developed and sustained, though much remains at the drawing board and awaits conversion into

Keywords: Europe, youth, policy, European commission, Council of Europe

All countries have a youth policy – by intent, default or neglect. Whatever a country may do, or not do by way of its provision and practice with young people, inevitably has an effect on them, and on their futures and possibilities. Some countries do very little for young people: a policy of neglect. Some countries may be reducing or diminishing their active focus on young people: a policy of default. Most countries subscribe to the age-old truism that their young people are their future, and so endeavour to frame policies purposefully on their behalf: a policy of intent. That intent may, however, be as much to do with regulation (of unacceptable, deviant or anti-social behaviour) as with positive participation and engagement. So even where one can detect that an *intentional* policy framework for young people prevails, one has to consider the extent to which it emphasises the control and perhaps prevention of negative issues as opposed to the encouragement and promotion of more positive features of young people's lives. A 'youth policy' is the overarching framework of governmental (and sometimes non-governmental) activity directed towards young people: at, for and with them. It has generally been regarded as, and restricted to the authority and autonomy of nation-states but, under the twin influences of globalisation and geo-political collaboration, one can see that 'youth policy' now potentially transgresses national borders. This is, indeed, the case in relation to the European context, in which both the 'social condition' of young people in many corners of Europe and the social, economic and political objectives of the countries of Europe often converge to produce a shared agenda. Such convergence should not, however, submerge the equally important issue of *difference*, for the 'social condition' of young people in different parts of Europe and the social, political and economic circumstances of the countries in which they live also produce *different* issues and priorities. The integration of youth in the European community has,

therefore, to take account both of many shared features, experiences and needs and of persisting inequalities and differences both within and between its member states.

Not that the embryonic post-war 'Europe' was always so actively committed to young people. Many arguments and explanations have been put forward for this, not least that there were fewer challenges around the successful transition and integration of young people into 'adult' life and that the institutional framework of 'Europe' was itself so much younger then. Moreover, nation-states were largely both capable and effective in 'making' their young people whereas, under later conditions of globalisation, as Lauritzen and Guidikova (2002) have pointed out, they were no longer able to make and shape their youth. In fact the reverse was starting to apply: young people have to make their own futures, with a range of consequences both for the ways in which they should learn and for the geographical and political boundaries of their lives. Indeed, it is often argued that the starting point for youth policy development *in Europe* (as opposed to within specific countries, for different social, economic or ideological purposes) were the events – or *'les evenements'* – of 1968, during which the political establishments realised and recognised that something had to be done to accommodate and incorporate the aspirations of young people in wider structures of governance.

Shortly after the events of 1968, both the European Community and the Council of Europe (both relatively small 'associations' of countries at the time) embarked on what was to become a long, and often quite separate, journey in the forging, shaping and defining of something that would come to be known as 'youth policy'. The EEC held a youth colloquium and the Council of Europe opened its European Youth Centre in Strasbourg. The language at the time was one of radicalism, revolution and social change – and young people were viewed as the vanguard of that movement.

By the 1980s, the language had mellowed, the focus had changed, and European engagement with young people had widened. Young people were but one of a range of social movements (alongside women, peace and environment, for example) seeking participation, dialogue and influence in an increasingly inter-connected world. For young people, this became more pronounced during International Youth Year (1985), which saw the first European Conference for Ministers of Youth (in Strasbourg) and an increasing interest and concern with intercultural learning and tolerance. The 1980s saw youth organisations becoming more prominent and actively associated with the political transformations that took place at the end of that decade, symbolised by the fall of the Berlin Wall, that led to the dramatic and rapid expansion of the Council of Europe and the steady increase in the membership of the European Union over the next fifteen years. And this in turn led to a more systematic *European* focus on young people and youth policy.

Background/Context

Today, the enlarged European Union has a membership of 27 countries (since January 2007) and the Council of Europe a membership of 47 countries, stretching from Iceland to the border with Japan. More countries are candidates for EU membership, and others benefit from what is known as the 'neighbourhood policy' of the EU.

In some respects, though, the emergence and development of 'youth policy' is not so much a product of the European situation per se. It is more a consequence of the wider issues in the lives of young people. These clearly bear on, and invite a response from the social and economic concerns of individual countries and on the European context more generally.

First, there is the question of 'youth transitions' that, for many young people have become prolonged, significantly more complex, and sometimes reversible. No longer are they the relatively straightforward (literally!) linear process of leaving education, finding work, leaving home and starting a family. Transitions in the labour market, in personal relationships and in housing are far less certain. And though far greater opportunities now exist for more young people than prevailed in the past, there is also a significantly greater set of risks, to which more vulnerable young people in particular are susceptible.

Second, therefore, is this issue of what has been referred to as the 'youth divide' (Jones, 2002). For many similar, and sometimes different, reasons, throughout Europe, there is growing evidence of increasing inequalities between a majority of young people making a purposeful and positive transition to adulthood and a significant minority who are falling to the margins and succumbing to circumstances involving educational drop-out, early pregnancy, unemployment, substance misuse and crime.

Third, there is a huge debate about the parameters, definition and causes of what has come to be known as 'social exclusion', though others still favour arguably more precise terms such as poverty. Nevertheless, there is some consensus that such exclusion and social marginality includes a clustering of disadvantages that can be self-fulfilling in their impact as a vicious circle turns and exclusion is reproduced over generations. Those trapped in such circumstances become cut off from any possibility of mainstream participation, both in the labour market and in the wider society.

And this produces the fourth contextual point: what is required to address and redress such processes and circumstances in order to promote a stronger probability of employability and civic participation? The debate revolves around the balance to be struck between creating greater opportunities for autonomy and individual responsibility, and ensuring more possibility of access to support and public services.

These, then, are the background issues which set the scene for thinking about appropriate 'youth policy' responses at local, regional, national and supranational levels – including the European community.

Developments

There have been a host of varied developments that could all be viewed as having contributed to the 'flow' towards a more unified and coherent idea of 'youth policy' at a European level. What follows are some 'headline' contributions.

Lauritzen and Guidikova (2002) draw attention to what they refer to as 'official' developments in the youth field, starting with the declaration by the United Nations in

1985 of the International Year of Youth and its three governing themes: peace, participation and development. They move on then to 1989 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and then 1992 and the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life, a declaration of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe [CLRAE]. They also move through other material, including various resolutions of the Council of Ministers of Youth within the Council of Europe and the final text of the First World Congress of Ministers of Youth of the United Nations, which met in Lisbon in 1998. Of most significance, however, is their observation once they have mapped such developments:

> These texts are what people make of them. Even if there is no army behind them to make sure they are followed to the letter, why would youth ministers and authorities, NGOs, and parliaments agree on them when they have already decided to ignore them afterwards? (Lauritzen and Guidikova, 2002:373)

In other words, Lauritzen and Guidikova are asserting that those who allege that such documentation pays no more than lip service to the ideas underpinning youth policy and participation are missing the point that, even if one cannot necessarily trace direct action flowing from it, it still serves as a significant signpost for more concrete development.

It is tempting nevertheless, to adopt the more sceptical position, since virtually all high-level meetings necessarily emerge with a set of high-level aspirations, many of which do not appear to come to fruition. The Council of Europe's Conferences of Ministers of Youth, from the first in Strasbourg in 1985 to the sixth in Thessaloniki in 2002, are a case in point. Over those years, all the predictable rhetoric has been invoked: participation, the need for 'comprehensive' youth policies, gender equality, meeting the needs of young people at risk, promoting youth mobility, cultivating enterprise, improving training, ensuring youth rights, enhancing access to information, and so on. At the meeting in Bucharest in 1998, there was a resolution defining 'The Youth Policy of the Council of Europe':

- Help young people meet the challenges facing them and achieve their aspirations
- Strengthen civil society through training for democratic citizenship, in a non-formal educational context
- Encourage young people's participation in society
- Support the development of youth policies
- Seek ways of promoting youth mobility in Europe

Even sceptics will detect immediately that some of these laudable aspirations *have* been assisted through various European level initiatives and activities. The European Union established its youth programmes in 1992 – Youth for Europe, the 'YOUTH' programme, and, from 2006-2013 the 'Youth in Action' programme. These have had different and incremental features, but have included youth exchanges, youth initiative projects, the transfer of expertise and knowledge through support for study visits by youth workers, and the European Voluntary Service programme (EVS). The Council of Europe has run a range of training courses on a host of trans-national issues, governed by its principles of human rights, democracy and tolerance and its practices of co-management. During the mid-1990s, it ran a huge anti-racism campaign across Europe under the banner of 'All Different,

All Equal'. When one starts to explore the detail of *practice* that has been established under the auspices of both of these European institutions, it becomes rather more difficult to sustain the view that the pronouncements and documentation from high-level European meetings are only vacuous rhetoric, even if there is still most definitely a case for narrowing the gap between politics and practice. To some extent that gap has come to be filled by meetings of senior officials responsible for youth issues within national Ministries. Within the EU, the Directors General for Youth meet twice a year, under each Presidency. Within the Council of Europe, government youth representatives meet (at least) twice yearly as the CDEJ, the inter-governmental steering group for European co-operation in the youth field. It is their role to interpret political pronouncements and aspirations, and to contribute to decisions as to what are priorities for practice. It is these two (overlapping[1]) groups of senior civil servants who, in fact, have served as the engine for the most recent developments in the youth field, which may reasonably be seen as moving towards a more coherent and integrated 'youth policy' in Europe.

Towards a focus on 'youth policy'

The developments outlined above therefore comprise some of the building blocks and signposts that slowly gelled into a more comprehensive view of 'youth policy'. Initially, there were separate – and quite distinctive – pathways being followed by the two European institutions (despite, as I note above, the common personnel involved!) but slowly this work has converged and there is now, increasingly, a shared agenda being followed, notably on account of an integrated partnership agreement between the European Commission and the Council of Europe that has been operational since May 2005. Nevertheless, at the end of the 1990s, rather different youth policy foci were in train.

The European Union (Youth Unit)
In December 1999, the European Commissioner for Education and Culture announced that a White Paper on Youth was to be prepared. This set in motion a series of consultations with governments, young people and – significantly – youth researchers, and a sequence of conferences and events which at first invited ideas as if the White Paper was an open book and then sought to turn them into more realistic propositions. The rules concerning levels of European 'competence' and principles of 'subsidiarity' meant, in fact, that the scope for a White Paper on *youth policy* was heavily circumscribed. It could not, for example, directly address issues such as formal education or employment, nor could it require member states to act on its propositions.

The White Paper (European Commission, 2001) was launched in November 2001. By some, it was considered to be a rather damp squid, lacking teeth and dwelling on issues that appeared, perhaps, to be rather peripheral to the central needs facing young people at the turn of the millennium. For others, however, it was a major achievement; there had not been so many White Papers in the history of the European Commission, and for 'youth' to have such dedicated attention reflected a significant level of political commitment. Both views are, in fact, legitimate positions to adopt. The White Paper has produced concerted political effort that would almost certainly not have materialised had it not existed. But it has largely been restricted to the four central themes of the White Paper that, although

important, are perhaps not the most urgent issues in the lives of many young people in Europe, especially those who are more disadvantaged and excluded.

Those themes are participation, information, voluntary services, and a greater knowledge and better understanding of youth. Since the launch of the White Paper, each has been subjected to intensive bi-lateral consultations with member states through a process called the 'Open Method of Co-ordination'. This has requested member states to respond to a detailed questionnaire on each theme. All country questionnaires have subsequently been collated and analysed, leading to a composite report by the Commission that, in turn, has generated a set of 'common objectives' that are then agreed by the Ministers for Youth. Once agreed, they then have to be acted upon. Five years on, it is not particularly clear how much progress has taken place on these common objectives across the European Union and whether any such progress has produced a greater evenness in provision and practice on these themes, or possibly simply widened the divide[2].

Once more, it is possible to see the glass both as half full and half empty. Despite weaknesses and reservations in the process, there *have* been useful and important aspects of progress. Issues concerning youth participation have been strengthened by further declarations during different EU Presidencies – in the Netherlands, Luxembourg and the UK. Indeed, in the UK, young people argued that participation had a key role to play in advancing employability and citizenship, and in combating exclusion. The partnership with the Council of Europe has led to significant progress on the theme of a 'greater understanding of youth', notably through a series of research seminars that have taken place[3]. The European Voluntary Service programme has been strengthened within Action 2 of the new Youth in Action programme of the EU, on account of its central position within the White Paper and subsequent debate about the importance of youth volunteering for personal transition and social citizenship (see Williamson and Hoskins, 2005).

The other important 'youth policy' development within the European Union has been the European Youth Pact, established in 2005 mid-way through the 'Lisbon Strategy' at the instigations of the political leaders of Sweden, Germany, France and Spain. The Lisbon Strategy of 2000 aims to make the European Union the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010. There always was within it some recognition of the role of non-formal education in fomenting active citizenship, but the 'European Pact for Youth' emanating from the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy strengthens its focus on young people: it calls for urgent action in response to demographic change (the 'generational contract') and emphasises the need to give young people a first chance in life and the skills to contribute to competitiveness, growth and social cohesion. In short, it underlines the view that the Lisbon strategy needs the support of young people to succeed – and for this to materialise, member states need Action Plans to show how they plan to support young people to succeed.

The 2005 European Pact for Youth, in effect, therefore builds from, and broadens the youth policy focus established formally by the European Union through the 2001 White Paper through encompassing considerable additional territory, including 'the fields of employment, social cohesion, education, training, mobility, as well as family and professional life' (Council of the European Union, 2005). Indeed, reporting on the Pact, the

European Youth Portal (www.europa.eu.int/youth) comments that 'This is the first time that youth policy has featured so visibly at EU level.'

It would be a mistake, however, to think that the White Paper on Youth and the European Pact for Youth were the EU's only contribution to European youth policy. Many other areas of EU activity – notably various training and enterprise initiatives promoted by CEDEFOP, the Leonardo da Vinci vocational training programme, and the Socrates and Erasmus mobility programmes in higher education – clearly impact on (some sub-populations of) young people in various ways. The White Paper and the Pact are simply the most dedicated and discrete manifestations of the European Union's specific policy focus on young people.

