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EMPOWERMENT AND THE NEW RIGHT

Culture of change

LOUISE MORLEY

Empowerment is an abstract concept, but it has entered the discourses of both the employment and service delivery functions of the public services in the 1990s. In this paper I intend both to explore it and raise questions about why empowerment has entered the vocabulary of the change process in the UK at this particular political and historical moment. In so doing, the philosophical, psychological, sociological and political issues connected with the idea and practice of empowerment in public service settings will be considered.

Youth service documentation abounds with references to empowerment. The word even appears in ministerial documentation regarding the role and responsibilities of professional workers in relation to young people (NYB, 1990). Critics readily indicate that this is a contradictory message from a government which has structurally disempowered young people by removal of welfare benefits, housing rights and opportunities for employment (Morley, 1991). In education, social, probation, community and health work too, social personnel are required to provide the necessary preconditions which will facilitate the development of service users' sense of autonomy, well-being and effectiveness, while simultaneously implementing the policies and market economy of the New Right'. The market has become a policy alternative to public monopolies, and there has been a gradual commodification of public services, with decision-making balanced against financial self-interest as well as service users' needs (Ball, 1993). In the discourse of managerialism in the public services, employee empowerment is part of the strategy to motivate and accelerate productivity in the face of economic stringency and declining employment conditions. Individual professionals and social agencies embody and prioritise different notions about social inequalities, the nature of empowerment and techniques of intervention. To understand empowerment requires an analysis of power. How one depicts power determines whether there will be an alertness to its full implications in social relations. In relation to the New Right's restructuring of school governing bodies, Rosemary Deem (1992) comments, 'who becomes empowered and what they do with those powers is more crucial than an abstract notion of empowerment regarded as a "good thing" in itself'.

Paradoxically, the concept of empowerment (but not necessarily the ideology), has been usurped by the New Right. The word empowerment has lost its radical, politicised roots. In education, it was traditionally associated with liberal and Marxist positions (Giroux, 1983, 1985, 1988; Dewey, 1933, 1966; Freire, 1973, 1985; Shor, 1980). Central to these arguments was the problematisation of the power relationship between teacher and learner, expert and 'client', and the introduction of interactive methods in which learners moved out of passivity and into dialogue with educators. The privileging of experience and the development of critical consciousness were seen as fundamental requirements in this process. It was believed that there was a clear connection between the silencing of students demanded by traditional, transmission modes of teaching, and the suppression of people's voices politically. In this sense, there is a modernist rationality embedded in the idea of empowerment, suggesting that outcomes rationally follow

interventions. In the wider context of citizenship, empowerment was traditionally linked to Enlightenment values of universalism and rights, such as franchise, the rise of the trade union movement, housing initiatives, employment contracts and access to education.

Defining the term/ understanding the process

Whilst the use of the term empowerment is proliferating, it remains ill-defined and scantily theorised. The transference of micro practices and achievements to macro social change remains a problematic in the empowerment discourse. A question that has to be asked about the process is: empowerment for what end? For some it is a cognitive exercise, with an objective of promoting psychological benefits, for others the aim is socio-political, with material implications and changes to substantive social reality. Often, it is reduced to simplistic behaviourism, seeking socially decontextualised personal change. Kreisberg (1992, p.19) argues that the term empowerment 'has an expanding presence in a broad range of fields and contexts...used as rhetorical device without being carefully defined by its wielders'. He also notes that 'it has begun to be drained of its critical edge' (Kreisberg, 1992, p.21). Cochrane (1989, p.178) argues that:

In a situation of poverty, empowerment must of necessity take on a political meaning in the sense that the transformation of needs into rights is a socio-political process.

He notes that:

In many ways the current pressure to 'clientise' poor people is an effective form of control because they become categorised and therefore subdivided politically (Cochrane, 1989, p.180).

Shor and Freire (1987, p.111) refer to 'social class empowerment'. They argue:

...if you are not able to use your recent freedom to help others to be free by transforming the totality of society, then you are exercising only an individualist attitude towards empowerment or freedom (ibid, p.109).

Shor and Freire emphasise that:

...this feeling of being free...is still not enough for the transformation of society even though it is absolutely necessary for the process of social transformation (ibid, p. 110).

Giroux (1988) speaks of 'self and social empowerment', distinguishing between and connecting the empowerment of individuals and social positions. Giroux (1985, p.379) also links empowerment to transformation, by uniting the language of critique with the language of possibility. In the current usage by the New Right, social transformation may also be a goal, but with a different value base. By focusing attention on individual agency, rather than on structures, empowerment could be perceived as an extension of the New Right's commitment to self-sufficiency; one which ignores social formations such as 'race', class and gender. Meeting the needs of disempowered members of the community is a drain on the resources of the market economy. Empowerment, then, becomes part of the language of efficiency, cost-effectiveness, quality and standards, employed to mask the extent to which the government has sought to prepare for privatisation and the erosion of the welfare state.

Jeffs and Smith (1994) believe that there is a control culture and a new authoritarianism masquerading in the language and philosophy of progressivism. The new economy of power in the UK public services, with its managerialism and accountancy-based culture requires empowerment, without acknowledging that a major cause of powerlessness is social and economic inequality (Pollitt, 1993). It is arguable that, in the context of the New Right, the process of empowerment is aimed at refashioning marginalised members of the community. Clients are deemed in need of empowerment if they display behavioural or attitudinal traits that distinguish them from the 'empowered' mainstream. Whereas empowerment ostensibly appears client-centred and liberatory, it could well be a normalising discourse, or part of the ideology about the powerful bearing the social and economic burden of the less powerful.

Many feminist educators have seen the curriculum and teaching methodologies as sites of struggle, but also as potential areas for change (Mahony, 1988; Morley, 1991, 1992, 1993b, 1994; Weiner, 1994). O'Brien and Whitmore (1989, p.309) define empowerment as:

An interactive process through which less powerful people experience personal and social change, enabling them to achieve influence over the organisations and institutions which affect their lives, and the communities in which they live.

The rationalist idea here is that by exposing people to the appropriate educational interventions, they will gain the confidence to critically engage and change their environments. But Patti Lather (1991, p.4) argues that empowerment is 'not something done to or for someone, but instead is a process one undertakes for oneself'. She uses the term to mean 'analysing ideas about the causes of powerlessness, recognising systematic oppressive forces and acting both individually and collectively to change the conditions of our lives'. Caroline Shrewsbury (1987, p.8) claims that:

To be empowered is to recognise our abilities to act to create a more humane social order. To be empowered is to be able to engage in significant learning. To be empowered is to be able to connect with others in mutually productive ways.

Robinson (1994, p.7) maintains that:

Empowerment is a personal and social process, a liberatory sense of one's own strengths, competence, creativity and freedom of action; to be empowered is to feel power surging into one from other people and from inside, specifically the power to act and grow.

Jennifer Gore (1992, p.56) is less evangelical, and counsels caution in relation to the need for reflexivity and humility on the part of those charged with the responsibility of empowering others. Gore believes that empowerment first presupposes an agent of empowerment (teacher, youth worker, therapist, manager); second, it holds the notion of power as property; and third, it has some kind of vision or desirable end state. Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989, p.306) vividly describes her attempts at progressive pedagogy across differences of 'race', ethnicity, class, sexuality in a progressive university course. She concluded that 'strategies such as student empowerment and dialogue give the illusion of equality while in fact leaving the authoritarian nature of the student/teacher relationship intact.' She questions the relationship between

teachers and learners by asking how a teacher 'makes' a student autonomous without directing them.

Discourses on power frequently include references to both Marxist and postmodern positions. In Marxism, power operating in society is ultimately grounded in the economic power of the dominant class. In a postmodern analysis power is no longer seen as a reified possession. Postmodernism rejects the notion that power is concentrated in monolithic structures such as the militia or the state. Rather, it is perceived as capillary, that is, exercised in every moment of social life - in inter and intra personal relations. Furthermore, as postmodern subjects, the belief is that we have internalised power relations and monitor ourselves. According to Bartky (1988), disciplinary power is dispersed and anonymous, invested in everyone and no one in particular. A powerful metaphor for this is Bentham's model of the panopticon prison in which the wardens reside in the middle of a tower of backlit cells. So, prisoners never know when they are being watched. The result is they learn to regulate themselves. In this analysis, empowerment could be perceived as an extension of the surveillance mechanisms of the public services (Ball, 1990). But postmodernism also conceptualises power as a generative, productive phenomenon, as well as repressive. Gore (1993, p.120) argues that:

It is this productive conception of power that undergirds notions of empowerment and notions of emancipatory or liberatory authority, authority-with rather than over others.

It is possible that the absence of politicised reflexivity means empowerment could involve new forms of domination (Gore, 1993). Boulding (1989, p.15) defines power as potential for change. At the level of the individual, Boulding sees power simply as 'the ability to get what one wants'. This interpretation relies heavily on liberalism and the possibilities for reform and change within existing structures.

The Anti-discourse

To be provocative, I shall consider empowerment as a manipulative strategy, designed to disguise the harsh consumer-oriented market values of New Right policies in the public and voluntary sectors. Attacks on local authorities for their municipal socialism have dramatically undermined policies for equality. In this context, empowerment is part of the new discourse of individual choice. The New Right has parodied the welfare state by offering liberation from the disempowering mechanisms of state interference in people's personal lives. For different ideological reasons, this has also been a concern of the left. Habermas (1984) theorised that welfare bureaucracies and 'therapeutocracies' disempower clients by pre-empting their capacities to interpret their own needs, experiences and life problems. This is colloquially exemplified in the 'we know what is best for you' syndrome. This suggests that individuals or groups with more cultural capital, in terms of educational qualifications and professional status, can have power over those denied access to such capital. Catherine MacKinnon (1987, p.141) describes 'the existing distributions of power', suggesting that power exists in readily identifiable forms which enable its sharing. Epstein (1993, p.12) argues that 'power is not a "thing" which exists outside social relationships. It is constructed and reconstructed in and through them constantly.'

The notion of the therapeutic, or 'nanny' state (Polsky, 1991) is open to different theoretical and political interpretations. A postmodern view would articulate how social and public services are part of this network of power, in so far as they provide a constant surveillance of the individual. Regulatory discourses in community and youth work, health, housing, social services and education, are part of the interaction between professionals and clients, and can reinforce normative behaviour and lifestyles. Jeffs and Smith (1994, p. 21) argue that social policy in the UK and USA has been 'increasingly shaped by the underclass thesis'. This construction suggests that the majority of social problems are associated with 'the inferior, even criminal disposition of the underclass who justly deserve their poverty' (Galbraith, 1992, p.172). Solutions to the problem range from extreme right wing interventions, such as the abolition of welfare benefits for single mothers, in favour of funding for orphanages and fostering schemes, to 'initiatives directed at radically altering the attitudes and behaviour of young working class people' (Jeffs and Smith, 1994, p. 22). In this context, the empowerment discourse could be seen as part of the 'civilising' process and a cure for the diseases of poverty and criminality. While appearing emancipatory, it could be behaviourist, intrusive and provide public service workers with the right to invade and colonise clients' inner worlds. It moves the relationship beyond the provision of services and meeting of stated needs, and suggests a psychological subtext with quasi-therapeutic interventions. The issue of boundaries and their transgression is paramount. In the empowerment discourse, it is questionable if there is any realm of the service user's personal life beyond the concern of the professional worker. The result is therapeutic interventions insidiously permeating the caring professions, with an aim of social reconstruction and cultural engineering.

Empowerment contains the danger of promoting social pathology and implying that the group to be empowered is objectified, and reduced to the status of raw material to be worked and moulded by experts who have decoded the mysteries of power. In the public services, the 'product' is often embedded in the relations between worker and client. As such, interpersonal relations can be considered as carriers, relays or microcosms of external power relations. Jennifer Gore (1993) is critical of what she perceives as the non-reflexive use of the term in liberatory education. She believes that there are no inherently liberatory practices or discourses, and that power must be analysed as a microprocess of social life. Her fear is that empowerment has become yet another regime of truth, and she attempts to unravel the connections between authority and power. In so doing, she exposes an inherent paradox in the argument: authority is a necessary attribute in order to empower, and yet authority itself is frequently acknowledged as problematic within liberatory discourses.

Examples of liberatory, empowering interventions, with the possible subtext of social control are visible in areas such as sex education, youth justice, group work, educational psychology, youth work, community work, substance abuse units, crime prevention projects. Empowerment could be part of the gaze of the new moral technology, aiming to regulate and survey the most vulnerable members of the community. Professionals involved in this work would be right to contest this, emphasising their agency, and refusing to be perceived as uncritical technicians of a right wing regime. It is indisputable that there is an overwhelming human cost to

mass unemployment, global recession, racism, sexism and classism, heterosexism, violence, poverty and urban and industrial decline. In this era of profound social change, there are dislocations and discontinuities which can leave individuals isolated and alienated. It could be argued that the role of the caring professions is not to change the world, but to respond sensitively to wider changes by providing support for people most damaged. Yet the controversial question is whether the support provided is so individuated that its aim is to muzzle the possibility for collective action for social change.

Steve Hall (1995, p.61) argues that, 'Contemporary youth work, youth justice and education have been informed primarily by the behaviourist and cognitive traditions in psychology'. The perception of empowerment as 'power to' that is, confidence and self-efficacy to take responsibility for stating and achieving personal goals is dependent on a psychodynamic formulation which offers the central notion that our personal histories, expectations of the future and present interpretations interact. Anna Freud (1937) suggested that subordinate and oppressed parties tend to introject, or internalise, the negative characteristics that their oppressors have projected on to them. This interpretation acknowledges the extent to which misinformation as a result of racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism and disablism has been internalised by subordinate groups (Morley, 1991, 1992, 1993a & b, 1994). Empowerment, by this definition, involves oppressed groups overcoming the internalised barriers created by the dominant group's negative evaluations. A question remains as to how this process is achieved.

Kitzinger and Perkins (1993) argue strongly against counselling and therapy. They believe the empowerment claim of personal therapy is a diversion from political activity, fostering dependency on the 'expert' culture. Counselling and therapy, they maintain, despite its liberatory/alternative status, is a mechanism for instilling mainstream values in marginalised groups. Therapy, they argue, succeeds in marginalising emotions by usurping services traditionally provided by personal support networks. Solutions to large scale discrimination and inequalities they maintain, cannot be remedied by individualised 'talking cures'. Therapy, they claim, does very little to shift the normative construction of male dominance and female subordination. They urge members of oppressed groups to stop seeking solace in the 'psychobabble' of white, male-dominated humanistic cults, such as Co-counselling, Transactional Analysis and Gestalt therapy, and to campaign politically for an end to the conditions that create the hurt, distress and dis-ease in the first place. There can be no psychological theory of empowerment, they argue, apart from the social and political, and it is vital to consider and change the social context of power relations. Kitzinger and Perkins' thesis, while refreshingly challenging, could be perceived as dichotomous rationalism, implying that personal development and political action are mutually exclusive. Steve Hall (1995, p.61) suggests that these interventions are powerless anyway in the face of wider social breakdown. He argues that:

The permutations of counselling, groupwork, alternative to custody programmes, health education, self-esteem building, empowerment exercises ...is powerless in the vast flow of an exfoliatory historical process which in specific locations is producing nihilistic, violent criminality amongst young people faster than most justice systems can process it, let alone ameliorate it.

Empowerment as emotional labour

Underfunding and New Right legislation have resulted in an escalating workload for public service workers, who have to absorb and contain the consequences of social inequalities. The empowerment directive can represent major exploitation of workers. Fineman (1993, p.3) describes emotional labour as employees being paid to smile, laugh, be polite, or 'be caring.' He believes that this can be stressful and alienating as it involves the suppression of workers' own needs and feelings, as they are paid for their skills in emotion management. In effect, employers buy workers' emotional performance, without necessarily providing resources to replenish it. Ferguson (1984, p.53) explained that 'emotional labourers are required to take the arts of emotional management and control that characterise the intimate relations of family and friends... and package them according to the feeling rules laid down by the organisation.' Van Maanan and Kunda (1989) note that emotional numbness and burnout frequently accompany the incongruence of felt and displayed emotions. So, it is not simply a question of the volume of emotional demands, but the gap between demand and capacity that causes the stress and exhaustion (Fisher, 1994). The empowerment discourse attributes a great deal of agency to individual practitioners, and overlooks the constraints imposed by location in underfunded, hierarchical organisations.

Empowerment and the management of change

The literature of management development in the USA has been threaded with references to empowerment for the last two decades (Block, 1987; Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Conger, 1989; Kanter, 1979). The implication is that, in order to wield institutional power, the manager has to connect with his or her own power, and foster the preconditions for employees to realise their creative potential. Kanter (1979, p. 73) argues:

Only those leaders who feel secure about their own power ...can see empowering subordinates as a gain rather than a loss.

Notice the use of the term 'subordinate', which suggests that empowerment must not be so effective as to disrupt hierarchical systems. In the UK public services, managerialism has played an essential role in achieving the shift to the values of the New Right. Stephen Ball (1990, p.158) highlights how:

...management stands in tension with its imperfect servants. The managed are fragile, prone to irrationality, atavistic practices, and surfeits of emotion.

In Ball's thesis, empowerment is yet another example of 'psychoanalytic or psychological analyses frequently mobilised in response to resistance'. Cognitive restructuring of employees has been an important part of management theory. Conger (1989, p.18) defines empowerment as 'the act of strengthening an individual's beliefs in his or her sense of effectiveness'. Conger urges managers to identify organisational factors contributing to powerlessness, such as lack of role clarity. Social structures such as racism and sexism appear to be absent from these taxonomies of powerlessness. Conger also believes that individuals are empowered when they feel they can cope with environmental demands. Early thinking, encapsulated in the work of organisational psychologist, Alfred Bandura (1977) identified four means of empowering others: (1) through positive emotional support during experiences associated with

stress and anxiety, (2) through words of encouragement and positive persuasion, (3) by providing opportunities to observe others' effectiveness, and (4) by enabling the mastering of a task with success. Much of this early management development analysis of empowerment appears to draw on mechanistic, behaviourist notions of reward and punishment. Behaviour is observable, while inner experiences and feelings, such as fear and internalised oppression, are more complex areas for managers to explore and monitor. Underlying this process is the more manipulative goal of transforming workers into manageable, loyal and productive docile bodies. In the words of John Nicholls (1995, p.5), 'An empowered workforce is a committed workforce'. Employer malleability and motivation are increasingly important in times of social and organisational transition and transformation.

Conclusion

Empowerment can have sinister undertones when considered in the context of New Right policies in the public services. It appears part of the manipulative, victim-blaming ideology suggesting that oppressed groups have the power to change their material circumstances through psychological restructuring. In this case, empowerment is superficially conceived and borders on simplistic behaviourist notions of change. Underpinning this conception is the advancement towards mass privatisation of public services on the basis that if people are empowered, they will make fewer demands on the welfare state. The New Right's usage has normative connotations and disregards structures of inequality and social diversity. It is questionable as to whether the empowerment discourse addresses potential inequities arising from the transition to a market economy. This interpretation also scapegoats public service workers by exploiting their emotional labour, and holding them responsible for facilitating major personal and social changes, in the framework of their own disempowered and unsupported positions.

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Notes

- 1 The New Right is a term used initially to describe the Thatcher and Reagan administrations. This particularly relates to changes in social policy underpinned by the transition from human relations and welfare values to a market economy in the public services. As Christopher Pollitt observes, (1993, p.122) 'Central to the new-right analysis of public services is the idea that the absence of competition will lead to endemic inefficiency.' Hence 'New Right' is used to identify political, social, organisational and cultural changes, as a result of shifts in policy and ideology.

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CONTRIBUTIONS

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In addition we are particularly interested in receiving contributions
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- *The changing location of youth workers from Community and Youth Departments to Leisure/Housing Departments*
- *Community Care and Young People*
- *Young People as Victims of Crime*
- *Young People in Custody, particularly with regard to those with learning difficulties*
- *Health*
- *The impact of peace in Northern Ireland on Young People.*

THE NEEDS AND PROBLEMS OF YOUNG SEASONAL WORKERS IN SOUTH LAKELAND

IAN PAYLOR and DAVID SMITH

Introduction

The research on which this article is based was carried out in the summer of 1994. It was funded by the Methodist Church's Ambleside and Windermere Circuit, and our concerns in the research, and the themes of this article, stem from the funder's original interests. Active members of the church had become concerned about the welfare of young people working in the catering trade in South Lakeland during the main tourist season. On admittedly anecdotal evidence, they believed that the health and well-being of many seasonal workers were endangered by the risks of unprotected sex, drug use and excessive drinking, and that some were at risk of drifting into offending. They were keen to establish what kind of services would be relevant to the needs of these young people, and what role the church might have in providing them. As we quickly became aware, outreach workers with the health promotion and youth services had also identified seasonal workers as a high risk group for problems associated with unprotected and casual sexual relations and with drug use, though not for crime problems, and an early concern of the research was to ensure that the fieldwork did not compromise the work already being done by these agencies to identify and meet these young people's needs. We are grateful to the workers involved for allowing us to draw on their local knowledge and experience, and to members of the police, probation and social services whom we contacted for background information and advice. ⁽¹⁾

The hotel and catering industry is one of the largest employers in the United Kingdom. Approximately 10% of the British workforce are engaged in hotel and catering employment, representing some two and a half million people. According to Roberts (1995), 'restaurants, hotels, other catering establishments, and tourism related businesses are prime examples' of service sectors with strong employment growth but 'bottom-heavy job profiles' - that is, the great majority of those working in the sector are poorly paid and have little prospect of promotion to better jobs. The hospitality industry, as it is now commonly known, is also a major employer of young people. The 1992 Labour Force Survey, cited in Coles (1995, p.43), found that 'distribution/hotels and catering' was by far the largest occupational category for 16-17 year-olds who were in full-time education, and accounted for about 10% (31,000) of those who were not. The hospitality industry is the most important element in the wider tourism sector (Wood 1992).