The Council of Europe (Youth Directorate)

The Council of Europe's Youth Ministers' Conference in 1998 may have set out a resolution on the 'youth policy' of the Council of Europe (see above), but the flesh for those bones started to be produced a year earlier. In 1996, the government of Finland had proposed that the Council of Europe, following a model already in place in relation to cultural policy, should embark on a process of reviewing national youth policy. Finland offered to be the first country for such an international review and an embryonic process was established. The country concerned would produce a national youth policy report, while the Council of Europe would compose a review team that would visit the country on two occasions before producing an international report based on its findings. There would then be an international 'hearing' at a meeting of the CDEJ to consider the conclusions. Subsequently this model was both developed (into a more sophisticated process) and occasionally corrupted (in that the sequence was, increasingly, not followed) but the essence of the approach remained the same.

The objective of this process was threefold: to provide a critical eye on the country concerned, to provide ideas and lessons for other countries within the Council of Europe and – significantly for this article – to start to construct some shared parameters within which a European level 'youth policy' might be considered.

The Finland review took place in 1997. Since then there have been a further eleven completed reviews, and others are in the pipeline. This has built up a body of knowledge about numerous principles, policies and practices in relation to young people across many cultural and political contexts, which were first 'synthesised' after the first seven reviews (Williamson, 2002). A second synthesis review is currently being undertaken, which may add to the structure and content of the youth policy framework advanced by Williamson in 2002[4], as well as exploring the efficacy of the ways in which the reviews are currently conducted.

In addition to the public international reviews of national youth policy (there are now open national hearings in the country's capital as part of the process), the Council of Europe has also been engaged in more private 'advisory missions' to countries, including Slovenia (the first in 2002), Croatia, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, the Czech Republic and Ukraine. Topics for consultation are specified by the inviting government, and the international team is committed to confidentiality, but nevertheless their general thoughts and reflections, suitably anonymised, can (and do) feed into discussions in wider contexts.

This, therefore, has also contributed to thinking about youth policy within the Council of Europe.

The Youth Directorate has also produced a document considering 'Youth Policy indicators' and the CDEJ has published a document on some of the standards that it believes should inform youth policy development within the member countries of the Council of Europe. Both of these pieces of work have sought, in different ways, to consolidate and contribute further to 'youth policy' development within the Council of Europe (see Council of Europe Youth Directorate, 2003, and European Steering Committee for Youth, 2003).

Finally, more recently, through the partnership arrangements between the European Commission and the Council of Europe (see below), there has been a series of research seminars convened by the Council's Youth Directorate but focusing on key issues of concern to the Commission, including some of the themes of the EU White Paper. Whatever the substantive focus of these seminars (such as voluntary activities by young people, or the social exclusion of young people), the contributions of academic youth researchers and policy analysts has undoubtedly assisted in making progress on the overarching fourth pillar of the White Paper – that is, the greater understanding and knowledge of youth. Further developments on this front are discussed below.

An emergent framework of 'opportunity focused' youth policy

A reading of the material emerging from the first seven Council of Europe international reviews of national youth policy produced the first attempt at a transversal, inter-sectoral youth policy framework that could – perhaps should – be a guiding model across Europe. That synthesis report (Williamson, 2002) was completely grounded in the seven national and seven international reports on Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Romania, Spain, Estonia and Luxembourg – a reasonable spread of European countries with very different traditions, cultures and contexts. It revealed some very dramatic differences (such as in policy approaches to substance misuse and the drugs culture) but also some very strong similarities (such as the policy commitment to education and lifelong learning). It did not set out a blueprint for youth policy but it did suggest an 'ideal type' in relation to the conceptualisation of youth policy, structural questions, principal domains, cross-cutting issues, and foundation stones for effective practice. The model would necessarily require, indeed demand, adaptation according to particular circumstances but it has, so far, stood the test of time and informed the international reviews that have subsequently taken place (of Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Cyprus, Slovakia, and Armenia).

The framework asks first how a country conceptualises the idea of 'youth' and the idea of 'youth policy'. This may appear self-explanatory, but the changing condition of 'youth' demands a changing consideration of 'youth policy' – something that now requires far more breadth and depth than the leisure-time (youth work) provision for teenagers that is still sometimes taken as a proxy for youth policy!

Secondly, there is a focus on the legislation, structures and budgets that exist for the delivery of youth policy. What are the laws that govern interventions with and for young

people? Are these enabling or restrictive? Which ministries are responsible for youth policy? How do they relate to each other? Does one have a dominant lead? How does the central administration relate to regional and local governance: in other words, how does central desire, demand or prescription actually 'reach the ground'? What kinds of budgets are available, across departments and between different levels of administration? How are these resources determined and allocated? And, finally, where do youth organisations fit in? Is there a National Youth Council? To what extent is it involved in discussions of policy and decisions about priorities and funding? The answers to these, and more, questions provide a map of the terrain on which youth policy is positioned and provide some very real clues about its likelihood of reaching the young people at whom different strands of policy may be directed.

Those strands are themselves located within different policy domains, often predominantly but never exclusively within (formal and non-formal) education and the related fields of training and employment. Beyond these, however, are the domains of health, housing, social protection, family policy and child welfare, leisure and culture, youth justice, and national defence and military service. All have a bearing on the lives of young people and may promote or constrain their prospects and possibilities.

There are, moreover, a range of issues that cut across, indeed cut *through*, these policy domains. These include questions of participation and citizenship (are young people involved in public decision-making?), of combating social exclusion and promoting inclusive practice, and of the provision of youth information. There are further, related, cross-cutting questions to do with multiculturalism and minorities, mobility and internationalism, safety and protection, and, fundamentally, equal opportunities. All of these issues merit both empirical inquiry and more conceptual debate within the framework of any youth policy.

Finally, there are foundation stones that promote and produce better policy and practice. These include the commissioning and use of youth research (how does research knowledge inform policy development?), the training of professional practitioners who work with young people (what level of training do they receive and what is the content of the curricula?), and the dissemination of good practice (are there conferences and publications that enable people to learn about what is going well?). Without such approaches in place, youth policy development and implementation can end up being a somewhat hit and miss affair, and more likely to be subject to changes in the political wind and the vagaries of political whim. Indeed, these latter points informed two further models concerned with youth policy that are simple in conception but are considered very valuable in stimulating reflective and reflexive discussion.

Checks and balances
During the process of writing the synthesis report on the Council of Europe international reviews, it became apparent that there was a relatively simple checklist of the *components* that are necessary if youth policy is to have any likelihood of moving from political rhetoric and aspiration to grounded effectiveness. There was also a relatively simple *dynamic* that illustrated how youth policy might make effective and improving progress or, conversely, grind to a halt. These have become known as the five 'C's and four (or eight) 'D's of youth policy in Europe. Both are designed to stimulate reflection and discussion about the

progress and 'state of play' of youth policy rather than produce definitive conclusions.

The five 'C's

1. Coverage – This is concerned with three different dimensions of 'coverage': geography, social groups and policy issues. First, in spatial terms, how far does youth policy *reach* – from the centre of administration? In particular, to what extent are dispersed rural areas reached by a range of policy opportunities and possibilities, or do these tend to be restricted to more concentrated population areas, where 'economies of scale' are more likely to apply? Second, do policy initiatives and measures actually reach all the young people at whom they are directed, especially when core objectives of particular policies are concerned with equalising opportunities or combating social exclusion? Too often, new initiatives get 'consumed' by other groups of young people before they make contact with those young people who may need them most. Third, what is the 'reach' of youth policy? Is it conceived within relatively narrow parameters, or does it embrace all those areas and aspects of policy that impinge on young people's lives?

2. Capacity – Do the structures exist to 'make youth policy happen'? What are the relationships between central administrations, and those at regional and more local levels? Where does authority lie? Is that the appropriate place for effective action? And what is the *structural* relationship between governmental processes and practices, and non-governmental activity, and youth organisations? In short, are arrangements in place to make the very best of the circumstances available?

3. Competence – Are those in the youth policy field suitably skilled to deliver effective services? What is the relationship between professionals and 'volunteers' (a concept well understood in some countries and completely unknown in others)? How do those working with and for young people build their knowledge, skills and attitudes – and keep them up to date?

4. Co-ordination / Co-operation / Communication – What is the nature of contact between different levels of administration and across different domains of youth policy? Put crudely, do people talk to each other! What is the effect of that discussion? If people work in narrow 'silos' of activity, then there is serious risk of different elements of youth policy development bearing absolutely no relation to one another and, at worst, working in completely opposing directions (criminal justice and employment policies are typically guilty of this).

5. Cost – The human and financial resources available for discharging the responsibilities of youth policy are clearly very important, if never the only factor in generating effective practice. Securing a sense of resource allocations and distribution, priority activities, and core and more discretionary budgets is a critical benchmark for exploring the issues within the other 'C's above.

The four (or eight) 'D's

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Decision and Drive

Direction   *Decentralisation*

Development   **Delivery**

Dissent   *Deficiencies*

Debate

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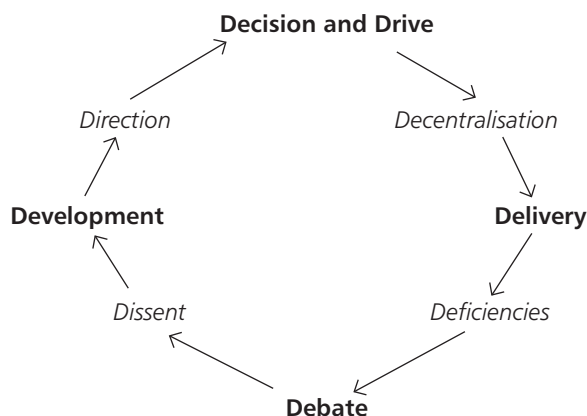
This model is concerned with the dynamic of youth policy development and implementation – how youth policy can experience catalysts of progress and, equally, obstructions that can sometimes put progressive policy into reverse. It can start and stall at any point in the cycle, for although usually initiatives *appear* to derive from the 'top' of the cycle – from political decision and drive – they have sometimes been cultivated and nurtured elsewhere in the cycle: in, for example, professional discussion or experimental practice projects.

The point about the model is that youth policy requires political championship but, for political rhetoric and even legislation to convert into service delivery, there have to be structures that enable policy aspirations to be decentralised. That process of decentralisation carries with it a wide range of governance and delivery questions: management, monitoring, workforce development, grant allocations, and so on. Inevitably, however well thought through any policy initiative, there will be unforeseen and unintended consequences – deficiencies in programmes and practice. Such weaknesses demand attention through critical reflection and evaluation (debate). That, in turn, is likely to produce different perspectives, explanations and interpretations. At some point, however, such 'dissent' (competing viewpoints) has to be reconciled if useful proposals for development are to be constructed. Those development ideas comprise possibly new directions in youth policy and certainly small turning points, which require political championship and drive.

The whole process should be one of creative interaction between politics (politicians and civil servants), professionals related to the issue in question (including youth researchers), and young people (not just youth NGOs). The best practice is only likely to emerge from a youth policy forged on the anvil of mutuality between these three constituencies. Youth participation and the involvement of young people in public decision-making has a range of rationales and benefits: not only is it compliant with Article 12 of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child but it provides a platform for the exercise of active citizenship and, critically, provides a 'user perspective' on the policy issues under consideration. There may be questions about the *type* of youth 'participation', but that is another matter. Similarly, the involvement of youth researchers with both general and specific knowledge of the topic being discussed provides a more dispassionate angle and

potentially an 'evidence base', even if other factors ultimately inform future directions. And while researchers may be more distant, professional practitioners have a 'hands-on' understanding of challenges at stake. Governments and politicians ignore these constituencies at their peril, for without them, weak and ineffective policy is likely to ensue.

Moving forward – partnerships and protocols

Youth policy within Europe is clearly not a static issue, whether at the level of municipalities, member states, the EU, or the Council of Europe. A municipality in England recently decided to abolish its statutory youth service (the provision of non-formal education); Lithuania has retracted on its much-celebrated system of 'co-management' of youth policy and absorbed its State Council for Youth Affairs within the government; Wales has taken a similar action in transferring the functions of the quasi-independent Wales Youth Agency into the Welsh Assembly Government; the EU is showing a commitment to a stronger commitment to a 'structured dialogue' within the triangular relationship between research, policy and practice (see Milmeister and Williamson, 2006); and in September 2006 the Council of Europe launched its second major 'All Different All Equal' anti-racism campaign under the banner of Diversity, Human Rights and Participation.

Many 'pillars' have already been put in place at a European level, building from both within and outside the key institutions of the European Union and the Council of Europe. The following are but some of the most prominent examples. It is important to note that these are not 'stand alone' trajectories; indeed, most are integrally linked through historical development, the personnel involved or the issues on which they have a shared agenda.

Within the field of **training and practice**, there have been significant developments since the signing of a training covenant in 1999 between the European Union and the Council of Europe. This led, most significantly, to a two-year programme of training for European level trainers in youth work on the question of European citizenship. This was the ATTE course (Advanced Training for Trainers in Europe) that ran from 2001-2003 (see Council of Europe, 2005; Chisholm et al, 2006). Its participants have since engaged in a range of multiplier activities. A more modest trans-national contribution during this time was the long-term training course 'Madzinga', on intercultural learning, funded through a number of European institutions, which was the subject to an intensive external observation and evaluation (see Williamson and Taylor, 2005).

In the field of youth **research**, through the increasing practice of partnership between the European Union and the Council of Europe, the somewhat dormant *European research correspondents' network* of the Council of Europe has been resurrected. A correspondent is nominated by each country and they meet once a year to exchange knowledge from their own countries as well as to consider the wider youth research context in Europe and their contribution to the even broader youth policy agenda. Closely related to this group is the 'knowledge centre' correspondents' network (some are the same people). These individuals were nominated by governments to contribute to the development of the *European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy* (EKCYP) which is viewed as a major instrument for advancing the fourth pillar of the EU White Paper ('greater knowledge and

better understanding of youth'), for bringing research findings closer to the 'applied' world, and for providing individuals with access to relevant comparative and substantive data on a myriad of issues in the youth field. It is still relatively early days in the establishment of EKCYP and clearly its success will depend on partnerships and co-operation between member states and the energy and motivation of the knowledge centre correspondents to their task. Behind these 'front office' activities, in the realm of research, lies the youth research committee of the International Sociological Association – RC34. *Research Committee 34* (Youth) has members throughout the world, but one of its activities has been to run international training courses for young researchers on comparative and intercultural research. Three of these took place in Budapest (at the European Youth Centre there, which was opened in 1995) between 1999 and 2001, and one in Moscow in 2002. (Another took place in South Africa in 2000.) In some respects they have now been superseded by the research seminars organised through the EU/CoE partnership, but it is important to recognise their place within the evolution of the research contribution to youth policy at a European level. It is also important to note the place of RC34 at a more global level, of which its European activity is but one component.