Tourism, according to the Lake District Special Planning Board (1994), is of 'fundamental importance' to the economic future of the Lake District. In Cumbria as a whole (of which the Lake District is of course only a part) tourism supports approximately 31,000 jobs or some 15% of the workforce; in the area relevant to this study (South Lakeland, meaning principally Bowness, Windermere and Ambleside) about 50% of the workforce are employed in some aspect of the hospitality industry.

The Lake District Special Planning Board (1994), whilst acknowledging that the tourist industry 'underpins the area's economy' and that it should be encouraged to develop because of this, also raises the concern that

a balance has to be struck between the need to provide for visitors' enjoyment of the National Park, the needs of the permanent residents, and the protection of the Park's natural beauty. (p.3, para 1.11)

We are concerned here with a different and less familiar balance: between the interests of hospitality industry employers in development and innovation within a changing and competitive market and the interests of their workers, particularly those who are most vulnerable to exploitation and neglect.

Traditionally, the industry has been one that has had few if any qualms about employing the cheapest labour (Thomas and Erlam 1978; Taylor, Airey and Kotas 1983; Robinson and Wallace 1984; Byrne 1986; Lucas 1990). Other concerns, such as suitability for the job, skills and training have not been of major interest to employers in an industry where many employees are seasonal, part-time and casual, enjoy few legal rights of protection, and can be excluded from certain benefits such as holiday pay and work-related bonuses. According to Crompton and Sanderson (1990):

In this highly competitive industry it is necessary that labour should be cheap...the economic recession, in combination with central government policies, has made young people [a source of cheap labour]. Unemployment rates are particularly high amongst the younger age groups, and the system of benefits has been structured so as to make it more likely that they will accept poorly-paid work (p 148).

Recent research (for example, Banks et al. 1992) has found that the desire for work among the young unemployed is strong, and strongest among those with the fewest qualifications. Many say that they would take any job which paid more than their benefit entitlements. The hospitality industry provides one of the 'escape routes from collapsed local industries' identified by Coles (1995, p.15); seasonal work in catering may be virtually the only employment option for young people with few qualifications living in economically depressed areas.

In the U.K. during the past fifteen years a central plank of Government policy has been to lower the cost of youth labour through a variety of devices (Chapman and Cook 1988; Jones and Wallace 1992; Williamson 1993), and whilst there is nothing inevitable about such policies, and a possible incoming Labour government committed to a minimum wage policy might well act in this area, it does seem that young people are likely to remain an important element of the labour supply to the hotel and catering trade. While the same pattern appears in tourist areas in other European countries, seasonal workers in Britain do not have the protection of the Social Chapter which, in principle at least, operates in other countries of the EU. The British Government has also insisted on retaining the opt-out position with regard to parts of the Young Workers' Directive [94/94/EC] which was adopted by the European Social Affairs Council in June of this year (see Fidderman 1994).

It is against this background that this small study was undertaken. Every summer some two and a half thousand young people arrive in South Lakeland to take up

employment in the hotel and catering trade (ECOTEC 1992). The majority of these young people are women,⁽²⁾ and for some this will be the first time they have been away from home for any length of time. They come from all parts of the U.K., although the study sample in this project were mainly from the north of England (Northumbria, Lancashire, Manchester, Merseyside, Yorkshire and Humberside). What the research project sought to do was illuminate the conditions those young people found themselves in and identify what the needs and problems of young seasonal employees were during their period of work in South Lakeland.

Methodology

Research on food service staff has almost invariably entailed some (usually extensive) element of ethnographic research involving participant observation in the workplace (e.g. Mars and Nicol 1984). This particular study is somewhat unusual in that it sought to explore the feelings, experiences and attitudes of a group of young people employed in the hotel and catering trade through interview and observation in their leisure time. Participant observation usually involves living or working alongside the group under study either openly or, more commonly, covertly, so that the subjects under scrutiny are unaware of the researcher's status. In ethnography the focus is on the manner in which people interact and collaborate in observable and regular ways. Typically such work has taken long periods of intensive study and immersion in a well-defined locality involving direct participation with some members of the organisation in their activities. A wide portfolio of data collection methods may be used, but generally ethnographers place more emphasis on observation and semi-structured interviewing than documentary and survey data, and this was the method adopted in this study. The fieldwork took place during June, July and August 1994 (seasonal research for a seasonal topic), and the research sites were the pubs and clubs in the locality where the young people spent their leisure time.

The main source of our data is the interviews conducted by the researcher (IP) with the young people engaged in the hotel and catering trade, which provide powerful and vivid evidence of how respondents feel about their work situation. It is an opportunity to hear *their* voice. The researcher was open with the young people contacted about why he was there and what his interests were. Once a rapport had been established and the relationship developed, then the young people contacted were very keen to talk. In the course of the study he met with and talked to, at varying lengths, over fifty young workers. Interviewing in pubs was problematic, especially as the evening wore on, but, once he had established a presence, a snowball sample quickly developed and the conversation could easily be brought round to our area of interest. The experience of being interviewed about one's job is, in some respects, similar to a counselling session, for one is asked some pertinent questions about one's life and feelings by an impersonal and non-judgmental person, and answering these questions involves reflecting on what one actually does feel and think.⁽³⁾ In fact, the preoccupations which emerged during the interviews were remarkably similar. We have shaped this article around the six major themes that emerged from the interviews: stress; drugs; sex; health; marginality; and rights.

Stress

In extracting common themes from the literature on hotel and catering occupations the over-riding impression that one gets is the sense of pressure that hotel and

catering workers at all levels operate under (See Wood 1992), and for the people in this study this was very much the case. The pressure emanates from a desire and in some cases a need to ensure adequate remuneration from informal rewards (tips), from the erratic nature and demand for hotel and catering services, from the unreasonable demands of hotel and catering supervisors and managers, from the heightened awareness of the high disaster potential inherent in situations when serving the public, from exhaustion, perhaps exacerbated by the excesses of the night before, or just from the sheer drudgery of much of the work. Whatever its origins, stress is an ever-present feature of hotel and catering work, as it is of other environments which contain many sources of uncertainty.

It is worth entering a qualification about the effects of working in an uncertain environment. A number of respondents actually welcomed the 'buzz' which they got from working in such a pressured atmosphere, with one young man comparing it to an enjoyable roller-coaster ride. All the same, no-one would enjoy being on a roller-coaster indefinitely, and the possible excitement of working under pressure easily slides into a pervading sense of anxiety and strain.⁽⁴⁾

Drugs

The folklore of the industry supports the view that there are many employees with alcohol problems, but any cause and effect relationship is unclear (Wood 1992). Evidence from the present study suggests that workers drink a great deal, not for relaxation but to 'get blitzed', to forget the stresses of the past working day. Heavy drinking and drug-taking may therefore be directly associated with stress, primarily as effect but on occasions also as cause. Young women especially 'used' modern high alcohol volume drinks with names like Thunderbird, 20/20, and Blue Strawberry to achieve a satisfactory level of intoxication very quickly. The use of illegal drugs was commonplace, especially cannabis, which was widely smoked combined with tobacco (see the section on Health below). Those interviewed thought taking drugs was essential for relieving stress and 'cooling down'. After working up to 15 hours a day it was felt 'legitimate' to 'have a perk' and achieve a high through drug use (see Dike 1993).

While work-related stress appeared to be the main cause of turning to drugs for relief, the peer group could itself be a source of pressure. When drugs were used within a group of employees anyone who was not taking them was liable to feel pressure to join in. Refusal could lead to social isolation. As in other studies of young people (see Davies and Coggans 1991), these young people were willing to experiment; if they did not like a particular effect they would not continue with the drug in question. There was anecdotal talk of heroin use amongst people they knew, but during the study we did not come into contact with any users. There was such a ready and plentiful supply of other substances that the market did not feel the need to 'move on' to opiates, opioids or narcotic analgesics (Parker 1993). Amphetamines and hallucinogenic amphetamines (Ecstasy) were the drugs most referred to after cannabis and those most used recreationally, although one person interviewed early on in the study did state that he regularly took speed for a more instrumental purpose, to get him 'up' at the start of a particularly early shift. Interestingly, he was the only worker in the group who fitted into the new stereotype of the dance culture young person who eschews the use of alcohol (see Malyon 1994) but uses a range of illegal drugs in a sophisticated and knowledge-

able way. The young workers contacted during the course of this study tended to use all drugs, including alcohol, as part of a cocktail of substances whose balance they varied depending on their immediate requirements.

This regular use of illegal and legal drugs was very much an element in maintaining stress levels. The young people interviewed were very conscious of the possibility of dismissal due to impaired performance through drug use, yet such was the cultural expectation that one would engage in such activities that workers played out a Jekyll and Hyde lifestyle which must have had an effect on their physical and mental well-being.

Sex

Again there is evidence in the literature that the hotel trade encourages people (both clients and workers) to take a 'moral holiday' (Shamir 1981). Evidence from the interviews with the respondents in this study suggests that this is the case in the hotels where these young people worked. As the literature suggests, the force of immediate cultural norms again appears to be a factor here - there was a tendency for working friends to expect you to establish a relationship with a partner when going out for the evening, and sex was an accepted part of that relationship. 'Bed-swopping' within the hotels and between the various hotels was regularly commented upon, and although people seemed aware of the risk of infection most sexual encounters occurred at the end of (or during) a drunken or drugged session when it was admitted that the last thing on a young person's mind would be precautions (the contraceptive pill was widely used). Listening to the young women's accounts of why and how they got involved with their sexual partners was reminiscent of accounts of fighter pilots in wartime who enjoyed a certain amount of sexual abandonment because of the fear that this might be the last time. The fragility of the young people's relationships is symptomatic of the perceived precariousness of their position in general.

Another issue here is the sexual harassment of female employees, a further stress factor. A number of respondents commented that the sexual harassment of women workers was far from uncommon. Women who deal with the public, such as bar staff, chambermaids and room service workers are vulnerable to harassment from guests (Byrne 1986), but a particular cause for concern expressed by the women in this study was the problem of unwanted attention from managers.⁽⁵⁾ Obviously, women who are dependent on their employers for continued employment and have no prospect of other work are especially at risk, and live-in women workers face particular problems both because of the location of their living quarters and their dependence on the employer for accommodation.

Health

There was the potential for health problems in aspects of the lives of seasonal workers apart from the stresses of the job and the compensatory consumption of alcohol and other drugs. The young people found it very difficult to ensure that they had a balanced diet in view of the hours and long shifts worked. Meals were taken at irregular times, and they found that working with food did not provide an incentive to watch their diet or try to control their weight. The shifts tended to finish late at night, and then you either ate a very substantial meal or just a snack of crisps or cereal. Neither alternative is ideal; poor eating habits and the long hours

make the young people more at risk of picking up infections and becoming run-down. The majority of young people contacted smoked, and again the temptation or pressure to 'fit-in' with your colleagues was a factor here. They thought a 'no-smoking' policy would not be a good idea as it would mean the establishment of a no-smoking area which, if they used it, would put them in a minority and isolate them from their colleagues. When working away from home they felt it was important to be accepted by their colleagues, and hence people who had not previously smoked felt compelled to do so.

Marginality

Statements concerning the social and psychological marginality of the hotel and catering workforce abound in the literature (Wood 1992). Despite lack of empirical support there has been an invidious tendency to depict many hotel workers as 'deviant' and the hospitality industry as attracting a large number of people with 'personal problems' (Mars, Bryant and Mitchell 1979). Shamir (1981) argues that the relationship is the other way round: rather than the deviant being attracted into the catering industry, it is hotel life which actually encourages deviance. Since hotel workers labour in the leisure time of other people they find themselves out of phase with the rest of society, and unable easily to form social relationships outside of the industry.

Although the seasonal workers in this study came into contact with permanent residents, their social life, as we have seen, was largely confined to groups of others similarly placed. The sense of 'them and us' in relation to the resident young people was very strong, occasionally manifesting itself in shows of bravado by young hotel workers in local pubs in order to taunt local resident youths. In this sense they were in the community of South Lakeland but not of it, which could be said to represent marginalisation (see Crow and Allan 1994). In common with many other young people, they also, arguably, lacked access to the full rights of citizenship, in terms of security of accommodation and employment. We found no evidence, however, of excluding or stigmatising behaviour on the part of official agencies such as the police, or by local owners or managers of pubs, clubs or other commercial services.

Rights

The effects of the Wages Act 1986 on the activities of hospitality industry Wages Councils and the payment rates of the workforce are, contrary to the claims by organisations such as the Low Pay Unit (Byrne 1986), difficult to assess, but it is certain that the group most affected by the changes introduced in the Wages Act 1986 are the under-21s.⁽⁶⁾ The young are particularly vulnerable not only because they fall outside Wages Council protection but also because they can be exploited in other ways because they are not aware of what little protective legislation there is.

That being said, most of the workers interviewed in this study were relatively happy with the levels of pay, especially when compared with their friends 'back home' who were unemployed or on training schemes. These young people shared in the high valuation of work, even ill-paid, difficult and stressful work, which according to the literature has remained a characteristic of the youthful population generally (Banks et al. 1992). A year or two ago they were at school 'scrounging' off parents; now they had real money, buying their own cigarettes and drink, clothes and tapes. What their wages did not buy was independence from the workplace. The level of remuneration was such that workers could not afford to rent property away from the work-site and

so whilst the money they earned did allow indulgence to have its head to a certain extent, it was not possible to live anywhere other than the workplace. Gabriel (1988) makes a similar point with regard to young workers employed in fast-food establishments; it was only those workers who were still living at home with their subsistence income being subsidised by the family who thought they were receiving a 'living wage'. The tied relationship between accommodation and employment in both cases masks the true value of the money they received each week, although the respondents in this study were very much aware that a loss of their employment meant the loss of their home.

The young people in this study were fully aware of the Catch-22 elements of their situation, and would have rejected any suggestion that subsidised food and lodging (which the hospitality industry insists is a valuable addition to basic pay) was to be welcomed as an unqualified good. It was felt that it was in the interest of the companies who ran the hotels to have the staff live 'on the job' because it made economic sense, and there was a strong feeling that employers were not being honest with the workers in presenting this as being in the workers' interests rather than their own.

The young people interviewed were thus under no illusions about their situation. They were well aware that live-in work entailed restrictions on their freedom and increased the power of their employers. On the other hand, they were realistic about the lack of an alternative: other accommodation would have been impossibly expensive.⁽⁷⁾

Conclusion

There are reasons to be concerned about the health and welfare of young seasonal workers in South Lakeland, but it is also important not to exaggerate the extent of the problems. Much of the behaviour identified in the research is characteristic of any group of young people in new-found conditions of freedom from parental or other restraints. Heavy drinking and the recreational use of soft drugs are common among groups of young people in more favourable circumstances, such as university students (at least until the financial consequences become apparent; on this analogy, South Lakeland's seasonal workers are like students who only have to stay for one term); and, from observation and insider information, the spirit of 'life as a party' (in off-duty hours) is to be found among, for example, campsite couriers in France and elsewhere, enjoying a moral holiday before or after (or during) the rigours of higher education.

With respect to one of the worries of its sponsors, there is no evidence from this study that the presence of a large number of seasonal workers creates particular problems of crime or disorder; 'seasonal' offenders who contribute to a rise in the local crime rate during the summer are much more likely to be holiday-makers than temporary workers. Nor is there clear evidence that the seasonal workers leave behind them a residue of social problems (such as the availability of drugs which might not otherwise have found a market in the area). Indeed, our information suggests that a market exists independently among local young people, who tend to be better off than elsewhere, because of their parents' reasonably lucrative engagement in the hospitality industry, and who spend their money in escaping from what they see as a restrictive and unexciting local environment, either by car to Blackpool or Manchester, or by drink or drugs to more exciting places in their heads.

The stresses of work in the hotel and catering trade, however, and the 'deviant' structure which it imposes upon patterns of work and leisure, combined with the fact that there is no escape from the peer group, undoubtedly add a dimension of urgency and a frenetic edge to the normal social activities of the young. Pleasures have to be enjoyed quickly; drugs, including alcohol, are used for a quick 'hit' rather than for gentle relaxation. In this context other risks are increased, for example of accidents and damage to health, as well as the possible consequences of unprotected sex. Young people are introduced to drug taking and heavy drinking without having much option about whether or not to accept the introduction. A strong sense of occupational community was clearly evident. Some of the stresses are inherent in work in the catering trade: George Orwell, 'down and out' as a dishwasher in Paris in the 1930s, famously commented on the effort waiters needed to make to present themselves acceptably as they passed through the kitchen door into the restaurant (Orwell, 1989, pp 67-8). But others are avoidable - for example, the sexual harassment which adds to the pressures of young women's working lives, and, to some extent, the insecurity associated with lack of employment and accommodation rights.

Since the employment structure of the hotel and catering trade, its hours of work and rates of pay, make it difficult to envisage what alternative forms of leisure pursuit could be made available to its young employees (although it may be possible to help them to pursue their pleasures more safely), the most promising line for improvement may well be in seeking to reduce the pressures of catering work and its associated culture. The problems of exploitation of young catering workers have been recognised elsewhere, in France for example, and one response has been to open advice centres, concentrating on employment and welfare rights, in the main tourist centres, with the aim of providing confidential and easily understood guidance on such matters as statutory rest periods and job security. A centre in Bowness or Windermere during the summer months could not only provide useful advice of this kind but might be a way into an alternative network of social activity for young people: if the advice was found helpful, any suggestions about alternative ways of spending time off would be more likely to be acceptable. From the perspective of the employers, such a centre could also encourage the spread of best employment practice such as is now found in some of the larger hotel chains, in which it is recognised that the employer as well as the employee benefits from reasonable conditions of work and rates of pay, through higher standards of work, lower rates of absenteeism, fewer accidents, and so on.⁽⁸⁾ Whitbread, one of the largest companies in the hospitality industry, has accepted the need for such a service and has just set up an Employee Assistance Programme which they describe as being like the Samaritans and a Citizens' Advice Bureau rolled into one (Hardcastle 1994). In addition to what are usually meant by welfare rights, a centre could advise on aspects of good employment practice which are not clearly defined in legislation, such as the right not to be sexually harassed. Any conflict with local employers would probably be short-lived, since few hotel owners will want to be known as bad employers (Braithwaite, 1989).

This was the principal recommendation for local action to emerge from our study.⁽⁹⁾ The other suggestion related to the need for provision for young people permanently in the area. As a by-product of our work we became aware that a well-used and valued centre for younger teenagers in Windermere had recently closed, leaving them with little alternative to the street as a site for social life which, some authors (e.g. Jones

and Wallace 1992) assert, could lead to rural youth becoming further alienated from and marginalised in their own communities. The visible and spectacular 'problem' of a seasonal influx of young people should not obscure the needs of those who have to live in South Lakeland from October until April, when all but the elite hotels have vacancies, and the tourist attractions are closed.

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Notes

- 1 We would like to thank an anonymous assessor for her/his comments on an earlier draft of this article.
- 2 This apparent gender segregation is perhaps not as straightforward as first appears. The reality, Crompton and Sanderson (1990) argue is more complex. They claim an 'inverse statistical discrimination' operates. Whilst female labour is used because it is cheap and available at the right time of day and season they state that the industry would use any available source of cheap labour, male or female. See Bagguley (1990) for an interesting discussion regarding gender and functional and numerical flexibility within the industry.
- 3 The study is not, in the most literal sense of the word, a truly ethnographic one. There was no attempt on the part of the researcher to immerse himself totally in the lives of the participants although the approach was as close to classic ethnography as it could be given the time restraints. The research methodology literature that best describes the process undertaken is Parlett and Hamilton's (1975) account of 'illuminative evaluation'. As a general research strategy it aims to be both eclectic and adaptable. Such research tactics allow for and accept the complexities of the problem undergoing examination. Social research has been variously described as an art or craft and as such should be 'judged' as a creative process which contributes 'relevant insight and information along the road, rather than cut-and-dried solutions', which is how Barritt (1986) describes illuminative evaluation as working.
- 4 Wood (1992) adds a caveat when discussing the issue of stress in the hotel and catering industry. He points out that, compared with other industries, 'managers and skilled workers in hotels and catering are subject to many of the processes of stress, conflict, low rewards and degradation experienced by the vast majority of the semi-skilled workforce' (p. 91).
- 5 There is a continuing problem of the under-representation of women at managerial level (Hicks 1990; McKenna and Lamour 1984). Guerrier (1986) in her study of women managers found that 'extra functional variables' such as gender, race and education could affect promotion. Women were not only expected to be servile and compliant with demands of male managers and clients but also physically attractive.
- 6 Lucas (1990) states that evidence exists which shows that wage council reforms actually depress wages with no parallel rise in job creation.
- 7 We do not wish to imply that entry into the housing market is unproblematic for young people who are not working in the hotel and catering industry. Indeed, we would wish to argue (and have done elsewhere [Paylor 1995]) that young people in particular have been most affected by the changes in housing policy in the 1980s and 1990s (see Burton et al 1989).
- 8 This could also have an impact on the exceptionally high labour turnover figures for the hotel and catering industry although agreement about the desirability of reducing the level of turnover is a matter of dispute (see Wood 1992).
- 9 The funders of this research project did accept our recommendation and subsequently have commenced work on the establishment of such a centre.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COMPETENCE-BASED APPROACH TO TRAINING PART-TIME YOUTH WORKERS

ROBIN McROBERTS and RUTH LEITCH

Abstract

The evolution and content of a newly devised, competence-based Certificate for Part-time Youth Workers in Northern Ireland is described. In outlining the rationale for developing this NVQ 'look-alike' programme, the contrast between former, traditional course-based approaches and a competence methodology is illustrated. Commonly cited issues and difficulties concerning the implementation of NVQs are identified and those regarded as most contentious and problematic within youth work are discussed. The development of performance standards for the Certificate is traced, alongside the quest for a partnership arrangement with a National Awarding Body (RSA). Infrastructure developments necessary to support the delivery of the Certificate and to optimise the effectiveness of training are indicated. In conclusion, the monitoring, evaluation and future development of this initiative are explored.

Introduction

In September 1994, an innovative training package for part-time youth workers in Northern Ireland (NI) was introduced. This new, competence-based qualification, designated the 'Certificate for Part-time Youth Workers: Northern Ireland', is endorsed by the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) and represents a significant departure from the previous training programme, known as Foundation Training which operated up to 1994 as a traditional course. Even though completion of this qualification provided recognised status for part-time youth workers across NI, there were inherent limitations in Foundation Training. For instance, assessment concentrated predominantly on what occurred during the course itself, rather than a work setting. This point is illustrated in the previous assessment arrangements, presented as 'an on-going and open process between the student and his/her personal tutor.....based on the degree to which the course aims have been met for individual students' (South Eastern Education and Library Board, 1990, p.4)¹. Similarly, validation guidelines produced in 1989 by the Youth Work Training Board (YWTB)² described the importance of training which is appropriate to the needs of the part-time worker. Although there was a common syllabus agreed across NI, the relationship between this curriculum and standards of youth work performance was not always clear. Chappell and Hager (1994) contend that 'knowledge possession, in itself, may not necessarily lead to competent occupational practice' (p.13). So, alongside knowledge it is also fundamentally important that there should be an elucidation of what a youth worker needs to be able to demonstrate consistently in terms of skills and attitudes if they are to be successful in carrying-out their important face-to-face work with young people. The new Certificate, on the other hand, while still including a course component to enable the acquisition of necessary under-pinning knowledge and to ensure that the 'heart and soul' of group training is not lost, also comprises learning and assessment of competence in the work place, that is a youth work setting. Students build a portfolio containing evidence

of competence in relation to the pre-stated performance standards. The inception of the Certificate programme signifies the outcome of a three year process during which those involved in the development and delivery of part-time youth worker training in NI participated in much exploration, discussion, consultation, investigation and planning.

Rationale

In the context of youth work, one of the earliest references to the term 'competences' can be found in the influential 'Starting from Strengths' Report (Bolger & Scott, 1984) which looked at the future development of training for part-time youth workers and expressed the importance of 'competences which should provide trainers with a clear conception of what part-timers and volunteers need to be able to do in practice' (p.33). Later Bainbridge (1988) spoke about the need to identify core competences which youth work and community work held in common and referred to the necessity to establish 'what does a person need in order to do the job?' (p.13). Whilst not setting out to do so, these documents have inadvertently contributed to subsequent dialogue about the feasibility of National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) competence-based methodologies within part-time youth work training. In NI, the process of discussion and consideration began in early 1991, at which time there was a growing interest among youth work training agencies in the development of a competence-based approach. As an alternative to traditional training such a route held a number of attractions.

Firstly, there was a widespread view among part-time youth workers in NI that whatever training they undertook should receive the kudos and acknowledgement of proper accreditation, preferably from a National Body and not just the localised, regional validation which held minimal currency outside the Province. The spread of competence-based programmes of training, under the NVQ framework seemed to provide an ideal means of achieving this student-led goal. It is interesting to note that this perspective is endorsed by the views of colleagues in England. Hand (1993), for instance, regards wider accreditation as one of the inherent merits of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ), scheme while Everard (1995) refers to the views of 'the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services whose members report a strong grassroots demand for access to occupational standards and NVQs' (p.25). Similarly, the Report of the Working Group (National Youth Agency, 1993b) appreciates 'the issue of recognition, worth and transferability of qualifications' as a motivating factor for part-timers (p.8). Eraut and Kelly (1994) draw attention to the additional incentive for part-time youth workers that 'skills accredited in the context of training for youth and community work also have currency in the wider employment market' (p.11). Such versatility is not to be undervalued in terms of the scope for individuals to operate in a variety of informal education settings, despite the pessimistic notion expressed by Thornhill et al (1993) that this would amount to making people 'infinitely flexible so they can skip like nomads from one low paid part-time job to another' (p.4).

Secondly, as indicated by Semple (1994), youth work training providers in NI are mindful of developments within the UK as a whole, in terms of the formation of the NCVQ and the government's clear commitment to establishing a skilled and proficient work-force across all occupational areas. A national target for the education and training of adults in the UK is that by 1996, 50% of the workforce will be

aiming for NVQs or units towards them (National Advisory Council for Education and Training Targets, 1994 p.16). This target was set to focus attention on the objective of establishing the NVQ framework as the principal form of accreditation in the workplace. The Training and Employment Agency (1995) confirms that more than 700,000 NVQs have been awarded thus far and eight countries have either adopted a similar system or are currently considering doing so. With regard to the transition from a conventional training format to the NVQ initiative, Fletcher (1994) argues 'these changes mean that methods and modes of training delivery must undergo complete review. New methods of delivery and a complete revision of curriculum are needed' (p.36). Commenting on the considerable amount of government funding being poured into the NVQ programme, Everard (1995) warns that 'by standing aside, the youth service is denied a share of this funding and the opportunity to influence the general development of S/NVQs' (p.25).³ Even though Field (1995) expresses concern at the way he feels central government funding for vocational qualifications has become a tool for policy management rather than a response to needs, one must be mindful of Bainbridge's (1988) analysis that 'the history of youth and community work.....has been a series of missed opportunities' (p.12). Not wishing to see youth work training in NI lag behind, with the consequent disadvantages which would ensue in the future, policy-makers were keen to review existing training practice and develop in new directions.

Thirdly and not least of all, there is a belief that the provision of competence-based training improves quality and is more likely to secure skilled, high calibre, confident part-time workers with transferable abilities. The importance of securing a dynamic approach to youth work is emphasised by Hand (1993) who feels that 'to ensure a high quality professional service which meets the changing needs of young people, the education and training of youth work personnel must continually develop' (p.5). White (1993) supports this imperative, concluding that 'the implications for training and the way forward in terms of future development is obviously to find ways to promote and foster good youth work practice so that the youth service can more effectively meet the needs of young people' (p.14).

In hindsight, if one was to be harsh, arguable weaknesses of Foundation Training concerned student selection, performance standards and skill acquisition, variable interpretations of course content and an amorphous approach to the assessment of students' capacity to work effectively with young people. Hitherto, notions about the effectiveness of Foundation Training tended to centre on the particular outlook of course tutors and dwelt mainly on what transpired during the course itself, rather than focusing more objectively on the students' performance in youth work settings. Parallels to this type of limited, subjective orientation exist elsewhere. For instance, Mullin (1992) confirms that 'leaving judgements to such an intuitive mode may be more comfortable for the judge, but will be less effective for the judgement' (p.28). Also, Castelino and Munn (1990) caution against a possible emphasis on 'the positive aspects and playing down the deficiencies in the skills of part-time workers therefore finding it very difficult to fail them' (p.19). Mullin (1992) describes this as the phenomenon of the 'false positive'. To concentrate on confirming evidence only is described by Mullin as 'demonstrably antithetical to accurate assessment' (p.22).

In relation to Foundation Training (the previous training programme), the value of the personal development of each individual participant was much more of a focus than

students' subsequent ability to function at the required level. In isolated cases, it is possible that some Foundation courses may have included sessions which were more focused on material the tutors enjoyed presenting rather than on what the students always needed to assimilate. Norton et al (1994) believe that the present government would have regarded such content as 'unnecessary and superfluous fripperies'. This scenario inevitably resulted in an over-preoccupation with process, unclear expectations of participants, variations in standard, outcomes which were patchy and some degree of dislocation between the needs of the field and the training provided. Regardless of this, there can be little dispute that former students enjoyed Foundation Training, found it valuable and derived considerable benefit from participation, mainly due to the inherent benefits of the group learning experience. Also, it should be recognised that for a number of years youth work trainers in NI had full confidence in such programmes and some would still wish to defend it. One argument which is advanced in support of Foundation Training is that, unlike the Certificate, it needed little servicing and was relatively problem-free. The issue here, though, is not that one training package is more manageable than another but that the competence approach necessarily brings into focus many of the issues which hitherto were overlooked. As Eraut and Kelly (1994) indicate, such problems are 'not created by NVQs but identified by their rigorous concern for standards of...performance' (p.10). Being able to cope effectively with the demands of an informal education role now seems more important than ever as youth work is increasingly characterised by an emphasis on curriculum planning, delivery, development and evaluation. The discipline associated with thinking through and designing training which responds to this challenge is regarded by Hand (1993) as one of the potential benefits of the competence-based approach. Stressing the need for objective assessment based on identifiable standards, Dawes (1988) argues that for a variety of reasons 'systematic decisions based on a few explicable and defensible principles are superior to intuitive decisions'. Likewise, Jessup (1990) draws a contrast between competence-based assessment and the 'generalised and loose concept of standards which has prevailed in educational circles in the past' (p.2). Certainly, as acknowledged by Fletcher (1992), the competence methodology provides not only a mechanism through which individual performance can be measured, but also a framework in which training effectiveness itself can be evaluated.

Contentious issues which arise from the implementation of a competence approach within youth work

Despite the considerable interest in a competence-based methodology in NI and beyond, there are those who would not share this enthusiasm. For example, Hodkinson and Issitt (1995) provide a comprehensive discussion of the advantages and limitations of the NCVQ methodology within the caring professions, concluding that it is fundamentally flawed. Similarly, Hyland (1994) asserts that the competence-based initiative is 'disastrously misguided and entirely inappropriate to our current and future education and training needs'. Elsewhere, specifically relating to youth work, various perspectives have been expressed on the worth, relevance and implications of NVQ training. These cover a broad spectrum of viewpoints within which it is possible to distinguish between two different stances. On the one hand, there are eulogies from those such as Everard (1995) with a passionate commitment to the introduction of competence-based training for youth workers but who, reasonably enough, recognise that NVQs are in some ways problematic. On the other

hand there are reactionary positions from those who seem fundamentally opposed, on ideological grounds, to the competence-based route in youth work, castigating the NVQ system and showing intransigence towards this particular government initiative. For instance, Thornhill et al (1993) assert that the competence-based approach is based on 'assessment by tick-box tickers'. One can identify authors who present a veritable plethora of reasons why NVQs should not be embraced, at any price. For instance, in this vein, the importance of 'effectively resisting unwanted NCVQ incursions' is underscored by Davies and Durkin (1991). Apparently challenging the validity of any systematic approach to training, they present a picture of a natural youth worker with innate skills and an intuitive feel for the values and principles from which effective informal education work flows. Referring to ideas previously presented by Bolger and Scott (1984) they depict the existence of indigenous youth workers 'deriving an invaluable mandate, credibility and self-worth from their membership of the very groups and communities with whom they worked' (p.5). It is further postulated that the broad life experience of these workers gave them 'insights into the lives and needs of young people and therefore they had at their disposal vital tools for their trade such as knowledge, understanding and skills' (p.5). There is just cause for one to feel mystified, though, at the myopic notion that because some informal educators are arguably blessed with instinctive abilities, this should necessarily debar those less gifted from pursuing training which is competence-based. Moreover, provision exists, within the NVQ system, through the accreditation of prior achievement for such natural youth workers to have their intrinsic skills acknowledged if they so desire.

Other disputants of NVQs include Norton et al (1994) who express implacable concern at the government's growing domination of the education agenda to the point where it is tied irrevocably to training which is outcome-oriented rather than appreciating the value of process and content. They argue that 'as the shift to pseudo-objective, mechanistic and narrowly task-centred notions of competences...has gathered pace, youth and community work training is becoming even further detached from its adult education value-base' (p.22). Exuding uninhibited, antagonistic venom towards the NVQ perspective, Norton et al further describe competences as being 'mundane, ordinary, functionalist...and rooted in the soul-lessness of behaviourism and positivism. If you can't see it, touch it or describe it, it isn't there' (p.27). Likewise, Hyland (1995) argues that a discernible tension exists between the behaviouristic nature of competence-based training and the requirements of professional development.

Taking a more balanced view, an amalgam of commonly cited concerns surrounding the implementation of NVQs can be distilled from the literature (Hand, 1993; NYA, 1993b; Eraut and Kelly, 1994; Everard, 1994, 1995; Hodkinson and Issitt, 1995). These worries include issues about cost, time requirements, insufficiency of consultation in standards development and performance specifications which are employer-led rather than employment-led. Also, there are identified anxieties surrounding a possible deprofessionalization of occupational areas if tasks are increasingly carried out by 'competent' staff who have not been professionally trained. The notion that the NVQ system produces individuals with transferable skills is also challenged, on the basis that insufficient cognizance is taken of the unique contexts within which workers often function, each one with its own distinctive ethos, sub-culture and philosophy.

Uncertainty is expressed with respect to the inter-relationship between youth work performance standards and other associated sectors. For instance, while recognising that the youth work profession wishes to preserve its own identity (preferably within an educational framework), it is nevertheless clear that much overlap exists with other groupings such as guidance and counselling, community work, health promotion, playwork, sport, recreation and management.

Of particular import within a youth work context are two main reservations. First, there is the possible danger that the value base of youth work could be minimised, undermined, eroded or neglected in a scenario where the main preoccupation is with observable skills (Davies and Durkin, 1991; Cairns, 1992; Issitt, 1995). Hand (1993) emphasises the location of youth work within the 'affective and subjective domain of personal relationships, experiential learning and social education' (p.20). This infers that the complexity of informal education work does not readily lend itself to ephemeral snapshots of people's competence, taken out of context by NVQ assessors using a lens which blurs their awareness and appreciation of underlying principles and on-going dynamics. Seemingly, the challenge, therefore, is somehow to inculcate essential values and attitudes into any performance standards which evolve. In this respect, Chappell and Hager (1994) offer an interesting discussion on how such a goal can be achieved. They describe an integrated approach to standards development which embraces the attributes that underpin effective occupational practice, including youth work. Chappell and Hager emphasise that 'standards which lack evidence of the values and attitudes base of the occupation are inadequate and that the presence of values and attitudes should be used as an indicator in any draft competency standards' (p.13). In a NI context, the YWTB (1994) were vigilant and ensured that key principles such as equality of opportunity, a person-centred approach and experiential learning are explicitly stated throughout the specifications of the Certificate for Part-time Youth Workers.

Second, there is a concern that breaking down overall youth work skill into individual competences creates a series of atomized, meaningless operations when carried out in isolation. Sceptics (eg Hyland, 1991; Norton et al, 1994; Hodkinson and Issitt, 1995) argue that this amounts to a utilitarian, reductionist approach which necessarily overlooks their inter-connectedness in terms of an effective entity. Eraut and Kelly (1994) eloquently describe the paradox which exists here between the necessity to define the constituent elements of good practice and the frequent requirement for youth workers to combine skills in an integrated manner, often in collaboration with others. The importance of youth workers being able to respond to the uniqueness of each encounter with young people and to operate in a flexible, creative and imaginative manner is regarded as central by Hand (1993). It is critical here that students do not receive training like automatons but that the opportunity exists for them to assimilate learning, develop awareness, share experience and reflect on situations within the ethos of a youth work culture. Nevertheless, it is logical to provide youth work training for part-time staff which has been broken down into manageable learning elements, thereby facilitating progression and primary competence acquisition. Thereafter, through attentive and effective coaching and mentoring by skilled supervisors in the youth work setting, part-time staff can gain meaningful experience and mature in the informal education role. The benefits and techniques of

effective supervision are well-documented both within an NVQ environment (Parsloe, 1992; Barnes, 1995) and more widely (Reddy, 1987; Hawkins and Shohet, 1989). Good quality supervision enables part-time staff increasingly to homogenise previously contrived individual skills into a cohesive, holistic style which displays ever higher levels of sophistication. In this respect, one of the challenges which lies ahead in NI will be to ensure that all prospective students have access to appropriately trained and effective supervisors.

The development of performance standards and the formation of a partnership arrangement

Given the range of potential obstacles inherent in the NVQ system and the necessity to examine these fully, it was opportune that in May 1991 the Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNi)⁴ organised a seminar for youth service personnel. This was addressed by representatives of NCVQ, and the Council for Education and Training in Youth and Community Work. The seminar proved to be highly significant in terms of creating a momentum, clarifying important issues, allaying fears and misconceptions, exploring the resource implications and dealing with specific queries which people had in relation to the pursuit of NVQ accreditation. Youth work training agencies in NI were able to ruminate on these matters during 1991, contemplating a redefinition of existing training into statements of competence and performance criteria. At the forefront of these developments was the seminal influence of the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) whose personnel devised initial, draft standards which proved to be the prototype of what was to follow.

By early 1992, in the continuing absence of a lead body for education, one available alternative was to follow the NCVQ recommendation that the youth service in NI should move towards the alignment of training with the NVQ framework. The YWTB accepted this challenge and continued the process of refining performance standards through on-going dialogue with practitioners, trainers, students and youth service managers. During 1992/93 the SEELB field-tested the provisional competences with approximately fifty students in three geographical regions. Evaluations indicated that participants had learned more and been challenged more rigorously by this new methodology. Throughout 1993, the YWTB investigated the possibility of links with a National Awarding Body. Given the prevailing vacuum due to the absence of a lead body for education, discussions took place directly with City and Guilds and RSA, both of whom offered the facility for direct endorsement of a competence-based programme under the terms of a 'customer-specific' scheme. This would secure NVQ 'look-alike' status with national currency, even though not yet slotting neatly into the NVQ framework of qualifications. The advantages were clear. For instance, it was known that this would give students the wider, external recognition they sought while providing quality assurance benefits derived from the input, support and scrutiny offered by the professional staff of a credible, established, experienced Awarding Body. Further, it was recognised that the opportunity then existed to build an infrastructure of qualified internal assessors, trainers and verifiers to support the implementation of competence-based training for part-timers. Through this, youth work training providers would be able to see their own personnel trained up to NVQ standard in requisite support areas. This was regarded as highly desirable lest the value base of youth work evaporated in the context of assessment carried out by individuals with only a minimal appreciation of youth work principles. Mullin

(1992) while recognising that assessment per se is a high level cognitive skill also emphasises the necessity for the assessor to be knowledgeable about the particular area being assessed; something he describes as 'subject competence'. The strategy in NI to train youth workers as assessors and verifiers ensured the desirable mix of competence in both youth work and assessment terms. By June 1993 a partnership was established between the YWTB and RSA largely due to this Awarding Body's profile and experience of training programmes in occupational domains closely related to youth work such as counselling, groupwork and continuing education. Moreover, RSA were agreeable to the YWTB defining the proposed performance standards, using the antecedent pilot work of SEELB as an exemplar of good practice. This ensured that the youth service in NI would have control over the shape and content of whatever training package finally emerged and that, consequently, the core values which underpin youth work practice would be enshrined within any documentation. The YCNI funded an initial two days of training, in November 1993, for youth service personnel, across the Province, to begin the process of preparing them as accredited trainers, assessors (through the RSA Assessor Award)⁵ and internal verifiers. These qualifications would enable participants not only to assess students on the Certificate for Part-time Youth Workers but also to train future assessors to national level (ie: Training and Development Lead Body standards) and oversee the quality control aspects of training provision within their own agency. In July 1994, the YWTB's final submission was approved by RSA and, thereafter, youth work training agencies became registered RSA Centres and course materials were printed to enable the first round of students in NI to commence the programme in September 1994.

The content and shape of the Certificate for Part-time Youth Workers

To facilitate the development of competence and to acquire the necessary underpinning knowledge, Certificate students attend a 70 hour course, over a five month period. Through this approach the potential for group sharing, experiential learning and tutorial support can be maximised. Concurrent workplace assessment is carried-out on the basis of a student portfolio containing evidence of competence against all the required performance standards. This evidence takes the form of worksheets, supervisor's reports, observations made by the student's assessor, audio and video tapes of work with young people, personal recordings and a variety of written materials. Quality assurance of the assessment process is maintained through internal verification by trained verifiers and external verification by RSA. In terms of the structure of the Award there are seven units and 20 elements as shown in Table 1. These units and elements are further broken down into integral performance criteria.

Even though Eraut and Kelly (1994) argued that 'NVQ look-alikes...should not be regarded as valid examples of what NVQs developed under an official Lead Body arrangement would look like' (p.7), they nevertheless concede that 'much of the work done for these and earlier competence-based qualifications will still provide

UNIT 1	IDENTIFY THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF YOUTH WORK
Element 1.1	<i>Define the aims and objectives of the Youth Service</i>
Element 1.2	<i>Define and evaluate the aims and objectives of his/her youth group</i>
UNIT 2	PLAN AND DELIVER A YOUTH WORK PROGRAMME RELEVANT TO THE NEEDS OF AN IDENTIFIED GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE
Element 2.1	<i>Identify a variety of the changes experienced in the transition from childhood to adulthood which may influence behaviour and attitude</i>
Element 2.2	<i>Identify the needs of individuals and groups</i>
Element 2.3	<i>Agree a programme to meet identified needs</i>
Element 2.4	<i>Make administrative arrangements in relation to the delivery of a programme</i>
Element 2.5	<i>Deliver a programme</i>
Element 2.6	<i>Evaluate the programme</i>
UNIT 3	DEVELOP AWARENESS OF SELF AND SENSITIVITY TO OTHERS TO ENHANCE PERFORMANCE
Element 3.1	<i>Identify and evaluate personal social skills</i>
Element 3.2	<i>Determine how personal values and beliefs can affect behaviour</i>
UNIT 4	PROMOTE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY
Element 4.1	<i>Promote equality of opportunity</i>
UNIT 5	COMMUNICATE WITH INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS
Element 5.1	<i>Present information to individuals and groups in a variety of youth work settings</i>
Element 5.2	<i>Use non-verbal communication techniques</i>
Element 5.3	<i>Listen and respond to oral questions from young people and colleagues</i>
UNIT 6	WORK WITH GROUPS AND WITH INDIVIDUALS IN A YOUTH WORK SETTING
Element 6.1	<i>Initiate, enable and sustain groupwork</i>
Element 6.2	<i>Provide opportunities for young people to work as a group</i>
Element 6.3	<i>Respond to individual need</i>
UNIT 7	WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH COLLEAGUES AND YOUNG PEOPLE
Element 7.1	<i>Work effectively in a team</i>
Element 7.2	<i>Identify the principal leadership styles</i>
Element 7.3	<i>Exercise leadership responsibilities</i>

TABLE 1 Structure of the Certificate for Part-time Youth Workers in N.Ireland

ideas and useful material for the next stage of development' (p.27). This offers welcome encouragement for training agencies in NI, especially since a comparison between the structure of the Certificate and the provisional map of functional areas

suggested by Eraut and Kelly reveals a close alignment (Table 2). In their preparatory study Eraut and Kelly, have synthesized the findings of earlier work by Bainbridge (1988), the Federation of Community Work Training Groups (1990) and the NYA (1993a; 1993b) in identifying key areas which characterise youth work activity. It is now reasonable to surmise that the shape of specifications eventually developed for youth work, by an informal education lead body, within the NVQ framework, will be heavily influenced by standards already emerging from initiatives like those discussed here.