At the level of **politics and policy**, the European Youth Pact illustrates clearly that young people and youth issues remain high on the European policy agenda. Beyond the meetings of the EU Directors-General for Youth, the meetings of the CDEJ at the Council of Europe, and the roughly biennial meetings of European Ministers for Youth, there are recurrent 'high-level' conferences and symposia considering a range of issues that are usually clustered around or within three overarching political challenges for Europe in relation to young people: the labour market and employability; participation in civil society and democratic renewal; and the promotion of integration and social inclusion. These challenges are themselves related to even wider political concerns around global economic competitiveness, human rights, the intergenerational contract, mobility, migration and the promotion of intercultural tolerance and understanding. It is young people who hold the key to sustaining a Europe characterised by democracy and diversity, in the face of competing and countervailing tendencies.

On account of these significant developments in the youth field over the past decade, there are now plans amongst various academics at different universities across European member states to develop a **learning** programme at Master's degree level in the field of youth studies. This will draw significantly from those developments in youth research, in governmental and European youth initiatives (policy), and in youth training and practice. It is likely to start running in the autumn of 2008 and hopes to attract students from all three dimensions of what is sometimes, perhaps slightly flippantly, referred to as the 'magic triangle' of research, policy and practice.

These broad pathways of youth policy direction are currently anchored significantly by an integrated partnership agreement on youth issues between the EU and the Council of Europe, and to a much lesser extent, by the debate that will follow the production of a second 'synthesis' review of the Council of Europe international reviews of national youth policy. The EU/CoE partnership was concluded in May 2005 and consolidated three partnerships and covenants that had existed previously – on training, on research and on Euro-Med co-operation (co-operation in the youth field amongst the countries bordering

the Mediterranean Sea). Senior representation of the Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe is invariably present at any discrete European Union events concerning young people, and the reverse also applies. The European Ministers for Youth meet next in Kiev in 2008.

Conclusion

Some forty years ago, student unrest across (a much smaller) Europe activated political attention to young people and established some of the early pan-European arrangements for youth involvement and exchange. Some twenty years ago, with the sudden and dramatic enlargement of an accessible and at least theoretically democratic Europe, that agenda took on new challenges, both in substance and scale. Initially, the two major European institutions – the European Commission and the Council of Europe – adopted quite different emphases in their position on 'youth', largely reflecting their own different priorities. The Commission promoted programmes that would support learning and qualifications that, over time, would enhance European economic competitiveness; the Council promoted training on topics that connected closely to its priorities around human rights and democracy.

During the 1990s, however, and particularly since the turn of the millennium, these different strands of activity have not only developed for themselves but have increasingly overlapped and interacted with each other. New processes and practices have come on stream, and the concept of 'youth policy' – a cross-sectoral, integrated approach to addressing the needs and accommodating the wants of young people – has slowly secured the European imagination. The concrete manifestations of this achievement lie in the EU's White Paper on Youth Policy, and the Council of Europe's programme of international reviews of national youth policy. These have been supported and taken forward by an increasingly sophisticated web of policy, research and practice activity, as exemplified through the EU's Open Method of Co-ordination on the White Paper process, the establishment of the European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy, research seminars convened by the Council of Europe on topics such as culture and inclusion as well as EU White Paper themes, and accounts of training and practice such as ATTE and Madzinga. All such measures and initiatives have a twofold objective: to provide the evidence and ammunition to sustain political commitment to youth policy, and to ensure the integration of young people in an enlarging Europe through promoting their employability, participation, and tolerance and understanding. The partnership arrangements now in place between the European Union and the Council of Europe in the youth field reflect the convergence of commitment to this agenda and, where possible, the sharing of expertise and resources to achieve these ends.

Notes

1   The Directors-General for Youth at European Union Presidency meetings comprise the D-Gs for the 27 countries of the EU, plus the D-Gs for the European Economic Area, which includes Iceland, Switzerland and Norway. The members of the CDEJ are usually also the D-Gs from the EU and EEA countries, plus those from the 20 other members of

the Council of Europe. Occasionally, they may not be (or may no longer be) government officials. The CDEJ member for Lithuania continued with the CDEJ after he terminated his work for the government; the same is true of the current CDEJ member for Armenia.

2 An evaluation of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) and the construction of common objectives on the four themes of the White Paper is currently being conducted by the Finnish Youth Research Society. The European Youth Forum has produced a strongly critical 'shadow report' on the implementation of the first two priorities of the OMC in the youth field: information and participation (European Youth Forum 2007)

3 This would typically comprise a member of the CDEJ (who would chair the process), a member of the Youth Directorate's Advisory Council, composed of representatives of youth organisations, three youth researchers, one of whom would be the rapporteur-general, and a member of the Youth Directorate serving as the secretariat. The CDEJ and the Advisory Council are the statutory organs that co-manage the work of the Youth Directorate.

4 After Finland: the Netherlands, Sweden, Romania, Spain, Estonia, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Cyprus, Slovakia. A review of Armenia (the first CIS state to be covered in this process) is currently in progress; Hungary and Latvia are being reviewed during 2007.

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Informal education, (in)formal control? What is voluntary youth work to make of Self-Assessment?

Sarah Smart

This article develops a critical analysis of policies in the public sector which involve an increasing focus on self-assessment. In particular it investigates the possibilities that might be presented through the self-assessment which Ofsted require to support the inspection of youth work. The article begins with a short summary of different types of evaluation and their history in youth work, describing both outcome focussed evaluation and more self-reflective evaluation. I suggest that self-assessment can be understood using Foucault's concept of technologies of power, because it has the potential to act in a way that enforces the adoption of externally determined priorities. However, the action of a technology of power creates possibilities for resistance. In this context, self-assessment might be used as 'empowerment evaluation'. Barriers to this might include a lack of time and a lack of reflection on the need for and possibilities for resistance. Some may also face a social positioning as lacking the authority to resist. However, self-assessment may present the possibility for fore-fronting critical reflection and accountability to co-workers and young people.

Keywords: new managerialism, informal education, self-assessment

Evaluation has become part of the language of policy. Most major contemporary public policy initiatives are accompanied by attempts to evaluate them (Pawson, 2006). There is also an increasing emphasis on the role of self-evaluation and self-assessment as a 'catalyst for improvement' (EFQM, not dated) and in order to provide evidence for accountability, professional development and development (Macbeath, 1999). This article examines evaluation and self-assessment as experienced in a youth work context, through analysis of policy documents relating to self-assessment in both the statutory and voluntary sector. I will suggest that external evaluation and self-assessment can act as technologies of power to enforce certain external principles through creating self-regulating individuals. I will also suggest individuals can resist this technology of power, and that evaluation can be used for empowerment.

I begin with an introduction to the kinds of evaluation that exist, before moving on to discuss how these have been used in the youth work context, and how they are currently being experienced.

Evaluation

Evaluation has many purposes, methods and approaches. Some define evaluation as a

particular type of research, indistinguishable from other research in terms of design, data collection and analysis (Robson, 1993). However, there are many texts treating evaluation as a separate subject (Patton, 1981; 1982). Robson (1993) lists eleven different models of evaluation, and six different purposes in order to indicate the range of possibilities for evaluation. A frequently made contrast is between outcome and process evaluation, and formative and summative evaluation (Robson, 1993). Smith (2001) makes similar distinctions in the youth work context. He distinguishes 'programme and project evaluation' from 'practice evaluation'. In the former the aim is to make judgements about effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability while practice evaluation is intended to enhance work and to further develop it. Either can be undertaken summatively (to demonstrate whether objectives have been met) or formatively (to identify changes taking place in order to understand them). In addition, they may be 'banking' or 'dialogical'. A 'banking' approach values objectivity, quantitative measurement and external control, while a dialogical approach recognises subjectivity and focuses on dialogue, negotiation and consensus (Smith, 2001).

Research textbooks (eg. Robson, 1993; Gaskell and Bauer, 2000) suggest that in any research the method of choice must be the one best suited to tackling the particular research question. However, a summative, banking approach is normally associated with a programme evaluation, while a formative, dialogical, approach is more associated with practice evaluation.

I now move onto examining the uses of evaluation in youth work; the introduction of self-assessment in the youth work sector; the particular significance of quality, standards and evaluation in the current political climate; and the ways in which these discourses have been critiqued.

Evaluation in youth work

In order to consider the evaluation and self-assessment currently being encouraged this section describes a little of the recent history of evaluation in youth work.

There are references to some forms of evaluation from the beginnings of youth work, although differently understood and practised from today. For example, in Sweatman's (1867) paper on the need for youth provision he outlines his beliefs about the importance of youth work and the 'wants' that his youth institutes are trying to fulfil (namely: evening recreation, companionship, an entertaining but healthy literature, useful instruction, and a strong guiding influence). He then presents evidence about the attendance at the club, and his view of its success:

> The reading-room is used with invariable decorum and earnestness; the periodicals and papers find an increasing number of readers; the interest in chess and draughts has become more intense each season, and the Institute can now furnish a large number of skilful players.

Sweatman also describes additional activities and outings, and reflects that these 'keep up

a freshness and spirit about the undertaking' and 'attach the members to the scheme'. Subsequently, memoirs of youth workers have described the ways in which they reflected on their practice (eg. Paneth, 1944; Brew, 1946; Montagu, 1953). These written evaluations are generally summative evaluations. Sweatman's is perhaps more programme focussed, while the memoirs suggest reflection on practice taking place.

External evaluation has also been a feature of practice. From 1943, as youth work became more formalized and increasingly supervised by the state, H.M. Inspectors were employed to visit and report on youth work. The Albemarle report described their approach: 'Much of his [H.M. Inspector's] most useful work is the advice and encouragement he gives in informal visits to clubs and other units. From time to time he reports to the Minister on the quality of the authority's service or on particular groups' (Ministry of Education, 1960: Ch1, para 19). The Inspector's work was therefore both evaluation of practice, with the aim to develop the work, and also programme evaluation in reports back to the government.

The majority of this evaluation work was done by practitioners. The publication of Donald Schön's *The Reflective Practitioner* in 1983, forefronted this kind of reflective practice in a range of disciplines, including teaching, social work and youth work. 'Reflective practice' is a kind of self-evaluation intended to focus an individual on their skills, practices and choices; the values that are embedded in these; their theories about their skills, practices, choices and values; and subsequently to adjust their actions in the light of their values and theories (Arthur, Davison and Lewis, 2005). Reflective practice requires the professional to gather information from a variety of sources, including conversation, observation and the judgements of others.

However, also in the early 1980s, calls for more 'banking' and summative evaluation by objective external observers were becoming stronger. This was directly linked to the rise of the discourses of 'quality' and 'standards'. During the last three decades, notions of the world as a global and risky place have become increasingly common (Beck, 1992). In this context, quality assessment is attractive because it offers something 'known' and something 'safe' (Morley, 2003). Political discourses about freedom of choice for individuals and about reducing the role of the state in public services (Trowler, 1998) have required indicators of quality to enable 'rational choices'. In the context of discourses of derision surrounding the public services (Ball, 1990b; Exworthy and Halford, 1999; Morley, 2003) the quality discourse provided action to deal with 'poor quality' public sector professionals, using techniques drawn from the 'high quality' private sector (Pollitt, 1993). Morley (2003) goes as far as to suggest that quality has become a 'universalizing metanarrative' (p1).

Discourses of derision certainly extended to the youth service during the 1980s. Davies (1999), describes 'derisive Thatcherite criticisms of youth workers' "woolly liberalism"' (p14), although he also suggests that some of this criticism was due to the 'free-wheeling, not to say maverick style' of some youth workers(p13). He also records the early 1980s as a period in which Her Majesty's Inspectors were experiencing increasing ambiguities in their work, and records a criticism made of H.M. Youth Service Inspectors as being little further advanced in 'assessing youth work than any other team of informed or experienced workers' (p45). Davies suggests that the external pressures for youth workers to become more accountable were long overdue, but that their resistance to this led to the imposition of accountability, cost-effectiveness, monitoring and evaluation by hostile political opponents.

Private sector management principles such as accountability, cost-effectiveness and external monitoring have been introduced throughout the public sector (Mahoney and Hextall, 2000). This process is known as 'New Public Management' (NPM), 'managerialism' or 'new managerialism' (Clarke and Newman, 1997). It involves the assessment of 'Quality' using external, objective benchmarks, generally involving statistical quantitative methodology (e.g. school league tables). One of the most obvious effects of new managerialism in the youth work sector has been the introduction of regular OfSTED inspections[1]

New managerialist ideas can be found in various government papers relating to youth work. For example, the discourse of quality is clear in *Transforming Youth Work – developing youth services for young people* (DfES, 2001). The foreword of this document says:

> *We need to raise the quality of all youth work to that of the best ...The document highlights successes, challenges weakness and sets out objectives for youth work. It recognizes the vital role of high quality youth work. And it challenges you to tackle second and third rate provision.*

The subsequent document *Transforming Youth Work – Resourcing Excellent Youth Services* (2002) contained detailed plans to monitor quality in youth work. The measures outlined included central direction on the duty of youth services, national standards of provision, a youth work curriculum and quality assurance procedures (involving annual local authority self-assessment and the development of performance indicators) (DfES, 2002).

Meanwhile self-assessment processes have been introduced in both the statutory (Ofsted 2001, 2004, 2006) and voluntary youth organisations operating within the National Voluntary Youth Organisations (NVYO) Grant Scheme[2] (DfES/NCVYS, 2003). At the time of writing, the self-assessment schedule has been updated in the statutory sector, but remains the same in the voluntary sector.

There have been three self-assessment documents provided to the statutory youth service: in 2001, 2004 and 2006. Each of the self-assessment schedules has become less prescriptive, required reporting in fewer areas, and been described in less managerialist terms.

The 2001 schedule was described 'primarily as an inspection tool' (p1). It was suggested that all youth services might find the schedule useful 'as a means of developing further their own approaches to quality assurance and to meeting the requirements of best value' (p1). It contained between five and twelve quality statements under seven headings (a total of 55 statements requiring evidence) (Ofsted, 2001). A similar schedule was provided for recipients of National Voluntary Youth Organisation grants. The accompanying booklet described the purpose of this schedule as to 'help organisations who are seeking to measure and develop their own performance' (p1) (DfES/NCVYS, 2003). It contained a focus on quality assurance, reliable data, sound judgements, targets, benchmarking and 'most importantly, linking what the organisation does with the results it achieves' (p5).