A SELF AWARENESS, SELF MANAGEMENT, SELF EVALUATION AND SELF DEVELOPMENT

(largely compatible with Unit 3 in the Certificate for Part-time Youth Workers)

B ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS OF TRUST WITH INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES

(related to Units 5 and 6 in the Certificate for Part-time Youth Workers)

C INVOLVING GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES IN PARTICIPATIVE APPROACHES TO LEARNING

(related to Units 5 and 6 in the Certificate for Part-time Youth Workers)

D WORKING WITH INDIVIDUALS TO PROMOTE PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

(related to Units 5 and 6 in the Certificate for Part-time Youth Workers)

E WORKING IN TEAMS, FOR ORGANISATIONS AND IN ASSOCIATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

(largely compatible with Unit 7 in the Certificate for Part-time Youth Workers)

F PLANNING AND EVALUATION IN CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

(related to Unit 2 in the Certificate for Part-time Youth Workers)

G ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF PEOPLE AND RESOURCES

(related to Unit 2 in the Certificate for Part-time Youth Workers)

TABLE 2 Eraut and Kelly's (1994) provisional map of functional areas

To ease the transition from traditional training approaches to a competence-based methodology it was important to introduce various prefatory measures. These included clarification of roles in respect of personnel involved in the delivery of the programme; resourcing and cost-effectiveness; support and supervision; the development of an appropriate assessment system and evidence documentation. An illustration of how these preparations were approached is exemplified by the work of the SEELB (1994a; 1994b; 1994c)

Monitoring, evaluation and future development

Whilst being mindful of the challenges which lie ahead as part-time youth work training providers in NI attempt to develop effective working practices to support and nurture the quality delivery of the Certificate programme in the future there is, nonetheless, a commitment to the competence-based philosophy and NCVQ-led reforms. It is gratifying and encouraging for youth service trainers to note the

recently expressed view of the DENI Inspectorate that the Certificate is regarded as an example of good practice (Semple, 1994). Approximately three hundred part-time youth workers, across a number of agencies, are participating in the first year of this programme with students completing their qualification by June 1995 (see note 6). The need for objective evaluation is recognised and work is currently underway to triangulate data on the perceptions and experiences of students, tutors, assessors and supervisors in order to provide a detailed summative assessment of the initiative. This will facilitate a thorough analysis of the effectiveness of the competence-based training programmes offered to part-timers in the NI youth service, thus providing invaluable information to guide future developments.

Without wishing to pre-empt the outcome of this summative evaluation, interim feedback suggests that a further sophistication of the Certificate programme may be to offer an introductory youth work programme which constitutes two of the seven units contained within the Certificate for Part-time Youth Workers. (possibly units 1 and 3). Such a package would be introductory in terms of scale rather than level and would be assessed with the same rigour as the Certificate, credit being given by RSA for the two units completed. To less experienced part-timers, returners to study or those lacking in confidence, this may seem like a less formidable proposition. Thereafter, such students would be encouraged to work towards the remaining five units necessary to complete the full Certificate. Other part-time youth workers could opt to undertake all seven units of the Certificate, as presently offered. Considerable demands are also anticipated from youth workers in the field who already regard themselves as competent and who wish to be directly assessed and accredited with the Certificate. This would involve submitting a portfolio containing current evidence of competence. Many of these candidates are likely to include youth workers who have completed the now defunct Foundation Training course.

Meanwhile, one of the exciting possibilities concerns the extension of competence training into other aspects of youth service operations, not only for leaders but also for young people themselves. For instance, considerable scope exists for dovetailing GNVQ programmes in mainstream education with the many learning opportunities which arise in the informal youth group setting. In this respect, Eraut and Kelly (1994) speculate that 'senior members of clubs who take on certain responsibilities might be able to seek NVQ qualifications' (p.11). Likewise, Hand (1993) recognises that youth work environments 'could provide work on placements, project work or situations from which evidence could be produced. Youth workers could authenticate evidence for inclusion in portfolios' (p.39). Elements of GNVQ Core Skills, for example, could be pursued by young people within a youth work setting. Through this, a closer liaison between the schools sector and the youth service could result in a more integrated approach to the curriculum. Additionally, Hand (1993) identifies links with further education as providing considerable scope 'to facilitate the recognition of young peoples' achievements which might otherwise be unacknowledged and not accredited' (p.39). The growth in the number of youth work personnel holding accredited assessor status would certainly facilitate such developments by integrating learning and assessment into the normal life of a youth group or project.

Conclusions

Enhancing the quality of part-time youth workers is an intrinsic element in the provision of high grade services and support to young people. Leadership training has an indispensable contribution to make to this process, whether delivered through

traditional or competence methodologies. Concurring the findings of Mullin (1992), it is argued here that the competence-based approach has many advantages and provides an effective mechanism for the acquisition of essential, basic youth work skills. In moving towards this goal, the Certificate for Part-time Youth Workers in NI has been warmly received by participants and youth work training providers alike. Common problems and issues which tend to detract from the inherent value of a competence format have been anticipated and are being addressed. An attempt has been made to achieve an effective blend through which performance standards can be met whilst maintaining the desirable ingredients of active, experiential, group learning and tutorial support.....variables acknowledged by Maynard (1995) as key requirements. There is a confident belief that the Certificate programme, endorsed by RSA, will enhance the quality of informal education work with young people and will provide part-time youth workers with the recognition and accreditation they desire and deserve. Whilst this award is regarded as an NVQ look-alike rather than an authentic NVQ, the experience gained through delivering competence-based youth work training in NI in the interim is viewed as invaluable preparation for the imminent formation of a Lead Body. The situation pertaining to the Province is regarded as an evolving one with future refinements of the package to be expected. In this respect, systematic feedback and evaluation of the 1994/95 programme will be important in shaping further improvements to the Certificate for 1995/96. The first year's operational experience throughout NI, on the part of tutors, assessors and supervisors, will increase their confidence and should augur well for the delivery of the 1995/96 programme.

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Notes

- 1 The South Eastern Education and Library Board is a statutory authority constituted under the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 to provide services to young people within its geographical region. It is one of five Boards in N. Ireland, each one operating a Youth Section which among other functions, provides training for part-time youth workers. The Boards are the main youth service employers in N. Ireland
- 2 The Youth Work Training Board for Northern Ireland is the recognised advisory body on all aspects of youth work training in Northern Ireland. The Board is responsible for validating and accrediting part-time youth work training programmes. It comprises representatives of the major youth service employers, the voluntary sector, the University of Ulster, the N. Ireland Youth Forum, the Association of Full-time Youth Workers and members of the Youth Council for N. Ireland in a unique partnership involving the principal statutory and voluntary youth work training agencies and interests.
- 3 According to Everard (1995) 'some £45 million of public money has been spent on the national standards and S/NVQ programme, on which nearly every sector apart from the education and youth service has drawn (85% of the working population is already covered by the 700 S/NVQs so far developed). There is £30 million more in this kitty up to 1995-96, but not necessarily beyond' (p.25). (In Scotland, the qualifications awarded under the government's competence initiative are known as Scottish Vocational Qualifications - SVQs).
- 4 The Youth Council for Northern Ireland was established by government under the terms of the Youth Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1989. Its functions are to advise the Department of Education and other bodies on the development of the youth service in N. Ireland, to encourage cross-community activity and the provision of youth facilities and to assist the coordination and efficient use of resources.
- 5 The RSA Assessor Award comprises two nationally recognised qualifications known as D32 and D33.

These relate to performance standards developed by the Training and Development Lead Body and are requirements for anyone assessing candidates on an NVQ programme.

- 6 During 1994/95, the Certificate for Part-time Youth Workers : N. Ireland (endorsed by RSA) was offered by each of the five Education and Library Boards and a number of voluntary sector headquarter organisations (eg: Youth Action; Youth Link etc.)

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TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOUTH IDENTITIES AND CONSUMER CULTURE

STEVEN MILES

The relationship between young people's identities and their everyday patterns of consumption remains relatively uncharted territory. With the rise of the New Right and the emergence of Thatcherism, consumption has undoubtedly come to play an increasingly active role in young people's lives, as Hollands (1991) notes. Indeed, it has been suggested that their experience as consumers provides young people with the only meaningful role available to them, during a period in their lives in which they are struggling to come to terms with exactly who it is they are (see Roberts 1992). Yet, attempts to comprehend experiential aspects of youth consumption are few and far between. Still less is known about the impact of youth consumption upon individual identities. In fact, the transition to a more individualistic and consumer-centred culture suggests that an understanding of such issues should be a matter of urgent priority. Only by fully understanding the cultural context within which young people operate is it possible to establish the foundations from which policy decisions can be made,

Whatever happens in the wider social sphere, the centrality of the consumption ethic as a governing factor in young people's lives will remain. It is important for those involved in all areas of adolescents' and young people's lives to understand the impact consumption has, and be able to cope with its wider ramifications. (Stewart 1992, p.225)

Accounts of the rising social significance of consumption are increasingly commonplace (Bocock 1993, Lee 1993). Much is made of the historical context in which consumerism emerged as a fundamental focus of young people's lives (e.g. Stewart 1992) as well as the mechanics of what it is that young people spend their money on (Roberts and Parsell 1991) and how it is they spend it (Ford 1992). An understanding of youth expenditure is of undoubted value, but goes only some of the way towards identifying the youth experience of consumer culture. The implications of teenage consumption can only be fully realised by addressing the actual meanings with which young people endow the goods that they consume.

The social scientific approach to youth consumption has traditionally tended to focus upon subcultural consumption. Hebdige (1979) for instance, examines Punk and Rastafarian sub-cultures by way of semiotic analyses of style as a signifying process. In addition, Brake (1985) identifies the extent to which youth subcultures provide young people with a source of identity, an identity that is expressed through subcultural style. In this respect the tendency is to see consumption in terms of its sub-cultural potential as a means of youth resistance. However, the problem with these sorts of approaches to youth consumption is that they tend to concentrate on symbolic aspects of sub-cultural consumption at the expense of the actual *meanings* that young consumers have for the goods that they consume. That is, at the expense of understanding the significance of consumption to young people as *individuals* in a cultural context. This problem is amplified by the fact that

the appeal of the subcultures often under discussion by such authors, such as Mods, Rockers, Punks and Skinheads, has swiftly dissipated through the 1980s and 1990s. As MacDonald et al (1993) note, the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, at the University of Birmingham (eg. Hall and Jefferson 1976) often did not equate with the mundane everyday reality, a point that is ever more salient in the individualistic nineties.

One approach that does attempt to get to grips with the impact of social change upon youth cultures is that of Redhead (1990) who questions orthodox sociological approaches to youth cultures in the context of the commodification of style. However, though Redhead can be commended for questioning the application of contemporary social theory, notably in the guise of postmodernism, to an understanding of youth cultures, the tendency to consider youth in its sub-cultural forms has resurfaced (Redhead 1993) and as a result any conception of youth consumption is limited, in this context, to an analysis of the dramatic, though analytically limited, 'rave' scene.

In effect, the problem seems to be that the social sciences have struggled to find an effective means of coming to grips with the significance of youth consumption in a society where individualism and self-help appear to have emerged at the expense of sub-cultural unity and resistance. How the social sciences can best deal with the transition from pragmatic and unified sub-cultural identities into a shifting mosaic and juxtaposition of styles as a focus of contemporary youth identities is a key question.

Above all, such difficulties are compounded by a reluctance to get to grips with the impact of contemporary consumer culture through *focused* empirical investigation. In recent years the impact of consumption on the lives of young people has tended to be subsumed in abstract theoretical discussions of the relationship between consumption and postmodernism (Featherstone 1991, Baudrillard 1983). Alternatively, research in this area, notably in much of the work produced as part of the ESRC's 16 - 19 initiative, has tended to be over formulaic and dependant upon large-scale surveys that tell us very little about the actuality of everyday experience (see Bynner and Breakwell 1990).

It is however, possible to overcome such limitations. In this context Willis' (1990) analysis of the relationship between young people's culture and the state is undoubtedly useful. Willis attempts to conceptualise young people's efforts to use the symbolic resources provided by the cultural industries as a means of creatively fashioning youth experience, identity and expression (see Rubinstein 1992), and thereby goes a step further in highlighting experiential aspects of teenage consumption in the context of the commercial context of cultural commodities. This sort of approach offers a rich source of data about the actual meanings incorporated in teenage consumption and, in turn, the implications of those meanings for cultural policy. As such Willis (1990) discusses, amongst other things the relationship between consumption, education and training,

In so far as education/training becomes ever more subordinated to technical instrumentalism and to the 'needs' of industry, it will be seen as a necessary evil to be tolerated in order to obtain access to the wage in order to obtain access to leisure and consumption and their cultural energies. (p.147)

The implication here is that the creativity of young people is put to practice most effectively in consumption based aspects of their lives.

People bring living identities to commerce and the consumption of cultural commodities as well as being formed there. They bring experiences, feelings, social position and social memberships to their encounter with commerce. Hence they bring a necessary creative symbolic pressure, not only to make sense of cultural commodities, but partly through them also to make sense of contradiction and structure as they experience them in school, college, production, neighbourhood, and as members of certain genders, races, classes and ages. (Willis 1990, p.21)

There does appear to be an intuitive logic in arguing that consumer culture has a significant role to play in the construction of youth identities. However, it is not enough to discuss consumerism and identity in the context of the fragmentation of postmodern identities, whereby the individual creates his or her identity from the vast diversities made available on the postmodern menu of consumer culture. Nor is it enough to describe the meanings young people have for the goods that they consume within the limited confines of a subcultural context. In order to come to terms with the practical implications of consumption it is absolutely imperative that priority is given to understanding the actual *experience* of young consumers. As such consideration needs to be given to the cultural contexts in which young people consume the goods that they purchase. And it is important to note that these may not necessarily adhere to the specific subcultural forms and comparatively predictable consumption patterns that were identified by authors such as Hebdige (1979) and Brake (1985).

Having commended some of Willis' (1990) achievements in this context it is also necessary to learn from his mistakes. Indeed, though Willis' (1990) efforts to come to terms with individual interpretations of consumer culture are undoubtedly invaluable, and though his approach is often lauded as an exemplar of ways in which research should try to come to terms with personal meanings, he actually tends to exaggerate the extent of agency involved here. Buckingham's (1993) criticisms of Willis (1990) are therefore especially pertinent in as much as it is all well and good to call for the prioritisation of individual meanings, but such meanings should not be swamped by broad generalisations about the 'youth' experience. Young people do not have the luxury of complete freedom of choice, neither does any researcher have the luxury of being able to understand in one broad sweep the complex meanings characteristic of young people's experience of contemporary society. These are the sorts of deficiencies that a more considered experience-centred approach to consumption can potentially overcome.

The Research Setting

This article will briefly present some findings from an ESRC funded project conducted largely in Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, between 1993 and 1995, that dealt with the relationship between youth, identity and consumption. This incorporated a triangulated methodological approach with four distinct stages:

- 1) a series of twenty focus groups interviews with 60 young people in Huddersfield which addressed the significance of consumption to young people's lives.

- 2) the application of techniques associated with Personal Construct Psychology with the above groups, including self-characterisation sketches, (see Kelly 1955) as a practical and theoretical means of addressing personal meanings in the context of consumption.
- 3) a ten week participant observation of a sports shop in Huddersfield during which time the author worked as a shop assistant as a means of addressing the sorts of influences evident in youth consumption in a naturalistic setting.
- 4) a shopping inventory or survey which was used to further develop an understanding of the meanings invested in specific products by 300 young people in schools and colleges in West Yorkshire and Strathclyde.

What follows is a discussion of one specific area of interest concerning youth consumption which emerged during the course of the participant observation. An important theme arising from the initial stage of group interviews, which were conducted with a purposive sample of sixty young people aged between 16 and 21 in sixth form and Further Education colleges in and around Huddersfield, was the significance of name, and in particular, sporting, brands to young people's consumption habits. In order to address such concerns in a more experiential setting the strategic decision was made to address the meanings with which young people endowed consumer goods in a specific site of consumption, namely a sports shop. The actual sports shop in which the participant observation was conducted represented a rich environment in which to unearth such meanings, not only in respect of the significance such goods appear to have to young people's consumption patterns, but also in light of the way in which the shop concerned was clearly targeted at the youth market. This being illustrated, for example, by the prominence on a television screen towering over the shop floor, of MTV [Music Television], a magnet which proved to be particularly appealing to young passers-by.

The research involved working for ten weeks as a shop assistant in a branch of a well-known American-owned chain of sports shops. It was important that the research was conducted in an as naturalistic as possible a setting in order that any of the material collected was not biased by customers' conceptions of the 'research process'. As such, it was decided that the researcher's role should remain unknown to customers, in order that the sports shop could be observed as a site of consumption, and more importantly, so that it might be possible to address the context in which personal meanings for particular kinds of consumer goods are established. The researcher therefore fulfilled the same tasks as other members of the shop's staff. The only difference being that in this case more attention would be paid, on the part of the shop assistant, to the background to the purchases of individual customers. Customers were therefore asked various questions, the intent of which were to address the significance of consumption in their lives - most particularly in relation to the training shoes they were considering purchasing. This material was not considered delicate enough for it to be deemed necessary for the researcher to reveal his identity. By doing so, it was felt that the potential rich data that might be gleaned from this research setting might be seriously undermined. The meanings that these shoes were endowed with, the role that these meanings played in the construction of personal identities, and the cultural context in which such meanings operated were therefore the issues addressed. For this purpose, pre-prepared questions were used as

a means of stimulating discussions with customers. For example, customers would be asked what it was that attracted them to a particular pair of training shoes or why they thought that a given brand was popular amongst their peers; the starting point from which the customer might develop the conversation along his or her own lines.

The priority here, then, was for the customer to discuss the role that training shoes (and often, as the conversation developed, other types of consumer goods) had in their lives, and what factors might influence that role. The intention was to allow the customer to set the agenda of the discussion as much as possible. The data was therefore analysed qualitatively according to the assumption that the meanings that consumers express are in themselves worthy of serious consideration. The views presented here are representative of the data collected as a whole.

The first point to make in this context is that the meanings with which young people endow consumer goods vary according to a whole range of class, gender and ethnic influences. However, consumption also provides young people with a common language that appears to transcend such influences. As such, it is important to note that training shoes (which accounted for approximately 80% of shop floor space) are far more than purely functional items as far as young people are concerned. Rather, the meanings associated with a particular brand of training shoe reflect a complex system of negotiated communal meanings between young consumers. Young people focus on their training shoes as an important means of establishing social hierarchies and of establishing who one is as an individual in relation to both peers and everyday street culture as a whole. In order to illustrate this point further I will consider in more detail one particular aspect of youth sports consumption, namely 'retro' training shoes.

Young People and Retrospective Consumption

'Retro' forms of clothing represent a retrospective throwback to styles that were popular in Britain during the 1970s and early 1980s. A whole industry of 'retro' paraphernalia has emerged in recent years as an especially popular means of image construction, notably amongst young people in their later teenage years. This soon became evident in the context of the participant observation. Though 'retro' styles take on various guises I will concentrate here specifically on 'retro' training shoes. All the major multi-national manufacturers of training shoes including Nike, Adidas and Converse, produce 'retro' trainers. These are characterised by their simplistic and colourful design. As far as wearing such trainers for actual participation in sports is concerned their practical value is limited. 'Retro' trainers give very little support to the foot, and in comparison to the technological advances that have been made in the sports shoe industry in general, are redundant in this respect. 'Retro' training shoes are self-consciously fashion items. Fashion inspired meaning is gleaned, in particular, from the variety of colours in which specific editions of training shoes are produced. The diversity of colour schemes available, in versions of the Adidas Gazelle, for example, clearly allow young consumers to invest meanings in their training shoes. This being despite the fact that many young people acknowledged the functional limitations of 'retro' trainers. One customer actually commented that, 'For me they wear out too quickly', and yet went on to purchase a pair. As the manager of the sports shop pointed out, it seems that teenagers 'get an image in their head and that's it...' It is also important to note that such an image appears to transcend gender in that though as a whole the sports shop was a largely male domain, the 'retro' display appearing to attract males and females in similar numbers.

What is it about 'retro' training shoes that appeal to young people? Could it be argued that 'retro' training shoes actually represent a means by which young people can assert their individual identities? Why is it that this type of trainer appears to have such symbolic power? A theoretically useful notion in this context is Bourdieu's (1984) discussion of the 'cultural capital of consumption' in that the cultural capital gleaned in peer groups is an essential influence on young people's consumption habits, and in turn upon their self-perceptions. Expanding upon this point Bourdieu employs his notion of the 'habitus' which he sees as being the embodiment of the cultural dispositions and sensibilities of the group that structure group behaviour, simultaneously allowing group members a mechanism for structuring their social experience. In the context of this research project the individual's social and cultural experience of the cultural capital invested in training shoes is structured in the peer group context. Of course, it should be noted that there exists an extensive body of literature, mainly of a psychological tradition, that analyses the significance of friendship and peer pressure in young people's lives (see Erwin 1993; Epstein 1983; Hallinan 1980), but the significance of material objects in providing a framework for micro-social interaction remains an oft neglected aspect of this experience.

It is not the specific qualities of the training shoe itself that appeal to young people but the meanings endowed in such shoes in a peer context. 'Retro' trainers allow young people to believe that they can assert their individuality whilst being able to call upon the security of knowing that this form of consumption is considered appropriate in a peer context. This is why the diversity of colours of 'retros' is so important. It promotes the idea that individuality can be engendered in a pair of 'retro' trainers.

Such individuality can only, however, be established on common cultural ground. In this respect the seventies provide a rich source of meaning. By adopting retrospective lifestyles young consumers appear to subvert the present by apparently denying the appropriations of nineties consumerism, in favour of a nostalgia for an age passed. The seventies appeal in that they are historically, if not experientially, familiar and the nostalgia engendered in 'retro' styles can easily be integrated into the current cultural climate. One customer explained the significance of the seventies to 'retro' lifestyles,

Well, it's to do with the seventies: like groups playing the Starsky and Hutch [1970s American 'Cop' show] theme and stuff like that. It's street culture. A culture like. It's all to do with the music as well.

The seventies therefore provide a common focus for young people in which they can appropriate specific aspects of seventies culture to their own ends. Inevitably, however, such ends are predetermined by complex interactions between the market in whose interest it is to promote and manufacture consumer goods associated with any period as long as sales are maximised. Young people can apply their own meanings to such goods, but such meanings are never unique. Such uniqueness is tempered by peer choices, and in turn the efforts on the part of producers to maximise these choices in the context of the market. In this respect it could be argued that the recycling of seventies style is nothing more than a money making exercise and that youth culture has become preoccupied with style at the expense of any sort of ideological input (Johnston 1993). This I would suggest is a simplistic interpretation of events. Clearly style has been prioritised by youth culture. However, there is no reason why an ideological element cannot exist alongside the actual physical adornment of seventies dress. What is of interest here is not the lack of ideological *intent*, but the

seemingly misguided conception on the part of young people that 'retro' forms of youth culture do have an ideological impact. Contrary to the ability of seventies consumption to subvert nineties consumerism in a 'nirvana' of individuality, this mode of consumption merely reinforces the status quo.

It seems that 'retros' identify young consumers with particular sub-cultures. My contention is that the sense of belonging engendered in consumer goods such as training shoes gives young people a feeling that they belong in a culture which rarely makes them feel that way in other aspects of life. With the decline of community and family as a focus for individual identities young people become increasingly dependant upon social relations. Such relationships would be perpetually insecure without the common language that is invested in youth consumption. By juxtaposing different aspects of seventies sub-cultural styles, apparently regardless of their aesthetic qualities, a sense of who one is can be established without the need for any wholesale commitment to a complete sub-cultural lifestyle. Interestingly, when asked, young people appeared to have no specific rationale for why they wanted to purchase a pair of 'retro' training shoes. They were genuinely unsure as to what it was about the shoe itself that attracted them. This was more so than for contemporary models of training shoes which were readily identified with their functional and stylistic attributes. One young woman's reasons for being attracted to 'retros' was typical,

Well everybody wears 'em don't they. They're just... Well... smart...

Another customer said that,

They're just different. That's what I think. I like 'em cos they're plain.

Young people appear to be fully aware that 'retro' styles are highly popular amongst their peers, and although they realise that they are 'following the crowd', they justify this by convincing themselves that they personally subvert this by applying their own meanings to such goods. In effect, an illusion of uniqueness is established which the market has no hesitation in promoting, in order to promote, in turn, the very goods that reinforce such meanings. 'Retros' offer a stability that appeals to young consumers. It would be a socially and psychologically risky strategy for young people to deny the cultural precedence of 'retro' styles. Young people may bemoan the ill-fitting nature of 'retro' trainers, but are not prepared to undermine the wider cultural values imparted in such goods precisely because this would undermine their own identity formation which is itself tied up in cultural precedents. To this end when a customer actually went as far as to suggest that,

They [young people] wear 'em if they like them or not don't they...

There is no doubt that teenage consumers are more than mere 'dupes'. That is, they do have at least some degree of critical distance as Willis (1990) argues, and their consumer choices are not completely dominated by peer pressure. But Willis makes the mistake of exaggerating the extent to which young people can be symbolically creative within the parameters provided for them by consumer capitalism. Young people undoubtedly do adopt a critical distance to consumer culture. Such critical distance was illustrated by one young person interviewed during my focus groups who expressed some dissatisfaction with the extent of choice available in shops,

Yeah, like when Miss Selfridge came to town I was like thinking 'oh yeah!' and then you walked in and it's rubbish. It's useless. It's like what they've got is just exactly the same as what they've got next door in Top Shop or... You know...

But such distance is tempered by the very pervasiveness of that culture. Indeed, the critical distance teenagers adopt is problematic in that they often fail to acknowledge the fact that they are part of the constraints of consumer culture. As far as most of my respondents were concerned, everybody else but themselves is a 'victim' of the consumer culture. Young people readily accept the value of consumption as a means of affirming status in the social group, and as long as that social group is important to them then consumer trends inevitably play a significant role in their lives. Because young people are at such an important stage in terms of forming their individual identities they tend to be protective towards their self-image. To acknowledge the role of the cultural capital of consumption could only serve to undermine that self-image. That is, consumption provides young people with an arena within which common meanings can be used as a means of locating the individual in a cultural context. In effect, as a means of signifying membership or allegiance to the peer group. It is the illusion of choice that makes consumption such a powerful player in the construction of youth identities. And there are clear pressures on young people to conform to a common set of likes and dislikes that are ultimately laid down by the market. In reality the extent of personal choice is highly constructed. Young consumers are not able to choose the goods they buy off a clean slate; that slate is cluttered by the choices that have already been made by their peers, a common language of consumer goods within which young people participate, as part of the unwritten laws of peer acceptance. In turn, the choices made beforehand by producers and markets are equally influential. Young consumers only have personal choice in the context of the parameters laid down for them by the cultural industries. A popular t-shirt amongst teenagers is one with a prominent slogan that reads, 'Demand the right to be unique.' By wearing that t-shirt young consumers may feel that they are being unique, that they are making a statement. Ultimately, however, that statement is redundant in that it is simultaneously being made by thousands of other teenagers, all of whom are locked into the same paradoxical system of meanings.

Young people construct their identities, at least partly, through their consumer goods which allow them to feel unique and yet at the same time reaffirm peer commonalities. There is undoubtedly a tension here between two apparently contradictory elements. It is the illusion of uniqueness that gives them confidence as people, confidence when they buy a well known brand. But it is also an illusion that ensures they subscribe to consumer culture, a culture that positively thrives on the axial principal that everybody believes that they can be totally unique within the parameters it lays down. In effect, teenage consumers do adopt a critical distance from consumer culture. They are able to identify what might be described as 'consumer sheep' but their refusal to believe that they can be part of these structures merely serves to reiterate how powerful a force consumerism can be in the construction of youth identities. The young consumers interviewed during this research might like a particular item and adopt it as a means of expressing who they are as an individual. That item might have a particular appeal, if short-lived, but the tendency for consumers to apply meanings to goods without realising, or at least acknowledging, the significance of the pressures that influence those meanings is telling.

Discussion

In contextualising these sorts of debates, it must be recognised that although youth consumers have developed into a very definite market niche (Stewart 1992), there is also much evidence to suggest that the majority of young people are marginalised, at least to some extent, from direct access to the wares of consumer culture. Consumption as a source of identity is not all-pervasive. Indeed, class represents an important influence upon the extent to which young people can get involved in the sorts of processes discussed above. Without the resources to participate in an arena that potentially represents an important source of identity, young people appear, in effect, to be disenfranchised. This, as Stewart (1992) notes, can result in some extreme reactions, notably the trainer wars in the USA, where young people have been known to murder, and be murdered, by other young people purely in order to acquire their trainers. In this respect it could be argued that consumption is an especially important focus for the lives of young people whose parents cannot subsidise the demands inherent in 1990s consumer culture. In a society that encourages materialistic values the psychological cost of disenfranchisement is likely to be costly (Banks and Jackson 1992).

Any discussion of shopping and consumption needs to be aware of these sorts of concerns. Teenage consumers have to make very careful decisions about the pros and cons of particular items. Having said that, many young people, as children of the individualistic Thatcher era, are all too aware of the significance of money in contemporary culture as both the focus group interviews and the participant observation illustrated. Might such an exclusion have detrimental affects on the identities of young people? Without the resources, or indeed, the inclination, to partake in consumer culture might young people, in turn, be excluded from acceptance by the peer group? Indeed, during one of my focus group interviews one of my respondents insisted that she wanted nothing to do with youth consumer culture,

I don't buy the crap that other teenagers do.

The fact that this person was quite clearly on the periphery of her particular peer group, that she kept relatively quiet during the interview sessions, and when she did have something to say, she was mocked by her colleagues, appears to be rather more than coincidental. The suggestion here is that young people often seem to be presented with a very painful, indeed cruel, choice. The influence of consumerism, and the impact of peer pressure is so pervasive, as to give young people a choice between submitting to peer pressure and becoming embroiled in consumer culture, or being consigned to the periphery of their peer groups. The nature of this choice illustrates, quite forcibly, the extent to which the life experiences of young people is framed, at least to some extent, by the consumer ethic.

If it is accepted that consumption has an important role to play in young people's lives then research is desperately needed to broaden our knowledge base. Some advances have already been made in this respect. For instance, Hollands (1991) has considered the extent to which young people are encouraged to become more self-reliant, independent, and even conservative, as a direct consequence of their being subjected to the wares of consumer culture at a young age. There has also been a significant body of work that has addressed the effects of unemployment and disenfranchisement on psychological adjustment and health (e.g. Banks and Jackson 1982). Yet other questions are still to be answered. What role do young

people's consumption patterns play in both framing their relationships with adults and in preparing them for aspects of adult life itself? Are there gender and race dimensions to young people's consumption patterns and might these dimensions have important implications for relationships in later life? Does consumption, in fact, represent a viable means of overcoming 'racial' divides? Certainly, during this participant observation black and white teenagers appeared to have a common interest in what were perceived collectively as the 'correct' pair of training shoes to be seen wearing, the hip hop movement having a particular influence in this regard. This appears to reinforce Cunningham's (1995) contention that cultural cross-overs in fashion and music can potentially undermine borders that exist between black and white youths.

Research also needs to look further into how far consumption patterns vary according to class and what this means for the identity of young consumers. In addition, the experience of young people who have no recourse to consumer goods, whether this be due to financial imperatives or through personal choice, might well provide a further means of coming to terms with the position of youth in relation to peers and adults alike. The above represents just a handful of the many concerns that may be enlightened through a greater understanding of consumption and its relationship to young people's identity.

To conclude, it has been suggested that whilst a sub-cultural approach to consumption in the work of authors such as Hebdige (1979) and Brake (1985) is misleading in that it deals with aspects of youth culture that owe more to cultures of 'resistance' in the seventies than the individualistic culture of the nineties, contemporary postmodern approaches are too detached from the everyday realities of youth consumption, to be of real use. Both these approaches tend to underestimate the complex social pressures that operate in the day to day lives of young people. This article has attempted to illustrate that by adopting a more contextualised approach to young people's meanings, in terms of the relationship between consumption and identity, it is possible to highlight the significance of such pressures. Peer pressure, financial hardship, the feeling of being unwanted; all these issues are important to young people in structuring their experience of contemporary society. The role of consumption, it appears, is to provide an arena within which young people can assert themselves as individuals. If that means subscribing to contemporary street styles then so be it (see Polhemus 1994).

Youth identities are constructed through stable commonalities that no longer appear to be available in the nuclear or extended family, or in the local community or neighbourhood. However, in order to understand the subjective nuances of such a construction it is not enough to observe them from the sanctity of the academic office. Young people's experience of consumer culture is highly complex and as such the experiences, contradictions, social positions and feelings associated with youth consumption need to be understood in their specific cultural contexts. Young consumers need to be asked what role they feel they play in consumer culture and how fulfilling they find that role to be. Some of these findings can then be used to address the whys and wherefores that result in so many young people feeling like inferior under-valued citizens of contemporary society. In the final analysis the most important point to remember in this respect is that consumption is far from a trivial matter. The items young people buy and why it is they buy are important indicators

of the sorts of pressures that young people live under in contemporary society. Academics and practitioners alike will ignore that fact at their peril.

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KNOWING THE BACK ROADS

Rural Social Work with Troubled Young People

ANDREW KENDRICK AND CATRIONA RIOCH

Introduction

When we think about the problems faced by young people today, the stereotyped setting of an urban housing scheme frequently springs to mind with its associated pictures of deprivation, drug and alcohol abuse and violence. Much less often do we think about those young people living in rural communities. However, along with issues which are common to their peers in urban areas, a number of issues specific to rural areas can be identified which have important implications for working with children and young people (Payne, 1984). In this paper we describe the work of one project working with young people in difficulty in a rural area of Scotland.

Activities and opportunities for young people are restricted in rural areas. There are fewer leisure and recreational provisions which tend to be concentrated in urban areas (Denman, 1980; Martinez-Brawley, 1987; Fabes and Banks, 1991; Rogers, 1992). A recent study of disadvantage in rural Scotland found that:

Many residents felt that leisure and recreational facilities were very limited in rural areas... Respondents in all areas identified teenagers and the elderly as the main groups for whom leisure provision was inadequate... (Shucksmith et al, 1994, p. 20).

This can be made worse in those rural cultures which fail or refuse to recognise young people's aspirations and their need to develop a wider experience of life' (Francis and Henderson, 1992, p. 25).

Educational problems can quickly escalate in rural areas as exclusion from one school creates major difficulties in finding a place in another distant school. The effects of 'labelling' young people and their families can lead to social exclusion and discrimination in small, rural communities. Isolation is a major issue which affects access to a range of provision (Payne, 1984; Fabes and Banks, 1991; Rogers, 1992; Shucksmith et al, 1994, p. 22). Young people's problems at home can be made worse by their isolation and lack of alternative provision and transport.

Private car ownership was considered to be a pre-condition of rural employment and access to social activities. In this respect young people in their late teenage years who had neither a driving licence nor access to a car were reported to be severely disadvantaged (Shucksmith et al, 1994, p. 17; see also Payne, 1984; Brogden, 1984).

There are also generally fewer resources targeted at troubled and troublesome young people available in rural areas. In a study of social work provision for children and young people in Scotland, intermediate treatment, for example, might only be provided on an ad hoc basis, if at all (Kendrick and Fraser, 1993; see also Johnson, 1980; Seed, 1984). In the field of child protection, the Orkney Enquiry raised questions about social work services in remote islands and sparsely popu-

lated areas. Attention was drawn to the lack of specialist child care resources and the challenges created by the smallness and genericism of social work teams in such areas (Directors of Social Work in Scotland, 1992; see also Leistyna, 1980; Sefcik and Ormsby, 1980).

Fabes and Knowles consider that rural work has 'often been seen as the poorer, smaller and less resourced urban model implanted into the countryside without due care and attention' (1991, p. 1: see also Johnson, 1986). More specifically, Akehurst described rural youthwork as 'low status, lacking an established body of knowledge, under-researched, under-resourced, with little in the way of support and with no distinct rationale or methods of work' (Akehurst, 1983, p. 29). Recently there has been an increasing recognition of the range of work being undertaken with young people in rural Britain (Fabes and Knowles, 1991; Fabes and Banks, 1991; White, 1991; Rogers, 1992; Fabes and Popham, 1994). Interestingly, this literature is largely related to community youth work, and there is very little written on working specifically with troubled or troublesome young people in rural areas.

This seems to mirror a general tendency in the literature of social work in rural areas to focus on the 'macro' aspects of community development approaches as opposed to the 'micro' aspect of work with individuals, families and groups (Jacobsen, 1980). In the American and Australian literature on rural social work, there has been a strong emphasis on the rural social worker as a generalist (Ginsberg, 1976; Southern Regional Education Board, 1976; Vice-Irey, 1980; Martinez-Brawley, 1986a; Waltman, 1986; Cheers, 1990, 1992; Lynn, 1992). This debate has focused on the importance of rural social workers encompassing both the 'micro' aspects of work with individuals, families and groups as well as the 'macro' aspects of community development (Jacobsen, 1980).

The rural generalist which the rural social work literature in the U.S. has tended to describe is, using U.K. terminology, a social and community worker all in one. The rural generalist is seen as a supporter of local level organisation and innovation, and a political force in the community that he/she serves. (Martinez-Brawley, 1984, p. 75)

Martinez-Brawley, however, points out that in the U.K., local authority social workers tend to 'function narrowly within the scope of traditional casework methodology' (Martinez-Brawley, 1984, p. 75; see also Stevenson and Parsloe, 1978; Martinez-Brawley, 1982; Grant, 1984; Watts, 1984). In her study of social work practice in the Western Isles, Martinez-Brawley concluded that while community-orientated social work was being undertaken by the local authority social worker:

Community work in the sense of broad involvement in the social, economic and political life of the community was clearly not being carried out within the statutory sector... As she saw it, it was either the tradition of statutory work that prevented her from engaging in more activist roles, or the realities of resource allocation, or the perception that community work, particularly political work, was not an appropriate part of social work. (Martinez-Brawley, 1986, p. 365).

In the remainder of this paper, we will describe how one specialist, rural project has worked with troubled and troublesome young people.

The NCH Action for Children Rural Youth Project

Action for Children currently runs six rural youth projects in Scotland (NCH Action for Children (Scotland), 1995). While youth work encompasses a range of activity, NCH Action for Children has sought to develop its youth work practice to suit the particular needs and requirements of the specific areas in which it operates and the projects have therefore developed different models of work. The Perth and Kinross Rural Youth Project is one of these projects and was developed in the context of social work policy and service developments in Tayside Region. In the mid-1980s, the report 'Children in Crisis' (Tayside Region, 1986) stressed the need to develop alternative strategies for children and young people. It considered that an expansion of intermediate treatment and day care services was required in order to offer a direct alternative to residential care and to divert young people from the criminal justice system (see also, Thorpe et al, 1980; Bilson and Thorpe, 1987; Werrbach, 1992).

Although a specialist social work service for adolescents was present in the city, given the large geographical area of Perth and Kinross District, it proved difficult to service the rural areas sufficiently. It was also apparent that particular issues faced young people in rural areas: isolation, a difficulty in identifying with urban youngsters and reluctance to go to the city for service provision. In the light of this, it was agreed that a separate, specialist service for young people from the rural areas who were presenting problems should be set up.

The NCH Perth and Kinross Rural Youth Project was established in October 1989 as part of this strategy with the aims:

To divert young people (aged 12 - 16 years) from the formal care and legal systems unless care and protection issues deem otherwise. It aims to maintain them within their families, communities and mainstream education. It will offer a complementary service which aims to work alongside voluntary and statutory organisations as well as members of the general public.

The project covers a large rural area of over 2,000 square miles with a population of some 82,780 people. The staff of the project comprises a project leader, two project workers and a part-time secretary/administrator. Staff are recruited on the basis of their skills and experience of groupwork and previous work with troubled and troublesome young people. They are required to have a social work, community education or other relevant qualification. Volunteers are also used to assist the employed workers.

'Youth groupwork' is central to the project's work. Highly structured group programmes are run over a 10-12 week time-limited period. Groupwork is an effective means of enabling young people who are experiencing difficulties at home, in school or in their communities, to address personal and inter-personal relationship issues in a safe and supportive environment. The primary focus is on the development of self control and social responsibility through a social skills approach. By sharing their difficulties, fears and anxieties and looking together at how they can learn to manage and cope with stressful social situations, it is felt that the young people can develop greater self-confidence in their abilities to deal more appropriately with challenging situations. Groupwork is complemented by individual work and work with parents and families of the young people.

The content of the groupwork programme varies according to the make up of the group and may incorporate input on a range of topics such as drug and solvent abuse; offending behaviour; and sexual abuse. School based groups are also run for first and second year pupils presenting difficulties in school. Using a range of groupwork techniques, the groups focus on encouraging the young people to consider the nature of the difficulties they face and develop more effective ways of resolving them. This is achieved through the development of trust, confidence and more effective means of communication. The groups are run in a number of locations across the area. As there is a dearth of public transport in the rural areas, transport to and from the programme is provided by the project. The programmes are located as near the young people's home base as possible and the project uses local village and church halls.

In some cases, individual work and counselling is carried out as an alternative to groupwork where groupwork is inappropriate in the light of a particular young person's needs and circumstances. Importantly, the project structure is designed to be flexible in order to respond to the needs of the young people who are referred at any given time and the content of any specific group and individual programme is developed accordingly. The project incorporates mechanisms for self monitoring, review and evaluation, and user satisfaction is systematically monitored through these mechanisms. The project has also been involved in establishing information sharing meetings with other professionals, in training of local authority residential staff and social workers, and monitoring initiatives in secondary schools.

The project is funded by Tayside Region Social Work Department and NCH Action for Children. Unlike similar projects, Perth and Kinross is unique in not having a contribution to its funding from the Education Department. However, recently the project's work has been located in the context of Tayside Region's inter-agency Youth Strategy (Kendrick, 1995b).