The 2004 self-assessment schedule was described 'primarily as a management tool' (p4) and intended to provide a 'starting point for dialogue between the service and reporting inspector' (p4). Youth services were required to grade themselves and provide evidence for

each of 22 statements (grouped into three areas). The 2006 framework was 'designed to enable youth services to provide evidence and grade their performance' (p2) and was to 'be evaluative and demonstrate impact' (p3), highlighting areas of good practice (Ofsted 2006). Services were required to grade themselves and provide evidence in the three key areas of the 2004 schedule: standards of young people's achievement and the quality of youth work practice; quality of curriculum and resources; and strategic and operational leadership and management.

New managerialist techniques for regulating quality and standards have been subject to critical analysis. For example, the introduction of performance indicators and measurements have been criticised for serving to refocus practice on the indicators used, which may not actually represent valued, worthwhile or meaningful objects – thus it is claimed that league tables in education have served to present exam results as the goal of education and allowed disciplinary measures against schools whose exam results are judged to be not good enough without addressing the real quality of education involved (Ball, 1999).

Criticisms have been made of quality measures proposed in the youth work sector and their possible effects. Concerns have been expressed that the Green Paper *Youth Matters* (DfES 2005) foregrounds activities ('things to do and places to go'), and individualised advice ('information, advice and guidance') without reference to association and the social nature of youth work (Davies, 2005). It has been further suggested that integrated support, ownership of decisions and consumption of services has come to replace the opportunities for young people to discover and develop their personal resources of body, mind and spirit (Wolfe, 2005). It seems possible to imagine a situation where activities, advice and volunteering come to be widely understood as the objectives of youth work, to be consumed, easily evaluated, withheld, listed and controlled.

While quality measurements have been critiqued, there have been fewer critical examinations of self-assessment in youth work. This is considered in the next section.

Self-assessment

In theory, self-assessment could fit into a variety of kinds of evaluation. It could be undertaken as a form of practice evaluation, either during a piece of work, or at the end, where the aim is to enhance the work. Alternatively it could be undertaken in order to evaluate the success of a piece of work against particular criteria. It could be approached using dialogical, subjective methods, or with the aim of reviewing work objectively.

Foucault's theories about knowledge and power provide a powerful theoretical framework for understanding self-assessment (Foucault, 1991). Particularly relevant is Foucault's discussion of the examination. He describes the examination as a process that measures particular things about an individual, assigns value to the measurements and separates individuals into a hierarchy (normalizing judgment). When this process is observed as part of a social system, individuals can be coerced to conform (hierarchized surveillance) (Foucault, 1991).

Inspection of local authority youth provision is an obvious example of the examination. At first sight, self-assessment does not appear to fit into the category of Foucault's examination. But the concept is illustrated in the idea of the panopticon (taken from an architectural design of a prison in which prisoners could be constantly watched by unseen observers). This suggests that under certain circumstances, automatic functioning of power can be assured through creating individuals who internalize the priorities of others.

> *He (sic) who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relations in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection.* (Foucault, 1991:202)

In other words, in a situation where individuals know it is possible for their behaviour to be constantly observed they will become an observer of themselves, taking on the priorities of the observer. Self-assessment creates the possibility for youth workers to constantly observe their own practice, while taking on the priorities of those in power. The guidance provided with the voluntary sector self-assessment document recommended continuous self-surveillance:

> *Once established, self-assessment should ideally be seen as a continuous process* (DfES/ NCVYS, 2003: 6)

The possibility for constant surveillance is created. This may involve an external assessor but is accomplished predominantly through the youth workers themselves. The intention is that youth workers should take on the priorities of policy, judging and grading their performance against particular targets. As Issitt and Spence (2005) observe, 'in the public sector [research and evaluation] is used to control and focus practice' (p69).

This understanding of self-assessment suggests the enforcement of certain priorities. These priorities could be a particular focus on outcomes in youth work. I suggested earlier that the objects of consumption in the youth service could become things such as activities, attendance, advice, accreditation and volunteering. Statement 2B(xiii) might be an example of attendance as an object of consumption: 'Young people attend regularly'. Statement 3B (iv) 'Youth workers give young people appropriate advice and personal support as necessary' might suggest advice as an object of consumption, and several statements stress the importance of young people taking on responsibility or volunteering ('Young people participate actively in decision-making', statement 2B(v); and 'Young people are willing to take on responsibility and work collaboratively', statement 2B(x)). While these can be positive aspects of youth work, a focus on them as objectives of youth work to be monitored and disciplined could mean the crowding out of many other positive aspects of youth work.

However, the existence of a technology of power to impose principles on youth workers does not imply that the objective will be achieved. Rather, Foucault understands power as the attempt to structure the possible actions and capacities of free agents. The power relationship depends on the freedom to refuse to submit, otherwise it would not be power, but determination. The power relationship is both 'reciprocal incitation and struggle'

(Foucault, 1982: 222). Similarly Clarke and Newman (1997) write:

> *Too many of the analyses of the productivity of power and discursive subjection have treated such strategies as though they worked, rather than as attempts to achieve their desired results. It is, we think, important to insist that attempted 'subjections' are not always accomplished and that 'discursive strategies' do not always achieve their objectives.*

Therefore the implementation of a technology of power does not have an inevitable conclusion. However, some theorists highlight the fact that opportunities to resist subjections or discursive strategies are not equally distributed between all 'free agents'. Certain groups may have options open to them for resistance that are not open to others, and the same action may be differently interpreted when undertaken by different groups. Drawing on the theory of Bourdieu, Lawler (2005) illustrates this in an article examining protests against the housing of child sex abusers within communities. She argues that for one group of working class mothers, change was very difficult to effect, because 'they were not authorised to be actors within the field of political protest', while the protests of the group of middle class mothers were assumed to be appropriate, straightforward and 'normal' because of their social positioning (p123). The action of a technology of power inevitably creates space for resistance; however, the possibilities for resistance are experienced differently depending on social position.

In his book, *Empowerment Evaluation*, Fetterman (1996a) attempts to describe and encourage resistance against evaluation used as control and power, and gives an example of how organisations might choose to use the self-assessment form. Empowerment evaluation is 'designed to help people help themselves and improve their programmes using a form of self-evaluation and reflection' (p5). Fetterman describes empowerment evaluation as democratic, illuminating and liberating. It should involve programme participants identifying what they believe to be the key activities in their programme and rating them. There is perhaps a particular opportunity in the 2006 schedule (which contains only three areas and no prescriptive statements) for the youth service to decide for itself on what it believes to be its key activities and what counts as evidence of success in these areas. The self-assessment schedule could be used in a formative, reflective and dialogical way, completed and negotiated between a team of workers and young people, creating space for focused conversations about the purpose and practice of their work.

There may be youth organizations who are undertaking self-assessment in this way. However, I suspect that there may also be youth organizations who have not seen the possibilities or who do not feel able to take advantage of them. Fetterman (1996a) suggests that in order for empowerment evaluation and self-assessment to be successful there must be training for participants, 'desensitising and demystifying evaluation' (p9). He also recommends the use of evaluation facilitators to create open group participation, dialogue and strategies to resolve differences. Undoubtedly support for the youth service in engaging with self-assessment would be welcome. But would it be enough?

My experience of the self-assessment form, as a member of a voluntary youth organization required to fill in the 2001 version of the form adapted for voluntary organizations (DfES/

NCVYS, 2003) was not one where I saw opportunities for empowerment or resistance. In my experience there were three key barriers, which were all linked. The first was time. Reflective practice of this sort requires time and long-term interaction; these was in very short supply in the setting in which I worked. Fetterman (1996b) acknowledges the risk that in 'keep your head above water' environments, internalized evaluation can become a product of the culture rather than a reforming tool. The second barrier was our perception of being observed. Rushing into completing our self-assessment we intended to work out what the government wanted to get out of the form, and tried to provide it. From our reading of the form we assumed we needed to provide facts and figures about measurable impact. We felt constrained to provide what we thought was wanted, in order to ensure we received funding in the future. We felt that we had little room for manoeuvre. In part this was because we knew that it was not enough simply to complete the self-assessment form, but that there was the possibility of inspection. It was not enough simply to use the self-assessment form as development; others intended to use it for accountability. However, the third barrier to resistance was that we were not conscious of any need for resistance. It was not until I reflected back on the process of completing the schedule that I realised the way in which I had thought about it, and saw the possibilities for other courses of action. I was not aware of the possibilities for resistance, precisely because I had not realised there was something to resist.

I have noted earlier that the possibilities for resistance are not equally distributed to all groups. In my experience, our small voluntary organisation staffed mainly by well-educated, middle-class volunteers, was not entirely dependent on the NVYO grant and this might have been a position from which we were granted some authority to approach the self-assessment form as a form of empowerment evaluation. This is unlikely to be the position of all youth organisations. Resistance might need to be supported through networks and particular attention given to groups who are positioned with little authority to protest.

To conclude, I have argued that self-assessment can act as a technology of power, creating self-regulating youth workers who have taken on the priorities of others. However, there is the possibility for resistance. Particularly, the taking on of externally imposed priorities may be challenged through use of the self-assessment schedule as the basis for reflection and dialogue between workers and young people. I have highlighted the way in which some organisations and workers might feel less able to engage in practices like this than others. This might be because of a lack of time, their unconscious perceptions of being observed and lack of reflection on possibilities for resistance. Some may also face a social positioning as lacking the authority to resist. Never-the-less, self-assessment contains the potential for youth workers to think carefully about the priorities they wish to set, subverting those with which they disagree that might be imposed by others. While remaining constrained by a lack of time and accountability to funders/government, there is an opportunity to forefront critical reflection and accountability to co-workers and young people.

Notes

1   The Office for Standards in Education was set up in 1992 to create teams of inspectors who would regularly inspect all state schools. Its remit was widened to include youth services in the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 (section 1, paragraph 55). Initially, a sample of 12 youth services were inspected each year. A revised framework for inspection was introduced in January 2004, and a new four-year cycle of inspections was begun so that all 150 youth services would be inspected by January 2008.

2   (A government scheme aiming to combat social exclusion and inequality through targeting priority groups, and improve the quality of youth work in the voluntary sector). The first round of these grants was distributed in 1996, and applications for the 2005 – 2008 round of grants closed in October 2004.

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What does Michel Foucault have to say about youth work?

Annette Fitzsimons

Michel Foucault, French philosopher, social critic and activist died tragically at the age of 57 in 1984. He was, and remains, one of the most influential thinkers of current times across a number of disciplines. Foucault has much to say of relevance to youth and community workers, particularly when it comes to his concepts of discourse and power. These I will argue are incredibly useful for understanding oppression and inequality in relation to sexuality, gender, 'race' and ethnicity. Critical reviews of Foucault abound (see for example Hoy, 1986: Berman, 1983; Dews, 1987; Fraser, 1989). Not least amongst some historians who were enraged by what they perceived as weaknesses in his methodology, including an apparent lack of accurate historical details (see for instance Elton, 1991; Evans, 1997). Foucault cannot be read with background noise coming from the television or even accompanied by the quietest, most soothing music. He is best encountered, perhaps, alone in a field or on a beach with absolutely nothing to disturb you coming to terms with what he has to say. For all his faults, he can, I think, illuminate and inspire us in our attempts to be better at working in an anti-oppressive way with young people.

Why Foucault?

His treatment of the relations between power, knowledge, the body and sexuality has made a significant impact on social theory and writers like Neil Thompson (2003) are using his ideas to construct a theoretical foundation for promoting equality in professional practice. In the late 1980s youth, community and social work all drew on elements of a radical theoretical framework to explore oppression and anti-discrimination and 'concepts such as ideology, oppression and discrimination' became commonplace (see Thompson: 6). However the ideas used to develop anti-discriminatory practice – and the use of language here is significant – were based on both Marxism and functionalism. In this framework individuals who were either oppressing or being oppressed were conceptualised in a particular way. Foucault's writings on discourse, knowledge and power changed the focus from an analysis based on structured social inequalities at a national and international level to one which centred on the individual at a local and regional level. I want to explain this change by using gender as an example. If I were trying to explain gender oppression, sexism, call it what you will, in the 1970s I would have used the concept of ideology to show how women and men are constructed by a set of ideas of their social roles. Gender identity is both constructed and lived though the process of socialisation. Individuals are socialised into roles that enable them to acquire a sense of self, become social and gendered members of society – what is sometimes called sex role theory. This notion of social construction is an advance on previous ideas that men and women are biologically different and women are inferior. At least this is a move away from biology and the notion

that women and men are 'naturally' unequal. However the problem is that the process of social construction is explained either in terms of the structural requirements of a system, whether capitalism or patriarchal male dominance, or as representing a powerful group in society, for example, the bourgeoisie. This takes the focus away from individual personal experience and keeps it at a particular level of abstraction. As Sue Lees points out:

> There is no room in this model of the world for the child as an active agent, the child as theorist, recognising for him or herself the way the social world is organised. Nor is there acknowledgement of the child as implicated in the construction and maintenance of the social world through the very act of recognising it and through learning its discursive practices. (1993: 14)

Concept of Discourse

Discursive practices refer to the practices and narratives (discourses) through which people live, think and speak. They are the stories or scripts individuals use to understand and operate in the social world. Thus:

> A discourse refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events. (Burr 1995: 48)

The Foucauldian concept of discourses indicates how individual subjectivity is shaped by these stories and how they structure people's understanding of themselves in relation to the world.

> Discourses, in Foucault's work, are ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and the relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects that they seek to govern. (Weedon 1987:108)

Another way of explaining this process is to think about discourse in terms of 'technologies of the self' which refers to the discourses that allow us to make our way and be in the world, a process which is informed by rules and regulations and a notion of 'natural' behaviour. Individuals police their 'selves' in society, and their practices are enabled or constrained by the available discourses[1]. This subjectivity 'is precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak' (Weedon 1987: 33). Weedon argues that some discourses are more powerful than others in shaping this process, but (and this is a weakness in Foucault's work) he does not provide a way of determining why or how some discourses are more dominant than others. The concept does however provide a framework for understanding social change through the mechanisms used by individuals to negotiate meaning, and structure their interactions in the world, and as such is an advance on the concept of ideology[2].