The Research

The evaluation of the Rural Youth Project was carried out between December 1993 and May 1994. The limited time input of the researcher and the short-time scale of the study meant that the research could not hope to consider all aspects of the project's work. The evaluation, therefore, focused on three particular issues:

- feedback from young people and their parents on their involvement in the project;
- outcomes in relation to a sample of young people with whom the project had worked;
- perceptions of professionals in other agencies of the project's effectiveness.

Questionnaires were sent to 50 young people involved with the project and to their parents. However, the response rate was disappointing and only 12 questionnaires were returned by young people and 14 by parents.

A content analysis of the case files of the 50 young people was carried out. Confidentiality issues meant that analysis forms were completed by project staff members before return to the researcher for analysis. Interviews were conducted with the project leader, two project workers, one student on placement, and the project secretary. Three young people who had been involved with the project were also interviewed. Telephone interviews were carried out with 18 professionals from agencies who had been involved in work with the project (social work,

secondary schools, education support service, educational psychology, and the researcher's department).

The methodology of the evaluation had two main limitations. Firstly, it was not feasible to compare the sample of young people with a control group of similar young people who had not been involved in the project. Secondly, it was not possible to carry out a prospective study of work with young people. This meant that the evaluation could not establish base-line information and measure changes in behaviour over the period of involvement with the project. The evaluation had to rely on information extracted retrospectively from case files.

Work with Young People

In 1991 and 1992 the project had some 100 referrals in each year and over two-thirds of these were boys. Two-thirds of referrals came from the Social Work Department and a further fifth came from schools. Smaller numbers came from the Education Support Service and the Educational Psychology Service.

Referrals of the 50 young people in the sample involved a number of problems.

The principal problems were:

- behaviour problems at school (25 young people);
- school attendance problems (11 young people);
- problems in peer group relations (19 young people);
- offending (22 young people) - family relationship difficulties (28 young people);
- child protection issues (9 young people).

We saw above that a main aim of the project is to divert young people from the formal legal and care systems. Only a small number of the young people referred (7) were in care, either on a home supervision requirement from the Children's Hearing or physically in the care of the local authority. One third (17) were not on any statute when referred to the project and another third (15) were open Social Work Department voluntary cases under Section 39(2) or Section 12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act.

One of the features of the project's work is that it allows intensive support to young people. Most young people were involved with the project for over six months and over one-quarter were involved with the project for over a year. Almost four-fifths of the young people had more than 20 hours of contact in groupwork, individual work or family work during their involvement with the project, over half had more than 40 hours of contact.

Groupwork

The main focus of the work of the project is providing the opportunity for groupwork, either task-centred, activity-based or school-based groups. All except seven of the young people attended at least one group (20 attended one group; 14 attended two groups; 6 attended three groups; and 3 young people attended four groups).

The professionals interviewed considered that groupwork was a valid and effective way of working with young people, particularly in relation to improving social skills and increasing confidence and self-esteem. Most of the parents who returned questionnaires (9) considered that involvement with groupwork in the project had helped their son/daughter in some way.

He was helped with behaviour problems and learned to control his temper more.

It gave her back her confidence and self-esteem. She went back to school and faced all her teachers and her friends she had alienated and worked very hard.

A number of parents (4) did not think that involvement in the group had helped their child. Two of these, however, thought the involvement in the group had not been for long enough. Another parent thought that it had been worthwhile even though it had not worked due to the non-cooperation of the young person.

Most of the young people found the activities in the groups enjoyable and helpful, in particular group exercises, arts and crafts, and games.

Well it helped me a lot, I met new friends, some of whom had the same problems as me and the workers were very friendly and understanding. I would advise anyone I knew to go as it helps to put your problems in a different perspective.

Basically, they were brilliant. They gave me a second chance, a second bite of the apple.

One young person, however, considered that the mixture of young people in the group she had attended was not helpful and therefore the group was a 'waste of time'.

I think the groups should be more selective and not include a wide range of young adults. I didn't really enjoy mixing with other young people who had problems a million miles from my own as I feel I didn't get much help. There should be separate groups for people with problems concerning the law, problems concerning school and problems with parents.

Groupwork is seen as a particularly effective way of tackling some of the specific issues facing young people in rural areas. It reduces isolation, offers activities and opportunities to acquire more skills and increases self confidence. This in turn helps young people to tackle other difficulties which they might face. These are young people who often reject or are excluded because of their behaviour from many of the mainstream community education or uniformed organisation groups. The use of volunteers from the local communities in the groups also creates an important link for young people in difficulty. This has led to increased awareness of the problems faced by young people and some local community involvement, for example through fund-raising.

Individual Work

Most frequently the individual work undertaken by the project is complementary to groupwork. Seven young people were only involved in individual counselling. However, of the others, all except one young person was involved in individual work as well as group work. Individual work ranged from one individual session up to 34 sessions with the average being just under nine sessions.

Fewer of the young people who completed the questionnaire had been involved in individual counselling but again there was a range of responses. While some found it helpful, one young person said that she had not enjoyed it because 'I did

not know what to say.' Another felt that being involved in individual counselling singled him out from the rest of the group.

Professionals in other agencies considered that individual work with young people was effective, particularly in child protection cases. Most importantly, other professionals felt that the project offered flexibility in being able to tailor programmes to meet the needs of the individual young person. Thus in two of the sample cases, groupwork was not effective but individual work which was subsequently carried out was thought to have been effective.

This aspect of the project's work has been increasing due to larger than anticipated numbers of referrals for child protection issues and also due to the number of young people disclosing abuse even though this was not included in the initial referral. Research currently being undertaken by one of the authors specifically on the child protection work of the project suggests that young people see the project as less official, less threatening and more confidential than statutory social work. Project staff have undertaken advanced training in child protection because of the extent of this type of work.

Work with Parents

Direct work with the family took place in all but two of the 50 sample cases. Most frequently both parents (20 cases) or the mother (20 cases) of the young person were involved in family meetings. Most parents who returned the questionnaire (11) considered that they were kept involved by staff at the project. They stressed regular feed-back both in meetings and informal chats:

The staff were excellent at keeping us fully informed.

There were meetings on a one-to-one basis with the leader and myself and then with us all together. All the problems encountered were discussed. Everyone's point of view was put. Not always well received, but at least we were able to communicate without animosity.

Professionals from other agencies also stressed the importance of consultation with parents and the regular feedback of information.

A number of parents also considered that the project had offered them support.

At the time of my son's referral to the group I was about at the end of my patience with him. It gave me some time away from him and took a lot of strain off me. The staff were all very good to talk to and seemed to understand the pressure I felt I was under and I felt at ease discussing very personal feelings with them.

This role was also pointed out by professionals from other agencies:

I know that workers try to concentrate on their work with the young person. But families see them as a friend to support them, as well as listening. They are able to spend time listening and that is a way of release. That is very important. With my clients, the workers had very good relationships with the parents and that is important because it is the parents who welcome them into their homes.

Work with Other Agencies

An important aspect of the work of the project was liaison and joint work with other agencies. All but four of the cases involved work with staff from other agencies. As would be expected, the project worked most frequently with social workers but school staff were involved in just under half of the cases.

Project staff members considered that, for the most part, they had established good working relationships with other agencies, particularly with education and the schools. Respondents from education and the schools considered that working relationships were good and respondents from social work and other agencies also highlighted the relations with schools and the high regard with which the Rural Youth Project was held by teachers.

While relationships with the social workers were, on the whole, also considered good, there was recognition by both project staff and social work staff that there could be tensions in this relationship. A number of reasons were put forward for this. It was suggested that these tensions were inherent in co-work between a statutory and voluntary agency, partly because of the different perspectives that this brings to the work. It was suggested that there might be a certain defensiveness on the part of social workers because of the different levels of input which the two workers could put into a case. It was also suggested that communication between the two agencies at the level of direct practice was not always as good as it could be, because cases could move quickly and because of the large area that the project was covering. Instances of the 'fudging of boundaries' in joint work and of role confusion were identified by a small number of professionals from other agencies.

The inter-agency focus of the project is important because of the overlapping nature of the problems the young people present. As we have seen, it is not uncommon for those referred to have problems at home, school and in the community which results in the involvement of social work, education and police.

Effectiveness of Work with Young People

To a large degree, the project succeeded in its aim of diverting young people from the formal legal and care systems. Almost four-fifths of the young people who were referred to the project did not become more heavily involved in the legal or care systems throughout their involvement with the project. Fifteen of the 17 who were not on any statute when they were referred, remained so until the end of their involvement with the project and 13 of the 15 young people with whom the Social Work Department was involved voluntarily under Section 39(2) or Section 12 at referral, either remained so at the end of the project's involvement or social work had closed the case. Seven young people were on home supervision requirements or in care at referral. Five had their supervision requirement terminated by the end of the project's involvement while two remained in care.

As we saw above, young people were frequently referred to the project with a number of presenting problems. The analysis of case records asked whether there was improvement in the presenting problem over the period that the young person was involved with the project. On the basis of this evaluation of improvement, supported by the perceptions of other individuals which were also extracted from case records, outcomes in terms of the presenting problems were categorised by

the researcher as either: 'positive improvement'; 'slight/mixed improvement'; or 'no change'. Table 1 gives the figures for the six most frequent presenting problems: school behaviour; school attendance; offending; family relations; child protection issues; and peer group relations.

Table 1: Effect on Presenting Problem

	'Positive'		'Slight/Mixed'		No Change	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>School behaviour</i>	14	(56)	6	(24)	5	(20)
<i>School Attendance</i>	6	(55)	4	(36)	1	(9)
<i>Offending</i>	16	(72)	3	(14)	3	(14)
<i>Family relations</i>	14	(50)	8	(29)	6	(21)
<i>Child protection</i>	4	(57)	2	(29)	1	(14)
<i>Peer group relations</i>	11	(65)	1	(6)	5	(29)

The highest level of success was with offenders, almost three-quarters were considered to have stopped or significantly reduced offending. There was 'positive improvement' in two-thirds of the cases where there were problems with peer group relations. In the other categories, it was considered that half or just over half the young people had shown a 'positive improvement' in relation to the presenting problem.

If we look at the overall outcomes for the sample of young people, taking into account all the problems which led to a young person being referred to the project, we find that 32 (64 per cent) were considered to have shown 'positive improvement', 16 (32 per cent) had shown 'slight/mixed improvement', while only 2 (4 per cent) were considered not to have improved at all while with the project. Most professionals considered that, overall, the project was effective in its work with young people. While respondents tended to qualify this by acknowledging that the work was not effective with all young people, the project's willingness to be frank about when work was not being effective was also acknowledged.

Conclusion

In the introduction, we emphasised a number of factors which put families in rural areas under stress and disadvantage. Although the project is child- centred in its work, it takes cognisance of the importance of families, offers them support and is successful in helping young people remain at home when problems arise. It provides a model for working with troubled and troublesome young people in rural areas. While the evaluation did not involve a follow-up of young people when they left the project, it is not uncommon for ex-users to have a continuing contact with the project and, having been running for six years, the project is now beginning to receive requests from ex-users to become volunteers.

Working with troubled young people in rural situations presents its own particular issues and difficulties. This paper has shown, however, that specialist work by a voluntary organisation, alongside the input of other agencies, can be effective in supporting young people in their homes and communities. The primary focus is

one of diverting youngsters from more serious interventions in their lives and working towards a resolution of their difficulties while effectively sustaining them in their own communities. The groupwork offered by the project cuts down the isolation and social exclusion of these troubled young people. It also offers opportunities for activities which are lacking in rural areas, particularly for this group of young people who are frequently excluded from mainstream youth groups. Through the use of volunteers, the project has also made links with the local communities. In individual and family work, the project has been able to do more intensive work, particularly in relation to child protection (Gibbons, 1995).

The project, unlike other NCH Action for Children youth projects in Scotland, is funded solely by the Social Work Department and does not receive funding from the Education Department. Since fieldwork for the evaluation was completed, the project has been increasingly unable to take on referrals from schools because of the increase in the number and complexity of social work cases. In a context where resources for child care services have been restricted because of the competition of other social work specialisms such as community care (Kirk and Part, 1995), there has been a move away from preventative work and the involvement in schools has diminished. A related aspect concerns the identification of a need for targeted work with under twelves, 'the younger they can get them the better.' The advantages of working with children while they are still at primary school to prevent the escalation of problems were stressed. Such issues emphasise the importance of joint funding and joint 'ownership' of work of this nature.

Mark Shucksmith argues that the particular problems of different groups, including young people, need to be identified 'in order to break the invisibility of the excluded, both at policy level and within rural communities' and that there 'is a need for an integrated and holistic approach which recognises the interconnectedness between various facets of rural living' (Shucksmith, 1995, p. 6). This reflects policy principles identified by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) for local strategies to tackle rural disadvantage which stress the need to take account of the interdependence of different sectors, to recognise the multiplicity of agencies and services which have a role and to initiate partnerships (CoSLA, 1992).

We have seen in the debate on rural social work that a distinction has been made between the 'macro' aspects of community development approaches and the 'micro' aspects of work with individuals, families and groups. In Tayside, inter-agency work with young people has been developed over recent years through a Youth Strategy involving social work, education, police, researchers and voluntary organisations. It is interesting that the tensions around the involvement of different agencies, such as social work and community education, has focused around the distinction between 'macro' and 'micro' aspects of the strategy (Kendrick, 1995b). While this project's work is focused on the 'micro' aspects of work with individuals, families and groups there has been a small element of community development work. Further development of this element of the project's work is unlikely, however, in the present climate of reduced social work and education budgets (Francis and Henderson, 1992).

Local government reorganisation in Scotland is creating a marked degree of uncertainty about the nature and scale of services to be provided by the new authorities (Kendrick, 1995a). This relates not only to the size of the new authorities but the

fact that most of the 32 new councils will be largely rural in character. In this context of rapid change, it is all the more important to highlight the needs of young people and their families living in rural areas and to further develop services to meet these needs. Local government reorganisation, however, also offers opportunities to develop integrated policies which take account of the issues rural communities face (Erick, 1995). As an element in such policies, projects such as the NCH Action for Children Rural Youth Project provide scope for innovation, flexibility and responsiveness to local needs in working with troubled young people and their families.

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WORKING SPACE

STUCK IN THE SYSTEM

The Abuse of Young People by Psychiatry

JO HANCOCK

Young people are as prolific in the psychiatric system now as they ever were. I spent the best part of my adolescence in it. I officially left school at 17 with 2 GCSEs to my name yet I question whether or not this was an accurate portrayal of my capabilities at 16? At 18 I am a published poet and have just finished typing my first novel (publishers out there?).

For whatever reason I entered the grim world of psychiatry at 15 via an admission to the local adolescent unit. It proved to have long lasting detrimental effects on me! In my adolescent unit I was classed as having the brain of an amoeba from day one. Trying to study for my GCSEs was neither encouraged nor aided in any way. Even so I still took my practice exam in April '92 like all the other girls at my school back home, the only difference between me and them was that I did it in a small room with the distracting sound of a group of teenagers, running riot outside, and they, well you can imagine their setting. Amazingly I got 82% for this practice exam. I think that this was before I was sedated with major tranquillisers. I eventually failed my GCSE English twice. Reading this you might find that an irony, but for me it is a stark reminder of how psychiatry wrecks rather than restores lives.

Once in the system the general presumption that I have the brain of an amoeba has been stuck on my forehead with superglue. Hence I didn't manage to obtain a diagnosis for myself for over 6 months after my breakdown. At 15 they sedated me without informing me;

- (i) *what was being flung down my throat/injected into me*
- (ii) *what it was supposed to do other than 'make me better'*
- (iii) *the side effects, long and short term.*

One day I was my happy go lucky self, the next I looked like an old age pensioner with Alzheimers. That's what they did to me and are still doing to other teenagers whom they can't handle for whatever reason. As a 15 year old you have no voice, you are a child, in psychiatry this means one thing

You have no rights!

All I had was a piece of paper, a pair of legs and fingernails which I used (to the effect of more psychiatric abuse) to relieve the distress that sedation did nothing for. If I wanted to die I would have asked them to sedate my life away. I did not want to die. I just wanted to go back to school and be happy.

Even as an adolescent I used to frequently attempt to access information. I was blocked from every angle. Doctors would give me the vaguest of answers to my

questions no matter how often I asked. Nurses, Social Workers, Teachers, well they 'weren't doctors' and so couldn't help. The average RMN gets paid 15,000 pounds per annum and yet will not tell me the side effects of the drug that they have just forcibly injected into me! That's like paying a child abuser to systematically abuse children till they are mere statue like plaques on a wall.

One of my own philosophies regarding my own disabling mental distress is that, with practical management, it need not be so disabling. People are these days being frequently encouraged to do it with anxiety. Considering that a lot of my so called illness is provoked by stress and in particular boredom then I think that there should be more stimulation in places like psychiatric wards. I know that as a 17 year old I would often have to sit in a room for twelve hours a day without anything to do except talk and smoke. At 17, like now at 19, I still had a very active intellect and if it didn't get satisfactorily stimulated then it would resort to other things to pass the time (eg. absconding).

Care in the community means that I now spend a lot of my time in damp, dark and often dangerous phoneboxes, phoning the Samaritans if they let me reverse the charges and any other freephone helpline, irrespective if they can help me or not. It's the only way that I can relax and get the messages that torment me out of my head. The down side to that is that it's addictive but I suppose that it's better than me not being here at all and considering how often I self injure and think of suicide it's surprising that I'm not sectioned! But then sectioning in itself only works by negative reinforcement maybe that that isn't such a bad thing.

However I digress, the important thing that I'm trying to illustrate is that, as the government is introducing more and more restraining legislation, the abuse of young people in psychiatric units is set to continue - unless we do something about it. So if you know a teenager who is in a psychiatric unit visit them as often as possible, take them something to do that they enjoy (eg. computer game), within reason. If you can get hold of it tell them information about their rights etc. whatever you can do, do it.

Likewise if you know a friend who is silently suffering but is not a psychiatric patient do what you can for them with the use of distraction, relaxation and positive coping techniques. Very often a lot of us just need a good shoulder to cry on and someone to be there for us when we are at our worst.

Jo Hancock a 19 year old survivor of over 4 years of psychiatric abuse

WORKING SPACE

A MENTALLY HEALTHY YOUNG NATION

PETER WILSON

Introduction

Mental health is a difficult concept. There is a great deal of confusion about the term, and an ever-quick tendency immediately to confuse it with its opposite - mental illness. Not only is this misleading, but deeply unhelpful to our consideration of young people's emotional needs and the services and support we should be providing for them. To focus our preoccupations on extreme states is not only to narrow concern to a relatively small number of people, but to take our minds away from thinking about the broad nature of mental health and the various and complex states of mental well-being that affect young people. If we are to have a sense of direction and purpose in our work and in our interventions, we need to have a concept of what state of mental health we are after.

This is not easy. There is not much chance of agreeing or finding clear, objective measures of what normality is. We can get terribly lost in trying to find the healthy, normal adolescent or adult, and there are always dangers of becoming moralistic and holier than thou in any such quest. We know, too, that mental health cannot be thought of without reference to cultural context. Each culture has its own ideas about ideal states of mind or well-being, and the general relationship between personal identity and group responsibility. The more we try to capture the essence of mental health, the more elusive it becomes or the more precious we sound. But we *must* make a stab at it, because, whatever it is mental health is much more than simply the absence of mental illness.

Mental Health

Defining mental health is hard enough, but capturing the diversity of young people is possibly even more difficult. There are something like ten million of them between the ages of 14 and 24 in England and Wales. They are all different - their genetic predispositions, their family background, their socioeconomic circumstances, their cultural values, their employment prospects are enormously varied.

Yet I think it is well to remember that all teenagers, no matter how well supported they may be, live with a wide range of fears that they have to deal with - of losing childish dependency, of feeling alienated and alone, of facing demands and challenges and exams, of dealing with feelings of inadequacy; of sorting out the questions and the possibilities of sexuality; of dealing with the anxiety of losing control, of not being able to check an increasing sense of physical power or control, or of potential destructiveness. And more plainly, fears of never getting a job, a role, a place, a pathway to adulthood in our society.

These anxieties constitute the core of the adolescent experience, and it is a measure of mental health in young people how they deal with the inevitable developmental vulnerability of adolescence - in other words, how they hold on to a measure of self-control and self-regard, and gain a coherent, confident sense of themselves. I think

we can draw from this developmental view a picture of mental health that will broadly stand up across most cultures, although with many variations in emphasis. The mental health of young people is essentially about their emotional well-being - not just superficially about their happiness, but about how well they are doing in their being. It is about their capacity to learn and work, their appreciation of themselves and of others, their readiness to meet challenge, their sense of hope and fun. It is not a recipe for perfection, but simply for the possibility of young people to enjoy themselves and make the most of their potential.

Perhaps the nearest we now have to a consensus definition of mental health is given in the NHS Health Advisory Service's invaluable publication on child and adolescent mental health, *Together We Stand: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services* (1995). According to that definition, the components of mental health include the capacity to develop psychologically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually; the ability to initiate, develop and sustain mutually satisfying personal relationships; the ability to become aware of others and to empathise with them; and the ability to use psychological distress as a developmental process, so that it does not hinder or impair further development.

Within that broad framework, and incorporating the developmental nature of both body and mind in childhood and adolescence, the authors go on to suggest that mental health in young people is more specifically indicated by the following:

- a capacity to enter into and sustain mutually satisfying personal relationships;
- a continuing progression of psychological development;
- an ability to play and to learn so that attainments are appropriate for age and intellectual level;
- a developing moral sense of right and wrong;
- a degree of psychological distress and mal-adapted behaviour being written within normal limits for the child's age and context.

Mental Health Problems

But while the majority of adolescents are getting along well enough, a sizeable number are not doing so well. These teenagers who, for one reason or another, are not coping so easily with the anxieties faced by their contemporaries. Various experiences may have rendered them especially vulnerable. Some may have experienced traumatic loss in early life as a result of parental death or separation; or overwhelming abuse or cruelty, either directly or indirectly, through living in situations of domestic violence. Others may have been bullied or subjected to racism at school and elsewhere - others may have gone through complicated relationships with parents - still others may have been born with particular temperamental pre-dispositions that have left them unusually vulnerable to stresses in life.