So, for example, there is a story about gender in society which views men and women as oppositional; the book *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* (Gray 1992) puts forward a view of gender as though women and men are different, rather than the same species. Part of this story is that men and women are very different, different biologically, emotionally, etc. and this conceptualisation of gender gives rise to cultural practices and beliefs around gender. However it is the dominant discourse on gender, that is, what constitutes femininity and masculinity, which constructs women and men as different sorts of individuals or persons who embody different principles of agency. For instance, in many cultures male sexuality and masculinity is portrayed as active, aggressive and powerful, and women are viewed as essentially passive, powerless and submissive. These dominant representations and categories bear only a slight relation to the behaviours, qualities, attributes and self-images of real individual women and men. Yet the ideas facilitate an understanding of the links between gender as it is lived and as it is constructed as this discourse is legitimated as knowledge backed up by various 'sciences', such as, biology, chemistry, medicine, psychology and sociology.

Some examples of how these notions are reproduced in youth work is through, for example, courses in babysitting, beauty therapies or fashion competitions aimed at attracting and increasing the participation of young women. Some 'anti-sexist' youth work is premised on the assumption either that girls are 'naturally' passive, suffer from low self-confidence and self-esteem (Seward 2001: 35) or that this is a result of socialisation (see Spence, 1999) and thus their interests centre on their personal appearance, childcare and domestic responsibilities. A critical approach to this work is discussed by Glynis Francis (1990) when she described how she uses a 'hair dressing session' to explore questions of body-image, healthy diet and agency in order to 'widen and deepen understanding' (1990: 59). The question here is – understanding of what? Which discourse of gender underpinned these discussions? From her account it appears that gender differences are, for the best of motives, put at the centre of the activities and interactions with young girls. I am not trying to deny the significance of gender here, rather my argument is that girls are viewed with a gender perspective in which either they appear as a deficit model – e.g. lacking self confidence etc. and/or young men and young women are viewed as two species who have different experiences, interests, roles and opportunities. Thus the perspective that shapes gender conscious work with young people may help to broaden out gender stereotypes rather than explores the dynamics which reproduce gender difference, that is, the discourses on femininity and masculinity. Asking youth workers to examine the discourse of gender that they hold is one way of beginning to re-invigorate 'anti-sexist' youth work.

Another example of how the discourse you use can reproduce the very issue you are trying to shift, is the example of 'race'. Social scientists, up to very recently, produced a discourse on 'race' which reproduced the ideas that 'race' refers to clear biological differences between people. The story that there are different 'races' was legitimated by 'scientific theories' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and these still continue to underpin and shape social practices that reproduce discrimination and racism. This discourse on 'race' reinforces and reproduces the notion that 'race' is a natural or fixed category or identity. There are various pieces of legislation e.g. the Race Relations Acts whose title repeats the fallacy that there are different races. This misleading notion is constantly re-iterated in the media in discussions about racism. When local government policy statements

on anti-racism are examined the instructions for workers are, for example, that:

> *Racism is the belief that some 'races' are superior to others – based on the false idea that different physical characteristics (like skin colour) or ethnic background make some people different from others. Racial Discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably because of their racial, national or ethnic origins.* [3]

In common with other city councils, Edinburgh, in order to comply with the Race Relations legislation is inadvertently reproducing a racist discourse. A further example is from my local council's policy which aims to: 'promote good race relations between persons of different racial groups' (Hull City Council 2005: 6). *Young People Now* – a useful resource for all youth workers and young people – also, on occasions, reproduces the notion that there are different 'races'. For example, a headline in the issue dated 21st June 2006, states: 'Race: Young Travellers' needs neglected'. In another piece an effort is made to use the term, 'dual heritage' in an article dealing with these issues and the impact on young people, but this was used alongside numerous references to 'mixed-race' (YPN 2004).

The Bradford Rewind Anti-Racism Project is an example of youth work practice whose starting point is that the notion of 'race' is a myth. They use this approach as a basis for their work rather than, for example, anti-racist activities that are based on cultural awareness and celebrating diversity. The strategies used by youth workers to engage young people in discussions about racism need to ensure that they are not reproducing the discourse of racism through the use of the notion that there are different races. There is only one race, the human race and by challenging the notion that 'race' has any scientific validity, the social practices produced by this discourse can be challenged. These changes can impact, as Thompson 2003 indicates at the level of the personal, the cultural and structural systems of oppression. There are many resources for anti-oppressive practice in relation to social work, less so for youth workers but see Egan and Millar (1999) whose discussion on 'anti-discriminatory youth work' provides a useful model and is one that emphasises, as does Thompson's work, the interconnected yet distinct levels of discriminatory and oppressive discourses[4].

It is not the case that individuals are duped into believing these discourses. In other words it is not a problem of 'false consciousnesses' rather the important point from Foucault is the fact that discourses are viewed as knowledge and this is what gives them power to reproduce the scripts through which people live their lives. So in order to understand, for example, gender oppression, racism or marginalised sexuality it is necessary to understand the way discourses as knowledge shape practices, activities, social relations and the lived experience of gender, sex and ethnicity. These discourses are not powerful because they provide accurate descriptions of social practices and experiences; but rather because they are used by individuals to construct their identities and shape their social actions. The following example from a female youth worker may illustrate this process:

> *Since learning more about discrimination and oppression it occurred to me that something as basic as session times can represent how we have a different set of rules and standards for the young men than we do for the young women. Before the winter last year the evening session times for both the male and female sessions were 7:00pm*

– 9:00pm. During a team meeting I brought up my concerns for the safety of the young women leaving the session. The location of our building and position of our entrance being at the rear of the building and there are no streetlights close to us makes it dark and lonely. The solution we came up with as a team was to lower the session time to 6:00pm – 8:00pm for the girls. We realised that wouldn't totally solve the problem as it was still dark at 8:00pm during the winter time but it was felt that there are likely to be more people around the streets at that time so it felt a little safer on the street. We also spoke to the young women about our concerns and recommended that parents collect them from sessions where possible or they walk together in a group to see each other home. During this time of trying to solve the safety problem for the young women the young men were totally overlooked. It never occurred to me that those young men were in any danger. We were not thinking of their safety in the same way as the girls, why? [5]

Discourses impose frameworks and thus restrictions on what is deemed to be 'true' and thus, reliable knowledge, and *resisting* key aspects of these stories/narratives is an essential part of any anti-oppressive struggle. Discourses do not stand alone, they can only be abstracted for the purpose of study and analysis, for in our living practice there are a wide network of discursive fields which interject and overlap such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity and 'race'. But they can be used to explore 'the relationship between what we do, what we are obliged to do, what we are allowed to do, what we are forbidden to do . . . and what we are allowed, forbidden, or obliged to say' (Foucault 1990: 8).

A key text that demonstrates these ideas is the first volume of Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (1978). Here Foucault traces how the discourse of sexuality and sexual practices are formed through the knowledge dispensed from biology, medicine, psychopathology, sociology and ethnology and shows how these 'sciences' link sexuality to reproduction. They produce a science of sex which provide an account of what is prohibited and forbidden rather than a discourse of sexuality based on pleasure. I was involved with a Sexual Health Workshop for young people to distribute condoms and to discuss issues relating to sex. The emphasis was on the dangers of sex, how to avoid disease and pregnancy. Not once did we discuss sexual pleasure, sensuality and desire. As Foucault's work helps to demonstrate, we reproduced a story about sexuality which emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The discourses that make up this story attempt to regulate individuals and populations by constructing a rigid model of 'normal' sexuality and sexual pleasure and abnormal sexuality, such as 'the homosexual'. The story of sex is that its purpose is reproduction rather than pleasure, that it should be heterosexual, and take place within the context of a marriage – and this view is adopted by all the major religions.

Through this process of classification the categories of normality and deviancy become established and a variety of treatments and procedures emerge to treat or reform the 'deviant'. In this way individuals are analysed and controlled by standards of normality which are legitimated through 'knowledge'/'truths' uncovered by various disciplines/'sciences' such as medicine, psychology and psychiatry. Foucault takes apart these 'knowledges' in such a way as to reveal that they are not universal truths but rather discourses constructed from particular positions. He shows how individuals internalise these discourses and thus act as their own disciplinarians. In this way, discourses produce practices and technologies that naturalise the relation between biology and power. In other words, the notion of what constitutes a natural,

normal sexuality is provided by these 'sciences'. This knowledge is viewed as the 'truth' about sexuality and thus is productive of certain social practices in relation to sexuality, one being that heterosexuality is considered more natural than others. An example of this 'normalising' discourse can be found in *Youth Matters* (June 2005).

There are no references to sexuality in this paper, and the four references to sex are directed towards information and advice about the dangers of sex, that is, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy and abortion and there is a presumption of heterosexuality throughout the green paper. This occurs despite the stated aim that the government wants 'to make sure that all young people are given the best chance in life to succeed' (2005: 1). The young people who are lesbians, gay, bisexual, or transgendered are not included or mentioned in this strategy (see Batsleer 2006:61). Using the jargon, the government is operating a discourse of heteronormativity which renders anything but 'straight' sex as unintelligible. Heterosexuality is normal and natural and does not need any explanation or exploration and this process renders other types of sexuality as 'deviant', invisible and marginalized and reinforces for young people that other sexualities are abnormal[6]. This discourse on sex and sexuality then shape the way that youth workers deal with these issues, as in the example of the Sexual Health session described above.

Carol Painter's (1995) article on 'Youth Workers, Sexual Values and Sexuality' is an excellent discussion of the need for work with young people on sexuality to 'avoid the usual list of 'Do's and Don'ts' . . . and focus on a set of rights for young people' (1995:1). This means that workers have to 'examine and challenge the definitions, assumptions, values and attitudes that we hold *ourselves* about sexuality' (1995: 2: emphasis in original). Painter argues for a model of sexuality that includes discussions with young people of sexual pleasure and sensuality and she states that youth workers need to be 'able to validate and support any expression of sexuality that is legal, consensual and non-oppressive' (1995: 6).

I appreciate that in taking this approach of challenging assumptions, values and the accepted common sense view (discourse) of sexuality is not easy, as evident from my own practice. It is particularly difficult in an environment where such alternative approaches may cause conflict with religious ideas. Here again, Foucault's ideas can help youth workers to avoid making 'quick' readings of a young person's interpretation of, and commitment to, a particular religious view or practice. As a 'good' Catholic girl growing up in Ireland in the 1960s, my friends and I had a list of priests who would allow us to confess our sexual 'sins' and take communion the next day. Where there is discourse, there is always the possibility of resistance, of negotiation and challenge. Claire Dwyer's study of young women, born in Britain, of South Asian heritage who defined themselves as Muslim, demonstrates how they operate a similar process of manipulation; as she shows how, for example, the wearing of the veil (hijab) can have a variety of meanings. The young women in this study discuss how the veil (hijab) is used to 'negotiate their own identities in relation to a complex of different meanings' (1999: 8). There are a number of discourses which impact on this process, not only gender, but also class, sexuality and ethnicity. Foucault's analysis alerts one to the contradictions and complexities of these for individuals and groups. This perspective it seems is much more useful for youth work, rather than operating as though the categories of gender, class and ethnicity, have fixed and stable meanings – many of which are framed by the notion that they are 'natural' and 'normal'.

Foucault's Concept of Power

In order to understand how certain types of knowledges (as described above) are converted into 'normalising' and 'naturalising' stories, it is essential to link Foucault's notion of discourse with his conceptualisation of power. According to Foucault, power's relation to knowledge is inseparable, because within each society there is a 'regime of truth' with its own particular mechanisms for producing truth. This analysis of power is in contrast to a Marxist notion of power as the possession of a particular class that is based on their relationship to a mode of production. In the Marxist formulation, power is viewed as repressive, as emanating from the top downwards, either through governmental and social elites, state and or class interests. Foucault says of conceptualisations of power such as these, that:

> it allows power to be only ever thought of in negative terms: refusal, delimitation, obstruction, censure. Power is that which says no. Any confrontation with power thus conceived appears only as transgression...The manifestation of power takes on the pure form of 'thou shalt not' (1979: 53) and the mechanics of power were never analysed. (1979: 34)

Foucault argues that if this was the only story about power, it cannot explain, what he terms, the productivity of power. The way power 'produces things...induces pleasure...forms knowledge ... produces discourse' (1979:36). Foucault views power as running through the social network; producing effects; as productive, rather than negative. He says that:

> What gives power its hold, what makes it accepted, is quite simply the fact that it does not simply weigh like a force which says no, but that it runs through, and it produces, things, it induces pleasure, it forms knowledge [savoir], it produces discourses; it must be considered as a productive network that runs through the entire social body much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression. (cited Morris and Patton 1979: 36)

Power is not only an oppressive force bearing down on individuals; rather everyone exercises power through their behaviour and interactions in the world. An example here would be the experiences of detached and outreach youth workers. As a recent study stated:

> when street-based work 'works', it does so because the young people who are the targets of the intervention allow it to. In almost all the projects surveyed or visited, the work is based upon the voluntary participation of young people and the negotiation of roles and goals between them and the workers. (Crimmins et al 2004: 73)

Foucault's view of power gets us interested in analysing the everyday practices through which power relations are exercised, the micro-powers that are exercised at the level of daily life. In an interview he said:

> I'm not one of those who try to elicit the effects of power at the level of ideology. Indeed I wonder whether, before one poses the question of ideology, it wouldn't be more materialist to study first the question of the body and the effects of power on it. (Foucault 1980:58)

He introduces a new way of thinking about power, which is as manipulation rather than force, an act between free subjects that can take a number of forms. Foucault does not deny the macro level dimension of power, that is, power at the level of the state – he says 'I don't want to say that the State isn't important', but

> *The State is superstructural in relation to a whole series of power networks that invest the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology and so forth. True these networks stand in a conditioning-conditioned relationship to a kind of 'meta-power' which is structured essentially round a certain number of great prohibition functions; but this meta-power with its prohibitions can only take hold and secure its footing where it is rooted in a whole series of multiple and indefinite power relations that supply the necessary basis for the great negative forms of power.* (cited Morris and Patton 1979: 39)

That discourse/knowledge is constructed in response to the interests of a particular group or classes (as in the Marxist use of the term ideology) is not a position that is clearly discussed by Foucault. So he can be read as treating discourses, as if they were independent of class interests. Although from some of his interviews and texts he can be read as arguing that the power of the State, through its legitimatising of what counts as knowledge, is linked to the interests of powerful groups, as claims about 'truth' and 'knowledge' are not divorced from the institutions that produce them. In his early work, it is quite clear that the interests of those in power play some role in the production of prevailing discourses[7].

An example of the operation of micro and macro power relations in the production of discursive practice could be the notion of the functional and dysfunctional family which pervades New Labour's youth policies, e.g. *Bridging the Gap* (1999), *Respect and Responsibility: Taking a Stand against Anti-Social Behaviour* (2003). The functional family becomes the norm by which all other types of households are judged. As Helen Lentell (1998) explains:

> *In our use of language we take up positions within discourses because the terms of this language carry with them chains of connection about what is 'normal', 'natural', right or proper. For example, if I state that: 'all children need two parents of the opposite sex living with them', I am adopting a position about a certain form of family as the 'best' or natural form of family. In doing this I am also adopting a position which constructs forms of family which vary from this as in some way inferior, deviant or abnormal – and I can do this without even actually mentioning them. This is the power of discourse. On the other hand, if I say 'what matters for children is not the form of the family in which they live, but that they have adults who love and care for them and provide stability', I am constructing another, alternative view of the family which privileges stability of affection and care rather than the living arrangements and sex of the adults around the children.* (1998: 230)

In *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault's study of the practices of discipline and training operating in institutions such as prisons, military establishments, hospitals, factories and schools he shows how discourses are internalised by individuals. The techniques of control, for example, constant surveillance and discipline, are internalised and reproduced

by individuals as normal standards of behaviour taking hold of both body and mind. As Foucault states:

> A 'political anatomy', which was also a 'mechanics of power', was being born; it defined how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies'. (1977: 138)

Discourses are formulated through power/knowledge mechanisms to operate on 'docile bodies' in order to reproduce compliance. If this seems very bleak, in later books, particularly *The Use of Pleasure* (1985) and *The Care of the Self*, (1986) he develops a concept of the self where according to McNay:

> Individuals are no longer conceived as docile bodies in the grip of an inexorable disciplinary power, but as self-determining agents who are capable of challenging and resisting the structures of domination in modern society. (1992: 4)

Challenge is possible because, as he argues, where there is power there is resistance, where there is discourse there is resistance. In the section on method in *History of Sexuality*, Vol.1, Foucault explains that his concept of power implies both the possibility and existence of forms of resistance. He states: 'there are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised' (Foucault 1978: 142). The area for resistance happens in the space that is made available through the constant production and reproduction of discourses. He said in an interview:

> nothing in society will be changed if the mechanisms of power that function outside, below and alongside the State apparatuses, on a much more minute and everyday level, are not also changed. (Foucault 1980: 60)

If we take the example of gender again, gender is not fixed or stable but constantly being produced though social practices. Thus aspects of discourses can be resisted, rejected, negotiated or not as the case may be, as discussed in the example of 'race'. The notion of contradiction is useful here as it indicates that there are always spaces, alternatives and thus options for the construction of alternative discourses. Foucault's words provide support for this interpretation of his ideas:

> The history of ideas usually credits the discourse that it analyses with coherence. If it happens to notice an irregularity in the use of words, several incompatible propositions, a set of meanings that do not adjust to one another, concepts that cannot be systematised together, then it regards it as its duty to find, at a deeper level, a principle of cohesion that organises the discourse and restores to it its hidden unity. This law of coherence is a heuristic rule, a procedural obligation, almost a moral constraint of research: not to multiply contradictions uselessly; to be taken in by small differences; not to give too much weight to changes. (Foucault 1972: 149)

In Conclusion

The previous discussion hopefully has illustrated how Foucault's analysis of the relationship between power, discursive practices, subjectivity and resistance provides a number of conceptual tools from which to re-examine the operation of oppression and relations between people in society. He refers to his method of analysis as either archaeology[8] or genealogy. Archaeology refers to excavation and analysis of evidence from the past, genealogy to tracing the past in order to present a critical questioning of what appears to be self evident, familiar and accepted. Using these methods he explores the historical limits that are imposed on us, in order to create the space to experiment with the possibility of going beyond them (Foucault 1984: 46). Thus, genealogy is a form of social critique that seeks to determine possibilities for social change and ethical transformation of ourselves helping us to build 'strategic knowledge'. Foucault rarely talked about himself, claiming that his personal life was 'uninteresting' though there are many published interviews which do provide glimpses of his personality and at times give easier access to his ideas. He stated that his books could be viewed as his exploration of his personal problems and concerns[9]. He even wrote an article on 'Foucault' under another name (Maurice Florence) and sometimes gave interviews on condition that he remained anonymous, saying:

> *Since you don't know who I am, you will not be tempted to look for the reasons why I am saying what you are reading: just let yourself go and say quite simply: 'That's right: that's wrong. I like this; I don't like that'.* (cited Macy 1993, xvi)

I find it useful to use Foucault's ideas in this way, in that his work can provide some uhelpful tools for critical practice. Foucault's notion of power as productive, is one that can be strategically useful for youth work and can be used to explore the persistence of discourses which are oppressive. It is not intended as a mechanism from which to abandon structural or material accounts of oppression. His aim is to provide an account of the operation of power that is not simply about the operation of political institutions, governments or the state but how individuals exercise power over themselves and through their exchanges/interactions with others. His work shows how the human sciences, for example, biology, medicine, economics, psychology and sociology construct discourses which set out the means by which individuals are required to behave. His notion of power allows an exploration of the productivity of power. These concepts provide a framework for understanding social change and how individuals, through a process of negotiation with meaning, construct and maintain their world. Foucault's notion of discourse explains this process of construction, negotiation, power and resistance, and demonstrates the impact of a number of discourses on subjectivity. Though this notion of discourse is helpful in explaining the contradictions, shifts and changes in, for example, the discourses of masculinity and femininity, there is no Foucauldian theory on why some discourses are more powerful and some more marginal than others. What he does, is to ask philosophical questions in a way that directs attention to how knowledge is used. Paul Rabinow in *The Foucault Reader* explains how Foucault avoids a question about the existence of human nature and asks instead: 'How has the concept of human nature functioned in our society' (1984: 4). His work on the power and knowledge produced by the human sciences is important for people who make it their business to involve themselves in other people's lives. If one of the skills of youth work is listening to young people (Williamson 2005) and engaging them in conversation (Jeffs and Smith 1999) then Foucault's ideas alert

us to the stories that we repeat inadvertently and unconsciously through language. If paying attention to this can begin to shift a layer of oppression, then his ideas have value for youth workers.

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Useful web sites:

http://www.thefoucauldian.co.uk
http://www.theory.org.uk

Acknowledgments

Notes

1   This analysis has also been applied to government health promotion strategies which may be of interest to people working in this area, see Coveney, J. (1998) 'The government and ethics of health promotion: the importance of Michel Foucault' in *Health Education Research: Theory and Practice*, Vol.13. No3. pp 459-468. available on line at: http://www.thefoucauldian.co.uk/coveney.pdf

2   An article by Trevor Purvis and Alan Hunt (1993) contrasts the concept of discourse with the concept of ideology suggesting that: 'if: "discourse" and "ideology" both figure in accounts of the general field of social action mediated through communicative practices, then "discourse" focuses upon the internal features of those practices, in particular their linguistic and semiotic dimensions. On the other hand, "ideology" directs attention towards the external aspects of focusing on the way in which lived experience is connected to notions of interest and position that are in principle distinguishable from lived experience' (1993: 476). Another way of formulating this is to talk about different levels of analysis. Ideology belongs to a level of analysis which is concerned with how the system works – at the level of a mode of production. So, for example, Marxist analysis of capitalism can be used to analyse capitalism in an abstract way, but the specifics of different forms of capitalism – American, Japanese, French, English etc. – need a different level of analysis. Discourse could then be concerned with analysis at this level: – the level of social formation.

3   Edinburgh Anti-bullying and Anti-racist Policy and Guidelines for Educational Establishments

4   See also Thomas, Erica (2004), *Respect!: a guide to understanding anti-oppressive practice for youth workers and those involved in community work, community education, community-based adult learning, parenting education and support*. Preston: HLB Associates; also Aluffi-Pentini, A. and Lorenz, W. (eds.) *Anti-Racist Work with Young People. European experiences and approaches*, Lyme Regis: Russell House Publishing; Beck, Les (1990) *Racist name calling and developing anti-racist initiatives in youth work, Research Paper in Ethnic Relations*, no.14. Coventry: Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations.

5   Thanks to Erika S. for this example.

6   There is also no discussion of disabled young people's engagement with sexuality.

7   see discussion on Power and Truth (1982: 187) H. L. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow; *Michel Foucault Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Brighton: Harvester Press.

8   He is asked in an interview why 'archaeology' and he says '"archaeology" can almost mean – a description of the archive. I mean by archive the set of discourses actually pronounced … and continues to function, to be transformed through history, and to provide the possibility of appearing in other discourses' (Foucault 1989, p.45).

9   According to the biography by David Macy (1993) Foucault says 'In a sense, I have always wanted my books to be fragments from an autobiography. My books have always been my personal problems with madness, with prisons, with sexuality' (xii).

Reviews

L. J. Francis, M. Robbins and J. Astley (eds)
Religion, Education and Adolescence: International Empirical Perspectives
University of Wales Press, 2006
ISBN 0-7083-1957-2
£45 (hbk)
pp. 272

Andrew Orton

In the context of increasingly contested roles for religion in society, Francis, Robbins and Astley use this text to present a range of perspectives from the 'International Seminar on Religious Education and Values' on the relationship between young people, religion and education.

These perspectives are arranged in two clear halves, with the first analysing various statistical relationships in data obtained from a large scale quantitative 'Religion and Values Survey'. This was based on a sample of nearly 34,000 young people aged between 13 and 15 from across England and Wales. Contributions to this first half of the text cover a broad range of related topics, including differing attitudes to prayer; smoking; science and purpose in life; and the influence of gender, schools, church attendance and different religious experiences on identity, values, actions and beliefs. Patterns in the data which these chapters highlight are generally interesting and thought-provoking, although the limitations of large-scale surveys requiring pre-defined quantitative responses are not always recognised and reported as clearly as they might be.

Unfortunately, at times, the failure to recognise these methodological implications and limitations also carries through to the analysis, where some elements of pre-defined models and theories are treated as established 'fact' whilst testing other hypotheses. For example, the survey relies heavily on the abbreviated Junior Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, categorising young people's personality based on their degree of extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism, without subjecting this theory to critical appraisal. In places, gender roles are dealt with in a similarly positivistic way, presenting analysis seemingly based on an innate relationship between sex, personality and social actions that seems oblivious to the potential role of socialisation in interacting with the data presented. Similarly, the correlation of attitudes within the constructed social and sexual 'morality scales' is interesting in trying to measure the relationship of social attitudes with religious experience. However the authors could have done much more to recognise how such links could be indicative of political groupings of ideas, and their related socialisation impact on a particular individual. Instead, such scales often come across as representing how 'moral' or 'religious' young people's values might be, based on (for example) whether they find church boring/irrelevant or think there is too much violence on television.

Different approaches to religiosity are generally dealt with in a much more sensitive way,

with indicators of different dimensions such as individual belief, public practice and private practice analysed in a nuanced way. However, whilst purporting to be looking at religion in general in multi-faith Britain, this occasionally lapses, with one chapter using 'church attendance' (rather than 'attendance at a place of worship' or a similar non-faith-specific phrase) as one of three measures of religiosity, together with other phrases such as 'belief in God' which may have an impact on the extent to which non-Christian faiths identify with these responses.

The second half of the collection of papers contains chapters which combine both quantitative and qualitative data analysis, resulting in much deeper and more nuanced contributions from Germany, Britain, Israel and Norway. The chapter on the life world of British Muslims is particularly good, recognising the potential and need for religious pedagogy to be critically analytical and grounded in young people's experiences, rather than just conveying unaltered traditional or fundamentalist views across generations. This is taken further in the chapter on Christian faith and practice in Norway, which recognises the implications for formal and informal education of conventional, enquiring and alternative individual forms of faith. The holistic education perspective presented here recognises the need for cognitive, emotional and social aspects of education, and the need to integrate education and welfare for 'ideal' pedagogy in a context that is aware of differences between church relationship, personal belief and social relationships.

The challenges of achieving such a vision within the time and curriculum constraints of the English state schooling system are ably addressed in a chapter on citizenship and religious education. Individual factors and barriers to effective education, including teachers' own perspectives and pupil attitudes to religion, are set in the complex context of broader social and political changes, especially in terms of national identity. This enables effective links to be drawn with issues of racism and sexism, including the educator's role in raising questions and encouraging debate and critical analysis to promote learning.

Occasionally, even the chapters in this second section are limited by the confines of the models they employ, leading to debatable policy conclusions. For example, in the chapter on inter-religious learning in Germany, students are asked to express their degree of agreement to statements based on pre-defined understandings of three alternative models of religious education (mono-religious, multi-religious and inter-religious). Given the complexity of philosophical approaches to relationships between religions, this is rather reductionist, and limits the potential of young people to articulate alternative approaches within the provided framework.

Many of these statements also confuse students' understandings of truth with the style of educational approach that they would prefer – for example, my agreement or otherwise with the statement 'There is no difference between religions, they all stem from a longing for God' is taken to imply whether or not I would support a multi-religious approach to education, as well as assuming that everyone who believes that religion arises from a longing for God must deny their differences. This leads the chapter to conclude that German young people would prefer a multi-religious approach, whereas what it appears to actually illustrate is that young people are sceptical about any exclusive claim to truth, whether in one or all religions. This only confirms the critical underlying theme of this

collection, that to be effective, religious education needs to start from young people's own worldviews, but accept neither these nor traditional religious tenets uncritically in pursuit of deeper understanding and relationships that strengthen rather than divide our collective social lives.

With its focus not just on data analysis but also exploration of the implications for educators and education, this collection is likely to provoke useful debate on how educators, policy-makers and religious congregations should respond to changing attitudes and values amongst young people.

Andrew Orton, Durham University.

Clive Billingham and Leicestershire Police
Seriously Weird
Leicestershire Police 2006
ISBN 1 855390906
£18.00
pp. 88 plus DVD

<div align="right">

Ellen Smith

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In today's society there is an ever increasing focus on anti-social behaviour and young people. When asked to review *Seriously Weird* as a resource to work with young people around these issues I was optimistic that it could be used to develop young people's understanding of this relatively new buzz word.