How these difficulties manifest themselves varies enormously. Some young people become very withdrawn, socially isolated, refusing to go to school; they may develop eating problems, or take refuge in substance misuse. Others may be more outgoing, more defiant and destructive. Most of these young people are not mentally ill, but they do have problems - mental health problems - arising from a combination of

genetic, developmental, family and social factors, problems that require a multi-disciplinary response.

The size of this problem is considerable, and is so easily underestimated if we do not keep in mind our definition of mental health. We know much more now about the prevalence of mental health problems in the young population. Most prevalence figures now indicate that around 20 per cent of all children have some kind of mental health problem. This amounts to approximately two million children under the age of 16 in England and Wales. About two per cent, that is about 40,000 children, have mental health problems that are severe enough as to be seriously disabling - problems which are persistent, extreme in the ways in which they present themselves, and which cause great distress to the young people themselves and to their families.

Implications for Services

The September issue of *Young People Now*, reviewing the Health of the Young Nation national conference in July, commented that Young Minds' definition of mental health could be 'almost a paraphrase of many youth services mission statements'. It was a gratifying observation, because it is important that in any consideration of the provision of services for children and young people, the definition of mental health which I outlined above should be borne constantly in mind.

First, the definition provides a context in which to understand and define the issues of mental health problems. Secondly, it indicates clearly that the mental health of young people, must be the concern of a wide range of people, and not just those who we traditionally regard as mental health professionals. That is to say, parents, friends, neighbours, as well as teachers, youth workers, health visitors, GPs and the mental health professionals, among others, all can, and indeed should, make a significant impact on the well-being of young people through directly and indirectly promoting their healthy mental and emotional development.

But a national review of mental health services for children and adolescents, commissioned by the Department of Health and published last year (*Services for the Mental Health of Children and Young People*, Kurtz, Thornes & Wolkind), found that services are generally unplanned and historically determined, that their distribution is patchy, that their work is variable in quality and composition, and that the work they do seems unrelated in strength or diversity to local need. The overriding impression is of very good practice in certain areas, inadequate or non-existent services in others, with no coherence to the overall provision throughout the country.

However, during the last three years there has been a succession of important advisory documents published by Government departments. A central focus of all those documents is on child and adolescent mental health services as a specialist multi-disciplinary core team of professionals operating from a central base, collaborating, liaising and consulting with other agencies in the field. This is in keeping with well-established practice and clearly needs to be cherished. But there is also a wider conception, a conception of a more comprehensive mental health service, one which moves beyond the confines of the core team and encompasses, as part of the overall service, a wide range of agencies, some of which do not have mental health as their principal remit.

This idea is a large and ambitious one. It seeks to address the complex and multifaceted nature of young people's mental health problems and the overriding need for

effective multi-agency, multi-professional collaboration. It is an idea that carries forward the agreed aims of child and adolescent mental health services to promote mental health amongst children and young people, as well as prevent and treat mental health problems. It also argues for a coherent framework which consists of different tiers of services, all ultimately concerned with the enhancement of the mental health of the young population.

The NHS Health Advisory Service's *Together We Stand* proposes a co-ordinated, tiered, strategic approach to the commissioning and delivery of services. This reflects the need to improve partnership and collaboration, the need to remove duplication and to ensure that no group of young people falls into a gap in provision. The report calls for more joint commissioning across agencies; the ownership and sharing of strategy and agenda for action by the chairs of agencies and their chief executive officers; collaboration at every level of service management and delivery within and across agencies; and close working relationships between practitioners of a wide variety of disciplines.

A particularly important theme considered by the reviewers in *Together We Stand* is the traditional way in which services are distributed according to the age of the users. The evidence, from the review team's visits and analysis of research, suggests that the time is now right for the creation of youth mental health services, offering assessment, care and intervention to older adolescents and young adults - services that are culturally sensitive and appropriate to the position in society of this group.

From Proposals to Practice

But while the key to the development of such proposals will be the willingness of agencies to enter into a joint enterprise with joint planning and joint commissioning, there are clearly major hurdles to overcome - not least in reaching agreement as to who drives such a comprehensive operation and who brings together the different agencies with their own agendas, ideologies and languages. In these times of accelerating change, limited resources and increasing mental health problems among young people, there is a clear need for all parties to look beyond their immediate interests and recognise the common objectives that all profess to share in the interests of children's mental health.

But, however valuable guidance from central Government departments may be, guidelines alone are unlikely to be enough. A creative and imaginative response from central Government could see the appointment of a children's co-ordinator in every local area. This could go a long way to providing a focal point of local expertise and advice, and ensure the development and monitoring of inter-agency collaboration, and the establishment of youth mental health services. A relatively modest amount of time-limited central government funding could be used to appoint co-ordinators and to stimulate the commissioning process into life. The establishment, too, of a small number of centrally-funded development pilot projects, projects that are well evaluated over a specified time, would be invaluable in demonstrating different models of work. The potential benefit is enormous.

Peter Wilson is Director of Young Minds, the children's mental health charity

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Short Cuts

Clyde Binfield
George Williams in Context
 Sheffield Academic Press 1994
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JOHN KNOX

Many words have been written about George Williams, the founder in 1844 of the YMCA. Most of these are statements of bare historical fact and some paint a picture of George Williams that make him look like someone approaching sainthood or at least superman status. Binfield, Chairman of the YMCA England and reader in History at the University of Sheffield, presents in this book four studies of George Williams. While the studies are described as 'affectionate portraits' Binfield does present a picture of Williams which is all the more valuable because of its honesty. He also assesses the social influences which had such influence on Williams and on the beginnings of the YMCA.

As three of the four papers were delivered as lectures at different times and in different places there is inevitably some repetition and overlap. Despite this the book is very readable, and an invaluable tool for anyone interested in getting to grips with the real George Williams.

The first paper 'Sir George Williams, Draper', takes us from his birth on 11 October 1821 in Somerset through to his death on 6 November 1905 in London. From that and the second paper 'A Personal Portrait' we get a clear picture of George Williams the man. His evangelical Christian faith comes through very clearly as does his concern for people and their social needs. We have a picture of a man pulsating with idealistic fervour and energy.

The portrait painted is seen for example in the picture of Williams in his old age as having 'a generous white beard... an elfin twinkling quality... a distinctive Williams grin... a very Victorian voice, at once full and light'. Yet Binfield is frank enough to state that 'as a public speaker he lapsed easily into incoherence, saved only by his transparent goodness'. In the studies we see in Williams a man of deep personal faith and conviction, vision, excitement, expectancy, single mindedness and determination.

In the third paper 'A Man in His Setting' the significance of his change of religious allegiance from the Congregational Church to the Anglican Church is emphasised. Binfield states that 'no voluntary cause could flourish in Victorian England without judicious patronage and whatever the Non-conformist contribution in zeal and personnel, only the Church of England could provide the patronage and sustain the necessary social, political and intellectual credibility. A national movement was a nonsense without the national Church'. Binfield states that 'if Williams had possessed all his sterling personal characteristics but had none the less been a Catholic shoemaker from Wexford or even a Cornish Bible-Christian shoemaker we would not now be commemorating him'.

The final paper 'Perspective and Crisis - the YMCA and its Setting' is of particular interest to those of us in the YMCA in Scotland. The work of Williams is set in the social context of the 19th Century at a time when the mould of politics was being broken as was the mould of Church politics in Scotland and in England. By the 1840s 'Scotland had already had a widespread, loosely organised young men's movement... Glasgow, the earliest, was founded in 1824 (by David Naismith); Paisley in 1832'. Binfield points out that the YMCA historian cannot ignore the prior existence of various young men's associations. The similarities of these movements to the YMCA are more striking than the differences. The problem of why we remember George Williams and not David Naismith, why we remember London and not Glasgow, why we remember 1844 and not 1842 is posed. Binfield says there is a dual answer 'Anglicanism and imperialism... no comprehensive voluntary movement could hope to survive without Anglican support'.

For those who simply want a bland statement of dates, times and places about George Williams this book has its usefulness. I specially commend it however to anyone who wants to get under the skin of the YMCA, the oldest youth organisation in the world. The picture of a Christian movement responding to contemporary needs is especially useful at a time when throughout the world the Movement is asking critical questions about its mission and purpose as we move towards a new millennium.

John Knox is National General Secretary of YMCA Scotland.

UK Agenda For Children

Children's Rights Development Unit

ISBN 1 898961 00X (pbk)

pp329

BOB FRANKLIN

Governments are understandably reluctant to discuss 'rights'. Such discussions are invariably critical of governments who may undermine the rights of individuals, as well as social groups by enacting legislation contrary to their particular interests or, conversely, by failing to act to protect the rights of citizens against some specific invasion; the subversion of a particular community's rights can be a consequence of the sin of commission as well as omission. Children's rights are no exception to this more general rule and the *UK Agenda For Children* catalogues the inconsistencies evident in government policies in this area. The book's claim that, 'there is a very clear dissonance between a professed commitment to children's welfare and the effective implementation of that commitment' (pxiii) offers a splendid euphemism for government hypocrisy. The *Agenda* is a damning

indictment of the British government's indifference to children's rights issues and its unwillingness to comply with the minimum rights requirements demanded of signatories of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The rather lengthy subtitle of the *Agenda* signals its broad aims and objectives: 'A systematic analysis of the extent to which law, policy and practice in the UK complies with the principles and standards contained in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child'. The *Agenda* offers a clearly structured, informative and authoritative account of the current state of children's rights in the British setting, cataloguing both current entitlements and highlighting areas for reform. It is simply an excellent document which is essential reading for anyone who works with children or who is interested in issues concerning children's rights.

The British government's hostility to the UN Convention is longstanding. When the Polish government initially suggested a Convention on Children's Rights in the International Year of the Child (1979), the British government rejected the idea as unnecessary. Britain eventually ratified the Convention in December 1991 but demanded the maximum three exemptions concerning the position of 16 year olds at work, young people and immigration legislation and the rights of young people placed in custody with adults. When governments have ratified the Convention, they are obliged to examine closely its implications for all aspects of law policy and practice concerning children, propose measures to guarantee compliance and make a full report to the appropriate UN Committee overseeing implementation of the Convention. But the Children's Rights Development Unit (CRDU), which coordinated the drafting of the *Agenda*, claims the UK's report to the UN Committee was 'complacent'. It was, moreover, 'dishonest by omission, highlighting particular laws and statistics that indicate compliance, without adequate recognition of gaps, inconsistencies and blatant breaches' (pxi). If the government had implemented the Convention fully, 'discrimination in children's access to basic social, economic, health and education rights would be openly acknowledged and actively challenged. There would be a new recognition that children's views must be heard and properly considered when decisions that affect them are made. Sadly none of this has happened' (pxi). Accordingly, the CRDU has felt the need to set the record straight by undertaking, 'with very few resources...the exercise which should be carried out by the government' (pxii).

The *Agenda* contains 14 substantive and authoritative reports each focusing on a particular area of children's rights. Each report was initially drafted by an organisation with a specialist knowledge of the area; Report 9 looking at Youth Justice, for example, was first drafted by NACRO. The CRDU then redrafted the papers following an extraordinarily extensive consultation with large numbers of interested and relevant organisations. The final *Agenda* offers a comprehensive account of children's rights in key areas of their lives. The fourteen reports include: Personal freedoms; Care of children; Physical and personal integrity; An adequate standard of living; Health and health care services; Environment; Education; Play and

leisure; Youth Justice; Child labour; Immigration and nationality; Children and violent conflict - Northern Ireland; Abduction; and International obligations to promote children's rights. Each report concludes with a concise summary and action points necessary to secure compliance with Convention requirements in the British setting. In combination, these reports constitute a goldmine of information packed with useful nuggets concerning existing laws, policies and practice relating to children and young people and their rights. The conclusion is all too depressing; 'it is clear that whether for reasons of poverty, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, immigration status or geography, many children are denied fundamental rights in the Convention' (pxiii).

But is not simply the content of the *Agenda* which impresses. The credibility and authority of the document derives from the process by which it was drafted which entailed consultation with Health Authorities and Trusts, local authorities, voluntary organisations, academics and professional associations in the four nation states of the UK; 1,000 questionnaires were distributed in England and Wales with additional mailings in Scotland and Northern Ireland. More significantly, the CRDU was determined that the *Agenda* should, 'be informed as fully as possible' by the experiences, feelings and opinions of children and young people. Consultation sessions with young people were established throughout the UK with groups ranging in age, 'from six to 18' and trying to reflect, 'the wide disparities in life experience of children in different circumstances' (pxv). Again, the summary finding of this exploration of young people's views about their rights makes predictably depressing reading: 'The theme which emerged from every group of children and young people consulted by CRDU was that they felt that adults did not listen to them, respect them, take them seriously or value what they had to say...there is a general feeling among young people that childhood is characterised by low status, little power and almost no control over the outcomes of their lives' (ppxiii-xiv). The CRDU synthesised this wealth of insights, experience and information, derived from their extensive survey supplemented by discussion and consultation groups, into the final report. This collective drafting process bestows substantial authority on the resulting *Agenda* document. Little wonder that more than 180 children's and young people's organisations from *A Voice for the Child In Care to Youthaid* are prepared to publicly endorse the *Agenda's* findings and proposals for action (ppxvi-xvii).

The CRDU's allegation that the government had failed to show 'any serious attempt at implementation' of the Convention, was endorsed by the highly critical and admonishing response of the UN Committee which received the British Government's first report on implementation in January 1995. The eight page UN Committee report has three paragraphs focusing on positive aspects of Britain's implementation of the Convention, with sixteen critical paragraphs and a further twenty three detailing recommendations for change. The report claimed that the British government breached the spirit of the Convention. The Convention provision that laws should be framed in the 'best interests of the child' appears not to be the case for sig-

nificant areas such as health, education and social security. The report criticised the high numbers of children living in poverty and expressed concern about numbers of teenage pregnancies, rising divorce rates, cuts in state benefits and the prevalence of children sleeping and begging on the street; building secure training units for young offenders would be in clear breach of the Convention. The UN recommended laws to proscribe the physical punishment of children in families or at privately funded schools. More broadly, the report argued for measures to end health inequalities between children from different social and ethnic backgrounds and to alleviate homelessness. In short the committee gave the government a bloody nose. The government seemed to believe that children's rights - always understood as rights to provision and protection rather than participation - was a problem which only developing countries needed to address. It appears to have been shocked by the UN Committee's response to its submission. Officials at the Department of Health have been given instructions not to attend meetings where children's rights will be discussed.

The *UK Agenda For Children* offers the government a concise, authoritative and detailed review of the position of children in contemporary Britain and the appropriate policy prescriptions necessary to meet the requirements of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Government could use this excellent overview to initiate discussion and inform policy around issues concerning children's rights. But intransigence and vindictiveness, the hallmarks of 'Majorism' as much as 'Thatcherism' have prevailed. The government has taken its bat home.

Bob Franklin teaches at the University of Sheffield.

Bob Franklin

Handbook of Children's Rights

Routledge 1995

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ISBN 0-415-11060-2 (pbk)

£40.00 (hbk)

£13.99 (pbk)

pp 248

PENNY TOWNSEND

The *Handbook of Children's Rights* is a study of children's rights and participation in a political context framed by the UN Convention. It aims to examine current and potential strategies for the political empowerment of children and young people.

In his introduction Franklin sets a gloomy picture of children's participation highlighting the high margins of children living in poverty demonstrating a lack of economic influence and due to the age of majority, children's equivalent lack of political power. Franklin argues that enshrining children's rights and participation is more the responsibility of policy makers than practitioners.

Basing the Handbook firmly around the UN Convention is a wholly appropriate place to start, as the Convention effectively documents the basic rights children are globally entitled to, regardless of any factor other than age. However the use of the UN Convention as the measure of children's Rights does lead to significant repetition by the contributors to the book as there is clearly a Global pattern of resources being targeted toward the protection of and provision for children rather than toward their democratic participation.

Part two of the Handbook assesses the values of rights and participation as already defined. Authors use examples of British services to young people, educational, welfare and judicial concluding that in many cases this is discretionary and geographically patchy. Part three examines the delivery of children's rights and methods of making rights widely known, accepted and implemented promoting examples of children's ombudsmen and ministers. This section also examines the specialist methods for implementing the rights of children to further marginalised groups such as disabled young people and young carers. Section four featuring international comparisons demonstrates the difficulties innate in attempting to implement international human rights legislation as social and legal perspectives and values differ greatly between each example.

The role of children in defining and implementing their rights is only briefly touched upon within the Handbook. A major element missing from the publication is the investigation and discussion of the 'grass roots' children's rights movement - where those under 18 are their own advocates. This is a vital area in both defining and implementing children's rights and has significant influence on the development of posts such as children's ministers, which are debated by the authors. An investigation into the democracy, constitutions and resources of children's lobby groups such as Youth Councils and Youth Fora would be a useful indicator to the implementation or otherwise of children's rights. These groups are particularly significant as unlike their adult counterparts children have few other opportunities for their voices to be heard therefore Children's councils and fora need to be more democratic and representative than the adult institutions they mirror. Where this is the case they are powerful advocates for children's rights but where ill supported can be at the level of using young people as tokens if judged by Arnsteins Ladder of participation. This gap in an otherwise comprehensive handbook leads to an incomplete picture of the practice of delivering children's rights although to be fair this is such a diverse topic as to deserve a book of its own and would swamp a concise and straightforward guide such as the Handbook of Children's Rights.

The Handbook is most effective when putting forward the case of why children's rights are significant and independent from those of adults and in arguing that all authorities and organisations need to be pro-active in this awareness through looking at the 'Child impact' of their policies and practice and through developing suggested mechanisms for promoting and responding to Children's rights. This book is an excellent up to date introduction for those wishing to advocate children's rights through an organisation or authority as it features the academic and practical arguments for the development of a coherent children's policy and practical examples of how others have gone about it.

Penny Townsend is Co-ordinator of Devon Youth Council

Susan Hutson and Mark Liddiard

Youth Homelessness. The Construction of a Social Issue

Macmillan Press, 1994

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ISBN 0-333-55056-0 (pbk)

£35.00 (hbk)

£10.00 (pbk)

pp 232

MOYRA RISEBOROUGH

This book provides a comprehensive discussion on the way that youth homelessness has been defined as a social problem. The book is very necessary since it provides just the sort of discussion that students in all social science disciplines should have before they engage in research. It is not concerned with examining the extent of youth homelessness although the authors Hutson and Liddiard demonstrate their knowledge on sources of information and on gaps in official/recorded statistics on the subject.

The book is divided into nine chapters. Chapters one to seven are thematically structured. I have chosen to comment in slightly more detail on five of the chapters in the book since they represent particularly good approaches in my view to the socially constructed nature of youth homelessness. Image, morality and child-saving messages are amongst the constructions that make this topic difficult to conceptualise. All of the messages need to be explored and these chapters begin to unravel them in a very satisfactory way accompanied with a display of newspaper photographs.

Chapter one deals with the context of homelessness amongst young people in the UK. It draws on historical as well as international comparisons to illustrate the diverse representations of youth homelessness as a social

problem. Chapter two discusses measurement and definitions. Chapter three looks at explanations of young homelessness and widely includes sections on the issues and approaches involved in the coinage of diverse explanations. Language and meanings are subtly explored in this chapter. Chapter four provides an excellent exposition on the depiction of young homelessness by the media. The image-making process and its effects are arranged around discussions providing evidence and analysis on the way that youth homelessness is depicted. Chapter eight provides conclusions and other examples on how social problems *become* problems.

For me chapter five is so fascinating that it could provide the basis for another book, since it examines the viewpoints of a number of agencies involved in assisting and representing young homeless people. The authors expose contradictions between the ethos of particular agency workers vis a vis their 'official' objectives and the categories/descriptions used to record details of young people. I would have liked further discussion on these issues particularly a comparative view between types of agencies and their ethos. However, it is good to see a critical discussion about helping agencies taking place. Consumer friendliness may be popular these days but its blandness obscures the fundamental existence of discrimination and lack of citizenship that characterise the lives of young homeless people.

My only criticisms with the book are that firstly it is too short and secondly that the comparative examples towards the end of the book on the construction of other issues, such as AIDS and domestic violence seem like an afterthought. As a result I think the authors try to draw the similarities too closely between the constructions of each issue. This overlooks the dissimilarities and the comparisons are weaker as a consequence.

I would recommend this book, particularly to housing research students and to other social science students undertaking original research.

Moyra Riseborough works for the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies at the University of Birmingham

Arnold P. Goldstein and Barry Glick
with Wilma Carthen and Douglas A. Blancero

The Prosocial Gang : Implementing Aggression Replacement Training.

Sage 1994

ISBN 0-8039-5771-8 (pbk)

£12.50

pp 120

Shirley R. Lal, Dhyana Lal and Charles M. Achilles

Handbook on Gangs in Schools : Strategies to Reduce Gang Related Activities.

Corwin Press 1993

ISBN 0-8039-6071-9 (pbk)

£12.50

pp 76

STEVE ROGOWSKI

These books, as their titles indicate, aim to provide guidance on how to deal with youth gangs. They are obviously for the U.S. market but nonetheless have something to say to those concerned about troublesome youth in the U.K. Both are readable, though the Americanisms grate at times, and they contain some useful hints and information.

'The Prosocial Gang' describes a gang intervention programme, aggression replacement training (ART), which is said to be successful in reducing crime when used with aggressive youth gangs in New York. ART aims to teach gang members anger control and other skills, thereby turning the gangs into prosocial rather than antisocial groups.