The resource is well presented with a teaching guide plus a DVD and CD-ROM. The teaching pack is user friendly in that it gives an overview of the programme at the start and is organised section by section. The DVD however is far too long and I don't think that it would retain the attention of not only young people but also the majority of adults. The characters in the DVD are slightly unrealistic and I feel most young people won't be able to relate to them. The DVD also has to be viewed over and over for each of the sessions which could become tedious. A lot of the sessions also rely on good levels of literacy which may isolate some young people. The information in the appendix is useful – however it may have been more beneficial to have the information earlier as a lot of the sessions would rely on the facilitator's own knowledge of the issues. The use of forum theatre in the sessions could be a good way of getting young people engaged. However. it again relies on the facilitator's own experience.

As far as the content of the sessions/DVD goes I was really disappointed. The material is enforcement heavy and was slightly biased in that it suggests young people are the only perpetrators of anti social behaviour. A definition of anti social behaviour is given from the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. However. throughout the resource what constituted anti social behaviour still seemed to be ambiguous. At one point it is even suggested that by not tidying his bedroom the young person in the DVD has committed anti social behaviour. It seems to almost suggest that everything young people do is anti social. For example, one of

the scenes is at a park where it is expected the young people should move and let a Mother and child use the equipment. The young people weren't displaying inappropriate behaviour; do young people not have rights too? Where can young people spend their leisure time? The teaching guide goes on to suggest that congregating in a group is 'rowdy behaviour' and uses terms such as 'hooliganism' and 'gang behaviour'. As a youth worker I don't find this helpful and think that some young people will find this approach judgmental and disregard the learning.

On a positive note, parts of the resource encourage the young people to think about ways they can avoid certain situations and what the consequences of their own actions may be. I think this is useful in that it encourages young people to think about their actions and how they affect others and about what skills they can use to resist pressures they may face.

Looking at ways to resolve conflicts within the community could be quite useful but again this comes across as being enforcement heavy. The case study 'James' they use in the teaching guide is an example of this whereby he is given an anti social behaviour order for being involved in a fight in the street. Maybe it would have been more useful to think of other ways to support James with the alcohol problem and the fact that he is 16 and lives away from home. Has the ASBO really resolved the situation? Also by suggesting that young people should do things for their community such as litter picking almost implies that young people have to justify their existence. Do adults not drop litter too?

One of the activities I did particularly like was the Family Fortunes game. This would be a really interactive way of engaging young people around a particular issue. Although the resource only provided four question cards I think it would be really useful to develop this. Another of the activities which could be useful was the feelings wheel. This encourages young people to think about not only how certain characters in the DVD may be feeling but also themselves.

Although some of this review has been based upon my opinion as a youth worker, I did find it quite alarming that they managed to print inaccurate information regarding the age of consent for sexual intercourse. It states that it is an offence to have 'intercourse with a girl under 16 years' (pg 56). Although this is true, they neglected to state that it is also an offence to have sexual intercourse with a boy under the age of 16. I think this gives out the wrong message being not only sexist but heterosexist.

As a youth worker I don't find this resource particularly useful although enforcement agencies such as the Police or the Youth Offending team may view it differently. Overall I probably wouldn't use this resource as a stand alone programme with young people. Some of the activities could be adapted and I would possibly use certain clips from the DVD. I think that the delivery of this resource would very much rely on the experience and value base of the facilitator and care should be taken not to buy into the moral panic around young people and anti social behaviour.

Ellen Smith, Youth Worker, Youthwise Drug Education Project, Newcastle

David L. Dubois and Michael J. Karcher (eds)
The Handbook of Youth Mentoring
Sage, 2005
ISBN 0-7619-29877-0
Price: £85.00

Kate Philip

The mere existence of this hefty tome points to the central position youth mentoring currently occupies in youth policy and practice arenas within the USA and, arguably, now in the UK. This handbook also reflects a desire on the part of advocates of the concept to embed it as a legitimate form of practice and to grapple with key questions about theory, research and practice in relation to mentoring. This is no easy task since youth mentoring covers such a wide range of definitions, approaches, aims, settings and target groups. Until now the high political profile of the concept, the heavy emphasis on marketing the benefits and the fervour of many of those in the mentoring lobby has tended to obscure rather than shed light on key underlying dimensions of the concept. Analysis of youth mentoring is also complicated by a historical lack of interaction between this form of intervention and other approaches in the youth field.

This book is therefore very timely in that an urgent need exists for a clear sighted, comprehensive and inclusive unpacking of key themes and debates around mentoring. The editors promise 'a scholarly account of youth mentoring with all of its limits and potential, without bias or inflated estimates of impact, but with conviction in the merits of its study' (p. xi). In keeping with this a climate of 'friendly criticism' permeates the 36 chapters which comprise the volume. The book is divided into 8 sections comprising theoretical orientations; mentoring relationships; developmental and cultural perspectives; formal mentoring programmes; the contexts of mentoring; special populations; and finally a section on policy issues. Chapters are structured to offer recommendations and implications for research and while this is repetitive it does serve to reinforce the message that work on mentoring has to be subject to more rigorous and systematic analysis. This short review offers a flavour of the wide ranging content and attempts to identify key themes that are of interest to the readership of this journal.

The emphasis is firmly on the North American experience of mentoring and the selection of chapters provides an extensive picture of mentoring within this context where mentoring is of older duration and more embedded than in the UK. This may be particularly useful for those involved in mentoring schemes and evaluations within the UK although it is clear from many of the contributions that the status of mentoring remains uncertain despite this longer heritage. Some serious questions remain unanswered about the transferability of the concept into European policy and practice. There is a much less developed youth work infrastructure across the USA and although currently the status of youth services in the UK are more precarious than previously, mentoring has been introduced here into a very different policy framework and set of expectations. Equally theoretical frameworks within social science within the UK have embraced notions of young people's efficacy and agency more extensively than in the USA where developmental psychology holds more sway. Although some authors refer to work in European contexts there is little engagement with UK and European notions of young people as active agents in the processes of mentoring.

These are important themes to bear in mind but nevertheless the chapters in this handbook reveal a plethora of fascinating insights and dimensions of youth mentoring. For example the work of Jean Rhodes has been groundbreaking in taking a critical perspective on youth mentoring programmes over a decade and in extending the analysis to the contexts and communities within which mentoring takes place. In Chapter 3 she builds on this empirical evidence and extends earlier work on a model of youth mentoring. Her overarching aim is to uncover how mentoring works for those young people who do succeed in building a strong relationship with an adult mentor but she concedes that this raises a wide range of further questions and a need for systematic evaluation. While it would have been useful to have linked this with UK work on models, Rhodes reiterates key questions about whether some young people are more likely than their peers to identify and find mentors or whether mentoring strengthens less able young people to make use of adult guides. She also highlights the salience of the length of time young people are mentored, the importance of the matching process and the wider context of family and friendships. Sipe's chapter offers a typology of youth mentoring which highlights the challenges to such an undertaking given the lack of reliable comparative data. Again it would have been valuable for UK readers to have some reference to work on UK typologies such as that undertaken by Colley (2005) or Shiner and Newburn (2005).

The critical overview of European developments by Liabo, Lucas and Roberts is only one of two contributions from outwith the USA. This chapter again refers to the theoretical frameworks of attachment, resilience and Rhodes' work on social emotional and cognitive development. The authors argue for theoretical development to address the range of European contexts. In common with Rhodes, they argue strongly for randomised control trials of youth mentoring to run alongside qualitative analysis of mentoring. It would have been useful if the authors had referred to Pawson's (2004) powerful critique of randomised control trials as a means of evaluating the benefits of mentoring. Indeed a chapter exploring the relevance and methodological implications of systematic reviews would have been a valuable contribution to the debates over evaluation and analysis of mentoring processes.

Evans, Jory and Dawson explore how the development of mentoring within Australian and New Zealand has been influenced by both the UK and USA but subsequently moved towards a more culturally sensitive approach. They suggest this enables greater recognition of the variety of family and other social support networks available to young people who take part in mentoring.

The historical chapter by Baker and Macguire presents an overview of the development of planned mentoring and how this links with dominant political and social trends within the USA. However while this explains the popularity and flexibility of mentoring in adapting to the changing cultures, less attention is paid to the ways in which mentoring has influenced how young people are viewed more generally or indeed what role if any, mentoring has played in improving the position of young people.

A critical edge is apparent in the chapter by Walker which explores the anomalous position of mentoring within government policy and the limits of such an intervention in the face of overwhelming structural inequalities. He usefully explores the attraction of mentoring to politicians, Republicans and Democrats alike, and this in turn can be linked to explanations

of the current popularity of mentoring with UK politicians. However as with other chapters there is little examination of mentoring as one form of intervention in comparison with others.

In conclusion although the focus of this handbook is almost exclusively on the North American experience, it presents an accessible, comprehensive and highly informative account of mentoring. In drawing together studies of mentoring over time it also helps signpost potential directions for mentoring within the UK context. But it will be of interest to those who work more generally with young people in raising key questions about evaluation, ethical dimensions and the processes of developing relationships between young people across generations. The highly psychological interpretation of mentoring however demonstrates a need for exploration and examination of research which conceptualises youth as active collaborators and for studies which illuminate the voices of young people in mentoring.

The recommendations typically focus on the US scene rather than on broader principles but again this can be highly instructive for other contexts. This book makes a valuable contribution at a range of levels and the accessible style means that it will find favour in research, policy and practice fields. The cost may put it beyond the reach of many practitioners who do not have access to good library facilities but it should certainly be on the shelf of courses concerned with work with young people.

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Simon Hallsworth
Street Crime
Willan, 2006
ISBN 1-84392-028-X
£17.99
pp.193

Tina Eadie

One of the most engaging parts of Hallsworth's *Street Crime* for me was the author's account in the introduction of an incident of street crime in which he was the victim. Confronted as a student in 1988 by a group of six young men in Brixton aged 15-18, one of whom put a knife to his throat and demanded cash, he recalled not only the incident itself but the feelings that accompanied it, both at the time and afterwards. Although he escaped unharmed and with nothing taken, he describes how his initial relief turned to righteous indignation, how he experienced sleep disturbance for a few weeks, and how his suspicion of groups of young men continued for a lot longer. This really highlighted the impact of street crime, defined in the book as involving the separation of victims from their property or money through violence, 'snatch crime' or pick pocketing.

What followed was a carefully researched and detailed analysis of the problem of street crime past and present, and an attempt at devising a new explanatory theoretical

framework drawing on examples from a study of rising crime in Brixton which Hallsworth was commissioned to undertake by Government Office in London. Part 1 of the book provides a short history of street robbery, going back to medieval times and the Robin Hood figures of the day and then moving on to consider street robbery in the later, more urban context. In more detail than was perhaps necessary, the author outlines how the 'folk hero' highwayman turned into the 'folk devil' of Victorian England – from MacHeath in *The Beggar's Opera* to Bill Sykes and Fagin in *Oliver Twist* (p.41).

Part 2, 'Accounting for Street Crime' offers some statistical data on the issue, an interesting observation being that whilst the most likely victims include young people aged 14 and 15, no-one below the age of 16 is included in the British Crime Survey. This links to another worrying statistic that seven per cent of perpetrators of this form of crime include schoolchildren. Part 2 then looks at different theoretical perspectives from right and left wing politicians – the former focusing on the 'deficit' model of offending behaviour in which something is deemed to be defective about offenders or the society in which they grew up (likely to be poor, metropolitan areas) and the latter focusing (not very convincingly as far as Hallsworth is concerned) on class disadvantage and social exclusion. What is of interest here is his challenge to the right that those engaged in street robbery do not necessarily reject dominant values (underclass theory) but conversely hold them strongly and it is their aspirations to own the latest consumer gadget or convenience – for example, the latest mobile phone – that fuels their crime.

From this, Hallsworth frames his own analysis of the problem, attempting to address the question of why this type of crime occurs. Drawing on the routine activity model of Cohen and Felson (1979) and adding in strain theory and differential association theory, he comes up with three dimensions of street crime which, put together, make its occurrence more likely:

(i)   The availability / suitability of victims;
(ii) The production of motivated offenders;
(iii) Deficiencies inherent in the social control response to this type of crime.

Part 3 seeks to develop each of these three factors by devoting a chapter to each. Looking firstly at what makes particular victims vulnerable, then at what motivates this type of offender (with an interesting analysis of the cultural context of this form of offending), and finally at attempts to prevent street crime and the failures within the criminal justice system to halt its increase over recent years.

Hallsworth's central thesis is that street robbery is a problem of a society that 'induces young people to desire and covet the very goods they have been pressurized from an early age to associate with the good life' (p.165). The fact that street robbers do not have the means to buy designer branded goods legitimately leads to them finding other (illegal) ways to be successful consumers. He cites the fact that mobile phone theft (most likely to be within the definition given of street crime) has risen from 1.1 per cent of all theft in 1995 to 5.5 per cent in 2000 as evidence of the desirability – and presumably saleability – of these as an item to target. He argues that the behaviour of the thieves can therefore be constructed as being about survival in today's capitalist, consumerist society (status / identity), rather

than survival in the more traditional sense of trying to stay alive.

Whether or not the framework put forward adequately explains street crime, key questions must be – and are regularly – asked about how it should be tackled plus, more importantly, how it might be prevented. Hallsworth offers three scenarios (p.170):

• Police our way out of it;
• Design our way out of it;
• Lock our way out of it.

Increased policing and (likely) prison sentence is put into perspective by the statistic that a mobile phone costs £100 compared with a year's imprisonment £35,000. Given that the offenders are part of our society, the answer as far as the author is concerned, is not to construct barriers to try to lock them out. That leaves designing new methods, but apart from advocating more investment in poor communities and in those who work in and for them, the book was concluded without any satisfactory detailed analysis of how this might be achieved.

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Gwynedd Lloyd (ed)
'Problem' Girls: Understanding and supporting troubled and troublesome girls and young women
Routledge Falmer, 2005
pp200
ISBN 0-415-30313-3 (hbk)
ISBN 0-415-30314-1 (pbk)

Jean Spence

The inverted commas around the word 'problem' in the title of this book, give the clue to the intention of the editor. While she is not questioning the reality of problems in girls' lives, or the fact that some girls are problematic, she uses the various chapters to address the gendered manner in which such problems are constituted particularly within the context of formal schooling.

The book has been produced against a background in which it has almost become common sense to accept that if there is any problem relating to gender in contemporary schools, it is that of boys. The idea that boys are 'bad' and girls are 'good' dominates attitudes towards

both boys and girls. The fact that girls out-perform boys in school examinations in the UK and are now in a majority accessing higher education reinforces the idea of 'good' girls and suggests at a common sense level they do not need special attention as girls. Yet the ritual bemoaning of boys' apparent underachievement, as Francis points out in the first chapter, obscures the fact that the experience of girls within the education system is historically continuous.

Subsequent to second-wave feminists pointing out the iniquities of a system in which girls were systematically disadvantaged by educational systems and methods, there has not been a particular moment in which the experience of girls was transformed. Many of the difficulties which girls endure are deeply rooted in the manner in which schooling reconstructs and maintains traditional inequalities of power, and standard indicators of achievement obscure the particularity of their experience. For those girls who are struggling with 'problems' or who are defined as 'a problem', the emphasis upon the question of boys and the gendered construction of meaning, serves only to exacerbate the difficulties of their situation.

The chapters are designed to uncover the gendered pre-suppositions across a range of issues affecting girls of school age, impacting upon their relationships with and within schools. The book begins with the general classroom behaviour of girls but it is not completely located in the environment of the school. Rather, it acknowledges the importance of the context of girls' lives to their experience of schooling. Similarly, there are chapters which deal with the formal educational discourse of the school – for example in relation to 'educational and behavioural difficulties ' (EBD), but it also recognises the different priorities which young people give to the school experience, where emotions and relationships often play a much larger part than educational achievement as such.

The opening chapter by Francis, 'Not/Knowing their place: girls' classroom behaviour' sets the scene for the development of the subsequent chapters which deal with more specific issues. The author uses her own classroom based observations and also draws upon the literature of the last thirty years to demonstrate the way in which classroom interactions reproduce gendered power relations. She covers a range of ground which might be familiar to youth workers and to those who have followed the debates since the 1970s. For example, her references to the domination and policing of space and of conversation by boys is reminiscent of Nava's (1984) discussion of the ways in which boys dominated youth clubs in the 1980s and of Spender's (1982) about boys' demands for attention. What Francis adds to such debates is a reminder of the importance of the social life of the classroom to children, of the ways in which gender is constantly being constructed through relationships, that these gendered categories are not absolutes and that other identities and social positions such as class and race impact upon the experience of gendered relations.

The formula adopted in the first chapter sets the pattern for the others: a review of significant literature, a questioning of the gendered meanings of the concept under consideration (e.g. mental health, violence, sexuality, aggression), use of the author's own professional practice experiences, insights from any research which the author has undertaken and recommendations for action. Sometimes this formula works very well – especially where there are 'live' examples from contemporary research and practice.

For example, in her chapter 'Feeling Under Pressure: low income girls negotiating school life', Ridge uses powerful extracts from her research with girls dealing with family poverty to illustrate its impact on their school lives. These speak of the pain of poverty; how the girls affected must put in so much extra effort in order to try to keep up appearances and how these efforts are systematically undermined on a daily basis by bullying or the threat of bullying. Similarly, in a chapter from a study in the USA 'Growing up mean: covert aggression and the policing of girlhood', Brown and Chesney-Lind use their primary research to present a lively discussion of the manner in which power and powerlessness is expressed in negative relations between girls through a prism of femininity in which they are situated as 'good girls'.

However the formula for writing the chapters works less well in relation to some other issues and especially where primary research is not available as in Street's contribution, 'Girls' mental health problems: often hidden, sometimes unrecognised?' This is presented primarily as a discussion of recent literature and policy relating to young people, mental health and schools. It does communicate the danger of girls being overlooked and the nature of their vulnerability, but it lacks the liveliness of those chapters where primary research dominates, and does not analyse the issues in any depth. Consequently the strategic recommendations are rather narrow and predictable.

The formulaic approach, which involves a particular approach to questioning given meanings, is not always a useful way of proceeding. It does give an order and pattern to the book and occasionally works as a mechanism for tying the chapters together but sometimes the reading becomes a bit tedious as yet again, another issue is shown to be 'complex'. To explore how the specific situation of particular individuals and groups of girls is addressed through gendered stereotypes is a legitimate exercise, but it is not always clear that at a general level, the appeal to complexity adds any significant dimensions to our understanding than those already pointed out within the older feminist texts. Thus McLaughlin's piece 'Exploring the psychosocial landscape of 'problem' girls: embodiment, relationship and agency', asserts, like the other chapters, that what is important to girls is the social experience, just as much as the curriculum experience, that process is more important than outcome. This is hardly a new insight! Similarly, her emphasis on internalisation, loss of voice and the invisibility of adolescent girls would hardly come as a surprise to youth workers, or I suspect to school teachers of my generation who were dealing with and debating such issues in the 1970s and 80s.

Ultimately, it was the revelation of the detail wrought by empirical evidence and different approaches to research that worked to hold the interest of this reader. In this sense, it might have been better if the authors had been given free rein to write about their research from whatever perspective suited them best. For such an approach would be more likely to play to the writers' enthusiasms and to stimulate the imagination of the reader.

My imagination was particularly stimulated by Chapter 12, 'Engaging girls' voices: learning as social practice' which reported on a two-year action research project in Newham in 1999-2000. Although focused upon 'educational and emotional difficulties' the teachers who undertook this project seem to have succeeded in shifting the terms of reference towards the girls' perceptions of their situation, to produce a genuinely participatory piece of action

research. Notably, they were constrained to participate in the terms set by the girls in this project, as much as the girls were expected to participate in the terms set by the teachers. In other words, the research proceeded through dialogue, with both sides learning. Needless to say, the authors, Cruddas and Haddock report the one important thing the girls all agreed they needed, was 'space to talk'. This is not complex. It is actually very simple and it is the one thing that appears to be missing in the centralised, curriculum-bound, outcome led systems which characterise contemporary schooling.

A similar message comes through in the following chapter which discusses an Australian example of action research in a school which proceeded by providing 'space' for 'naughty girls.' In 'My little special house: reforming the risky geographies of middle school girls at Clifftop College', the authors not only remind us of the absolute absence of personal space for young people in the contemporary school environment, but how this depersonalises young people and inhibits the possibility for the development of positive collective identities associated with school. Thomson, Mcquade and Rochford demonstrate the potential for constructive citizenship amongst 'problem' girls – in this case in relation to an environmental project- through the development of an 'activist collective identity' achieved through the provision of student controlled space to talk and create.

Despite some unevenness, this book offers a wealth of evidence regarding the need for change in schooling as well as some good positive strategies for the direction that might be taken. In a policy environment which is supposedly 'evidence-based' it might be imagined that there might be a positive response amongst politicians. However, where change is achieved, it has often been based on special and short term pots of money for research and innovation. Ultimately, when Cruddas and Haddock indicate that 'Targeting resources at girls is a starting point for all this' they are making a suggestion that is unlikely to gain a political response. The information and evidence is there to indicate how education might be more successful for both young men and young women in formal and informal educational settings. Unfortunately, whilst targeting resources might gain political favour, targeting them in this way does not correspond with government priorities for educational spending, and practitioners will undoubtedly be left to struggle with these issues in an unsympathetic environment. Perhaps it is only the development of an 'activist collective identity' amongst teachers and related educational practitioners which will ultimately pave the way for real change.

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Kerry Young
The Art of Youth Work (2nd Edition)
Russell House Publishing, 2006
ISBN 1-903855-46-2
pp.118

<div align="right">**Patrick Turner**</div>

*T*he *Art of Youth Work* is a curious book. Kerry Young's laudable aim is to argue for and outline a 'moral philosophy' of youth work. Or rather, she would like to demonstrate that the 'core' historical principles of youth work are in fact traceable to the moral philosophy of ancients such as Plato and Aristotle and the enlightenment thinking of Kant and Bentham. Young's basic thesis is that whilst the contexts of youth work have changed, the latter's essential purposes, motives and orientation towards the person have not. And, therefore, at a time in which policy imperatives point to the rapid withering of club based, voluntary and universal work with young people, practitioners seeking to reaffirm – or perhaps newly discover – what is potentially distinctive in their practice may profitably revisit youth work's core conditions, its art and guiding philosophy.

That somebody writing about work with young people in 2006 is using a language and conceptual schema that gives pride of place to such notions as art and philosophy is notable in itself. Whilst the book's extensive discussion of ethics and morality has a frequently religious undertow that threatens to capsize Young's bid for a secular and inclusive ethics of practice, her prose commendably eschews the bloodless policy speak of 'respect for others', 'participation' and 'diversity'. For all its faults religiosity has far more to commend it aesthetically than technocracy. The book's argument is structured , chapter-by-chapter, around what Young takes to be youth work's essential elements: its 'philosophy', 'practice' and 'art'. Her material is largely derived from her own readings of classical moral philosophy, excerpts from policy statements, and contributions from youth work and educational theorists. Young also includes extensive quotations from interviews conducted for the book with a wide range of youth work practitioners currently in the field and young people attending youth projects. Unfortunately, the manner in which she makes use of this material, structurally, thematically and conceptually, is fatally flawed.

Young's method is as follows. Each chapter is peppered with statements from moral philosophers on for example, 'right action', 'motive' and 'consequence' and the axiomatic importance in educational terms of adults nurturing the capacity in the young to exercise autonomous judgements in these things. Lengthy non-attributed quotes from Young's informants are then used to illustrate how such universal wisdom is hard-wired into the conduct of relations between youth workers and young people. However, Young supplies no analysis of these quotes whatsoever, allowing substantive claims made by her informants to stand completely unchallenged. Shorn of any biographical information, immediate context, or historical period, the words are reverentially endowed with an emblematic status. Were this sociological or anthropological writing Young's work could be taken as a stunning instance of the 'ethnographic fallacy'. That is, the wrong-headed assumption that in qualitative research interpretation or contextualisation always does an imperialistic violence to the words of informants. But what is important is that Young does not attempt to advance her thesis by engaging with and disputing practices, approaches and theories

that pose a threat to the 'core principles' she so wishes to defend. Her descriptions and mild words of opprobrium for the current policy conjuncture are curiously book ended in the introduction and conclusion. Whether or not the disciplinary and institutional regime of targeting, coercion and explicit behaviour modification is, ultimately, incommensurable with the capacity for autonomous moral judgement is intriguingly left unaddressed.

But testing youth work's alleged core principles against some of the specific forms modern day youth work has assumed, and building up a case comparatively from there, is not Young's favoured procedure. Had she attempted this some of the findings may have been intriguing. For example, some suggestive resonances might have been audible between ancient and contemporary forms of regulating normativity through speech and giving testimony. Young's method, on the other hand, is to endlessly restate her original position via an elaboration of youth work's essential value base. To do this she requires only the support of (apparently) congenial examples from informants as well as the literature on youth work and ethics. In fact there are many points at which a more interrogative approachto her material might have produced some interesting notes of dissonance, such as during her attempt to incorporate youth/cultural 'identity' as a paradigm area requiring a moral philosophical approach.

The book's failure to specify clearly from the outset the degree to which Young is being descriptive or prescriptive only makes its lack of criticality all the more frustrating. Is Young urging us to see what she herself has long divined: 'youth workers are moral philosophers – they just need telling'; or is she prescribing an ideal interpretative framework for making sense of what some youth workers do and others ought to. Whether the former or latter, the effect of all this is to make what is actually a very short work of 118 pages feel over long, and at times repetitive. There is also a sense of the hermetically sealed, despite the apparent diversity. This is not helped by the fact that her discussion on cultural identity , which she claims ought to be a central focus of youth work, feels at least ten years out of date. Young trots out the standard pieties of 'a politics of recognition' fashionable on the liberal-left in the late nineteen eighties to mid-nineties. To wit, the failure to acknowledge young people's self-ascribed identity categories, ethnic, religious and sexual, is linked to a host of psychosocial maladies. The most interesting work of that period by writers such as Paul Gilroy and Les Back, which looked at the newly hybrid forms of ethnic youth identity emerging from the imbrications of diasporic and indigenous cultures, gets no menetion whatsoever. Young claims to be attuned to the socially constructed, political nature of identity formation. Despite this she calls for youth workers to validate the kinds of essentialist, communitarian claims advanced by many of her informants on behalf of some or other culturo-ethnic tradition and heritage. Given events in recent years and the questioning of multiculturalism in the west as never before – the fact that commentators on the political left are even starting to question whether diversity and solidarity are perhaps incommensurable – Young might have made some effort to update these sections of the book to take account of such changes and debates. But then this only serves to underline the fact that Young has struggled to graft an allegedly trans-historical moral philosophy onto a complex, evolving sociological actuality. And none of this is helped by the fact that there is no discernibly consistent pattern to the use of graphical markers to differentiate the words of informants throughout the book.

The Art of Youth Work might have articulated a distinctive, historically grounded, morally charged alternative to youth work's current instrumental, disciplinary focus. But one of the signal failures of Young's book is its inability to link the threats to the moral philosophy she claims to champion to the sorts of political and philosophical values held by many youth work practitioners themselves, let alone policy makers. Indeed the politicisation of identity and inflation of psychic vulnerability – present in the words of many of Young's informants – have their root in the very demise of left wing politics that created the conditions for the emergence of New Labour. Welding 'the personal is political' of the New Left to 'underclass' cultural theories of the New Right, it was but a small step to the 'life politics' and 'positive welfare' of New Labour's individualised post-welfare state (Giddens 1994). Whilst I am sympathetic to the invocation of certain timeless truths (not least because such thinking is so unfashionable!), it is imperative that they are calibrated to the actual state of contemporary personhood and society. The first question is surely: what would it take to nurture the kind of moral agency Young claims is a vital prerequisite for good youth work at a time in which the dominant trend is toward what Christopher Lasch once termed a 'minimal self'? The second question is how to galvanise all those within youth work who wish, collectively, to assert an alternative to current policy? Had Young spoken to the need for virtuous actions of this sort as a preliminary to securing the conditions for a youth work of 'moral philosophising' her contribution might have been of genuine lasting value. As it is *The Art of Youth Work* is a Canute like curiosity, critically shallow and evasive, but containing some genuine pearls of wisdom.

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Patrick Turner is teaching and researching on youth issues in London.

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Report:
The Thompson Report (1982) Experience and Participation, Cmnd 8686, London: HMSO.

Abbreviations which are commonly understood can be used, but please spell out in full, with the abbreviation following in brackets, the first time they are used.

Please limit the use of supplementary notes as far as possible. Notes, numbered in the main text and detailed at the end of the article, should be included in the word count.

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