The book starts with an overview of work with youth gangs. The 1950s and 60s saw social workers as the 'gang-relevant professionals' using detached youth work methods, working with gangs using an array of counselling, vocational and recreational techniques aimed at value transformation. The police are seen as today's specialists because of the apparent failure of social work and the increase in gang violence. However, it is pointed out that the efficacy of social work is not known as detached youth work rarely took place - 50% of social work time was spent in the agency, 25% in travelling and only 25% with the gang amounting to five minutes per youth per week! The authors want to reassert the aim of value transformation using ART, moving gang members in more constructive directions and towards prosocial standards.

There is a brief history of gangs in the U.S., noting that gangs, which provide for example, camaraderie, pride, self-esteem, material gain, support and excitement, arise from factors such as poverty, discrimination, unemployment and poor education. Also covered is gang aggression and how it has increased since the 1950s, when gang fights involved such things as bats and bricks, to now when guns are often used, often ending in murder. This is followed with a look at the gang intervention strategies

employed ranging from detached youth work, to opportunities provision (improvements in schooling, employment and recreation) of the late 1960s and 1970s and the deterrence/incarceration programmes of the 1980s and 90s. Similar development of course, can be charted in the U.K. The authors argue that what is needed is a 'comprehensive model' incorporating detached youth work, opportunities provision and social control programming. The model involves three components : individual orientated interventions, i.e. ART - interpersonal skills training, anger control and moral reasoning; system orientated interventions focussing on, for example, the family, school and employment; and criminal justice intervention focussing on the police, prosecution and corrections.

ART draws on psychological skills training where gang members learn not only what they should do but why they should do it and how to control their antisocial behaviour. The background and procedures involved in implementing ART are covered along with an exploration of two areas of New York where ART has operated. This purports to show its effectiveness - skills are gained, anger is controlled and moral reasoning enhanced. Not least, re-arrests for crime are reduced with 15% of ART gang members reoffending compared with 43% of the control group. The book concludes by arguing that after all, working with gangs, aiming to change them into prosocial entities can and does work and should be the way forward.

The 'Handbook on Gangs in Schools' is a more basic, introductory text. It points out that gang activity is growing rapidly in the U.S. and that a radical approach is needed whereby gangs are assimilated into the fabric of daily school life by (i) offering acceptance of the gang and its members rather than rejection and punishment, (ii) involving gang members in positive activities that provide behavioural reinforcement for members and (iii) eliciting co-operation and encouraging participation. I suggest for many readers of this journal, this hardly amounts to a radical approach.

The handbook draws on two formal studies carried out between 1982-90 on school campuses in Los Angeles, as well as current literature and research (U.S.), interviews with former and present gang members, discussions with schools officials and from on-going and informal studies of gangs. It is emphasised that the problem of gang activity has to be recognised before any positive action can be taken. There is a discussion of gang characteristics, mentality, behaviours and activities, noting that there are three types of gang - social, delinquent and violent. In passing it also notes the increasing female presence in gangs.

As for what should actually be done in tackling school gangs, three chapters cover this though unfortunately they read a little like a procedures manual - developing a plan of action, creating a support team, forming goals and objectives, delineating tasks and planning on-going evaluation and programme modification. There is a 'step by step guide to organising the school personnel of the entire campus to deal directly with gangs and gang activity' together with a discussion of 'key issues' such as team approval, open communication, reorganisation of negative and positive gang behaviour, and parent and community involvement.

The obvious problem with these books is that they amount to guides for adjusting disaffected youth to an economic, political and social system that lies at the root of the problem. Goldstein et al do refer to 'social and economic structures' and 'of poverty itself' needing to be addressed rather than the 'behaviour of gangs and individual youths' needing to change, but this is only in passing. To my mind, it is only when one has a more just and equal society, where poverty, unemployment and other social problems are alleviated, that youth gangs can be eradicated.

To conclude, although I cannot really recommend anyone to buy these books they are worth a read.

Steve Rogowski, *Social Worker (Children and families) with a local authority in the North West of England.*

Mary McKeone RSCJ

Wasting Time in School, Secondary School Chaplaincy, A story and a handbook

St. Pauls 1993

ISBN 085439 461 3

£4.95

pp 118

JOHN ELLIS

From the outset the subject of this book surprised and fascinated me. I had, of course, heard of school chaplains; but always in connection with some exotic public school. Here was a book about a young woman who had worked as a chaplain in a number of comprehensive schools. I suppose I was trying to fit together in my head the concept of chaplain alongside the comprehensive schools with which I was familiar and the two did not seem to fit comfortably together. As I began to read however I discovered myself in a setting very distinct from my own experience of secondary education. Mary McKeone is in fact a nun - a sister of the Society of the Sacred Heart and the schools in which she worked were Catholic secondary schools. This in effect changes the whole setting. As you read you realise that there is an assumption on the part of the staff and the pupils of an all-embracing spiritual ethos light years away from that of the secular soulless comprehensives with which I guess most youth workers are more familiar. Mary describes her initial approach to getting alongside staff and pupils. Here I think is the source of the book's title 'Wasting Time in School'. For Mary found that the most effective method of making contact was to employ the well tried and tested youth worker's skill of being around and observing. She then describes the many forms of spiritual life in which she became

involved. These include prayer groups, celebrations marking the major events of the christian year, assemblies (but not as we know them), retreats for both pupils and staff and, for good value - an all night prayer vigil. In no way could these be described as familiar youth work settings!

There was, however, one point at which the very catholic setting of the book touched an aspect of life that could apply right across the board. Mary describes how at the time of the Gulf War she was able to set up a silent vigil in the school. Young people were able to come in, light a candle for a loved one involved in the conflict, and sit in the stillness for as long as they wished. I found myself wondering how our secular comprehensives could give expression to these deeply felt emotions at times of crisis. Indeed the whole book raises the question of how one might introduce spirituality into the all pervading secular humanism of our comprehensive system. Certainly the present government's wooden insistence on daily assemblies would seem to be just about the least effective method!

The book is really a collection of brief recordings - hence its description as a story. These describe the development of the ideas which arose from Mary's own thinking. Alongside these are set ideas which sprang from the young people themselves. I found these stories rather unsatisfactory. This is partly because they invariably describe what went well. I would have liked to read also of some disasters! My youth work instincts tell me that there will have been many. I would also have liked to know more about the numbers of young people involved in the various programmes. How did this compare with the numbers of young people in the schools? Was Mary's work confined to those who were already devout catholics? All this information was missing and made it difficult to judge the overall effectiveness of the approaches described.

For example one incident caught my imagination. Mary describes how a great deal of planning and thought went into a particular retreat. When Mary arrived she was faced with two self-contained groups. One she describes as 'a pious prayer group' while the other was made up of 'punks'. We all know the sinking feeling when you realise that your assumptions about a particular group of young people turn out to be very wide of the mark. Her fellow workers panicked but not Mary. She records an excellent and imaginative piece of work which succeeded in drawing the two disparate groups together. At the end of the retreat they were a cohesive group of young people who had become friends. It is a pity that we are not allowed to see more of this kind of experience.

I suppose I was beginning to get a little irritated with the seemingly endless string of brief cameos when quite unexpectedly the book moved into very deep waters. In chapter six 'Shadow on the Wall' Mary suddenly reveals that she has been fighting her own personal battle with cancer. She uses this to open up a discussion of the worker's role in relation to young people who are terminally ill. I cannot remember ever having come across a discussion of this in any youth work literature and yet I expect many workers have struggled to know how to deal with this. I

have worked with a number of young people over the years who have died. I found her sensitive treatment of the subject extremely helpful. While, of course, she discusses the issue from a christian perspective, her words of wisdom would be of help to workers whatever their worldview. In particular I found extremely helpful her discussion of how to avoid the trap of becoming immersed in the emotional situation. I suppose this book with its strong catholic setting might have limited appeal, but I believe it is well worth a place in any youth worker's library for this chapter alone.

John Ellis is a youth and community worker who manages the Shalom Youth Project in Grimsby. He is also an Anglican priest.

Frank Reeves

The Modernity of Further Education

Bilston College Publications in association with Education Now

ISBN 1 871526 17 5

£10 (pbk)

pp 110

SUE HARLEY

This book represents an attempt to apply the concept of modernity to further education, with the expressed aim of enabling college staff and others to make sense of today's turmoil in further education. It is the first of two books about further education in the 90s, presenting an analysis of the current state of affairs. The second volume, not yet published promises to suggest modifications for the future and, presumably to sound a note of optimism. The author is a deputy principal in a further education college who describes his working life in the terms of the 17th century philosopher Thomas Hobbes as 'solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short'.

The current changes in further education are seen as part of a broader process of social change affecting a wide range of institutions. These are underpinned by the impressive sociological concepts of Giddens, Bell, Gorz and Habermas together with those of Fordism, post-Fordism and post-modernism. This may sound a daunting prospect, especially if the reader is unfamiliar with sociological perspectives, but the subsequent chapters are much more accessible to the layperson.

The book goes on to provide a clear and all too recognisable account of the current state of affairs in colleges. It begins with the notion that further education is expected to play a central role in developing the national economy to meet the increasing need for a knowledge based

society. To do this, the sector's function has been clarified and redefined in terms of 'stark instrumentality'. It has been legally reconstructed through the 1992 FHE Act, to form a purposeful national system. The Act defined the kind of further education programmes which are legitimate (in its notorious Schedule 2) and set up the new and now familiar funding arrangements.

In the future, colleges will increasingly provide occupational preparation and training for peripheral workers particularly in service industries, whilst higher levels of education and training will be provided by education and business. For people outside of work, the 'achievement ideology' will provide the incentive to seek further education as a way to join or rejoin the workforce. For yet other groups, the 'therapeutic' function of further education will provide social and personal development.

Some alternative visions of further education are presented, providing some relief from the reality of this instrumentalism. Colleges could, for example, be encouraged to provide lifelong learning for its own sake. A further vision is that of the 'learning community', with the college at the hub of a new reflexive learning culture involving large sections of the population.

But back to stark reality. There is a newly developing uniformity between colleges, based on the requirements of the funding methodology. This renders decision making a tedious endorsement of various value-for-money exercises. Colleges have been put into an economic strait-jacket and are embedding expert systems adopted from other contexts. Within this business culture, employees are expected to conform to overarching corporate values, a conformity which conflicts with their traditional professional values.

Colleges have also undergone a process of rationality, a central feature of modernity, in both their processes and structures. The processes of rationality involve adopting both the language and practices of accounting and cost-economics. In doing this, all manner of formerly taken-for-granted college practices are now analysed, costed, reviewed and readjusted in a reflexivity of action which enables organisations to transform themselves in rapidly changing situations.

Colleges have to cope with their increases in size and complexity whilst allowing a rapid response to changing demands. As value for money is now paramount in terms of lecturers teaching loads, curriculum delivery and the transfer of jobs formerly undertaken by local authorities, everything must be managed. To do this, both management and managers have emerged in large quantity. They work by planning, setting objectives and everything is audited.

Further education has become a commodity in which individual college service elements are being costed at lower and lower levels within the structure, then compared with costs within and outside the organisation. There is some doubt, though, whether the customer is the student or the

state. One view is that through further education funding, the state is buying suitably qualified skilled labour to assist in the modernisation of the economy.

This can be seen either as a mass product or an exclusive service which is regarded as something unique in the experience of the individual student. If, however, education is viewed as knowledge, then it acquires an unlimited property entirely different from and beyond that of a mass-produced commodity. By using modern information technology, knowledge would be decommodified almost to the point of being free, and the use of this modern technology is proceeding apace within the sector.

The structures of rationality imply the demise of traditional departmentalism to more flexible college-wide approaches such as matrix systems of management. There has been a reduction in the ratio of lecturers to other staff. Staff have increasing specialisms and administrators take on more significant roles.

However, purchaser-provider models have been applied and colleges now have the appearance of business organisations. The idea of Fordism, taken from the example set by Henry Ford the car manufacturer, has been adopted. This is the mass production model of business which involves 'the planned, orderly and continuous progression of the commodity through the shop, the delivery to work instead of leaving it to the workman's initiative to find it, and an analysis of operations into their constituent parts'. Into this model fits very nicely the notion of measuring the competency of skills broken down into their constituent parts. Not only this, but also the concept of modularisation involving the analysis of courses into their component parts, relating them to an overall framework of education and training. Standardisation and timed throughputs with management intervention to ensure conformity, are also part of this scenario.

Looking outwards from the college, the alienation of college from community can be seen. Further education has become a juggernaut, which is able to crush resistance and block out alternative lines of vision. The author asks where the crisis of rationality will come from. Not from within or from business, he suggests. It could possibly come from those who contest the efficiency of trying to develop specialist skills in a workforce possessing comparatively low levels of general education. However, there is a general tendency towards 'closure' because there is no constant questioning of either performance indicators or the efficiency measures of accountants. In fact, they will create their own logic based on their own measures.

So, there is now no control of colleges by the community because there is no democratic accountability of colleges to their communities. Colleges were formerly part of a third sector of education, which in turn formed part of a broader system of local education. The local authority concept of providing further education for any citizen who wished to participate has been replaced by a government decision only to spend

money on education and training for the workforce. The qualification system now dominates and there is no account taken of the pleasure principle of learning.

This analysis of the present state of affairs does illuminate, for the liberal adult educator or youth worker, the prevailing climate in further education and beyond. It is difficult to see any optimism for the future when presented with this somewhat deterministic and inevitable perspective which matches the rather pessimistic predictions of the post-modernists. This book also provides an interesting attempt to relate sociological concepts to further education, to take a long view of the situation and subsequently gain a broad perspective.

It finishes, however, on a more optimistic note, suggesting that the 'unaccountable juggernaut' of further education is not an inevitable state of affairs and should be transformed into a system that is democratic and accountable to both individuals and their communities. I await the next book with hope and interest.

Sue Harley is Programme Director for Adult Continuing Education at Gateshead College, Tyne and Wear.

Edited by George Howard and Peter Nathan

Alcohol Use and Misuse By Young Adults

University of Notre Dame Press 1994

ISBN 0 268 00641 5

pp 198

WILLIAM CLEMMY

I picked up the book with enthusiasm. I hoped it would give an in depth analysis of current theory and practice of alcohol education and treatment with young people that could be applied in youth clubs. However, I soon realised it was a book that 'raises crucial issues regarding alcohol use and abuse among college-aged adults' and American ones at that. I wondered if it could be applied to university and college life in this country. Having read it I feel that the book has little of relevance to the situation in the United Kingdom.

The major difference is that in the United States drinking alcohol under the age of 21 is illegal. So whereas we have student bars with students running them, in the States they cannot legally serve anyone under 21. That immediately gives the colleges a problem of illegal alcohol consumption and consequent over indulgence which they then set up programmes

to redress. I could not help wondering whether if the legal age was brought down to eighteen then at least some of the problems would disappear. But not one of the contributors explores this option.

There are other striking cultural differences. At Brown University part of their policy includes mailing first year students prior to arrival with information on the college's drugs policy. Nothing unusual there. They also remind parents of the institutional expectations and social norms that their children will be expected to conform to. I thought this was paternalistic and protective. Then finally 'This message is reinforced at Orientation meetings and on Parents Weekend' (page 175). What an amazing concept, having your parents up to college to be lectured about your behaviour. They must be on a different planet. This was reinforced for me when it came to Rutgers University's model campus alcohol programme. Can you seriously see any student in Britain abiding by a rule that states that 'all parties must be registered with the university. Parties must be by invitation only, with a maximum of three guests per member of the group giving the party' (page 193). It's unbelievable, and they wonder why they have problems with alcohol use when their liberal policy is so restrictive.

The cover promises 'to present the material in such a way as to maximise its accessibility and usefulness'. It is accessible but I doubt its usefulness to youth workers or even for research psychologists in this country due to its heavy American bias.

Whilst parts of the book were an intellectual challenge presenting new concepts and ideas, other sections were dull and boring or seemed to ignore the core age group. Any subject area has its own jargon but I found that in some chapters initials were dropped onto the pages in the hope that they would enhance the text - SECs, PBAL were explained (standard ethanol consumption units and peak blood alcohol level) but the table, showing % of ETOH consumed, had me flummoxed. The content varies from story telling about the setting up of Alcoholics Anonymous to a theoretical formula of alcohol consumption patterns.

The more I read the less I liked the underlying judgemental stance that was being taken. It was a pity that only one contributor, Jean Kinney, challenges the language used in discussing alcohol use and alcohol problems. She argues that moralistic overtones are dysfunctional when it comes to health education and treatment.

'For example the title of this volume speaks about alcohol use and misuse. "Misuse" to me connotes finger wagging, the clear implication being misbehaviour and "bad"....Why use charged language when there is more neutral language available?...the implications of using alcoholic as a noun (are that) The individual is reduced to nothing more than his or her disease.' page 159.

One approach to alcohol dependence is that 'It is a genetically influenced biological illness rather than a character or psychological problem' (page 25). The chapter backs this up with quotations ranging from Aristotle 'drunken

women bring forth drunken children like themselves' to research into the levels of tetrahydroisoquinolines in the brain formed as the result of the metabolism of alcohol. My dinner party conversation will now be enhanced by the knowledge that there really are 'brain waves'. The 'Event Related Potential' P3 brain wave once thought to be the result of brain damage from alcohol consumption was found to be present in the sons of alcoholics who had never drunk, yet absent in a matched group of non alcoholics. Such analysis leads to the conclusion that children of alcoholics are at greater risk of becoming alcohol dependent. The chapter ends with a plea that the entire population should be made aware of this 'genetic risk'. Yet it points out that 'in approximately 50% of medical schools today it is possible to graduate without knowing anything about alcoholism - the third leading killer in the United States.' (page 37). I think that the subject should certainly be included in youth work courses. We could then be proactive in health education with the children of those with 'high risk alcohol use patterns'.

The first half of the chapter on 'Motivating Young Adults for Treatment and Lifestyle Change' by Miller and Sanchez should be read by all youth workers. 'Motivation is not a trait but rather a process'. It talks of the four stages of change - pre contemplation, contemplation, determination and action. This useful theory could be used for bringing about any change whether it be for drugs, smoking or a management committee. Another theory of change is summed up by the acronym FRAMES: Feedback; Responsibility; Advice; Menu; Empathy and Self Efficacy. The person is enabled to take control of the change.

So my advice is take out the book from your library, read the above chapter and then place it back on the shelf.

William Clemmey is the Executive Director of the Warwickshire Association of Youth Clubs.

Susan Halelgrove (ed)

The Student Experience

The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open

University Press 1994

ISBN 0 335 19358 7

£40.00 (hbk)

£15.99 (pbk)

pp 186

M. RUTH HAMILTON

This book incorporates the broad range of issues you would expect to find in a text examining the new mass higher education system, including interesting chapters on discrimination, further/higher education partnerships and accelerated degrees. They are divided into four sections, the first three reflecting the stages of higher education - *Getting In*, *Being There* and *Moving On*. The last section offers a glimpse into the foreseeable future. Overall I found it a stimulating and informative read but in particular would make the following comments.

Chapter 1 introduces the book and describes how higher education has historically concentrated on the learning role of students ignoring other vital aspects of student life which contribute to the totality of the higher education experience. With that acknowledgement in mind, the book fails to live up to the promise of a complete picture omitting in particular, the area of sexual relations in higher education, surely a very significant part of life for a large proportion of students. Not only does this involve consensual relationships but the disturbing issues of harassment and violence that students experience in their relationships with other students and with members of staff (L Kelly, P Carter and T Jeffs). This area has been largely neglected by higher education institutions (HEI) in this country compared to the proactive schemes integral to higher education in the USA, such as at Antioch University.

Application Procedures to Higher Education, Chapter 2, looks at solutions to the current unrealistic expectations of the UCCA and PCAS procedures. A more in depth discussion of the role of schools and colleges in preparing students for higher education would have been interesting here given the impact this has on their subsequent experience. Earlier research by the author, and D Roberts, found that the course and careers advice in schools and colleges was often very poor and that 'A' level course content lacked the skills and methods necessary for a smooth transition to higher education. Moreover the information provided by HEI was inadequate, ill preparing students for what lay ahead. Consequently 28% of higher education students in their third year regretted their choice of course and 10% of admissions left in their first year, phenomena that the author decries as a waste of human and financial resources.

Chapters 6 and 7 address the more practical concerns of students - financial support and student accommodation. The former outlines the radical

reductions in the support package during the 1980s and 90s replacing state dependency with privatised dependency in the form of credit. Pauperisation has resulted with student incomes falling below state benefit levels forcing students into term-time employment thereby sacrificing academic performance in order to survive mounting debts - a situation which will only worsen. Pilkington examines the factors contributing to poverty but a few personal accounts of students would have provided interesting first hand evidence of the related problems in areas such as diet, health, stress, drugs etc. Similarly this approach would have been useful in the chapter on student accommodation which examines the changes in university accommodation provision. A further development in this area, not mentioned by the author, is universities renting public sector houses and sub-letting them to students enabling them to demand certain standards, often dangerously lacking in the public sector, in exchange for guaranteed rents.

The central issue of student satisfaction is addressed in Chapter 10 which describes the holistic methodology developed at the University of Central England for assessing quality as perceived by students themselves. The resulting democratic dialogue produces priorities that can be used to focus management, but is not welcomed by all - 'The notion of the student as a customer goes against the grain for many academics who are reluctant to empower a group traditionally treated as the passive recipients of education' (p 105). However, if adopted by more HEI this long overdue approach could prove very productive for all concerned, especially given the rapid expansion of higher education and the threat to the quality of students' learning experience.

Chapter 11 examines the first ethics and values audit which asked, at every level of the organisation, the question 'Do we practice what we preach?'. Henry briefly discusses the values and principles which should underpin policy and practice within HEI recognizing the courage that is required in implementation. It is perhaps a sad but necessary indictment of the authoritarian style of management so evident in the public sector today that the first principle of 'respect for persons' (implicit in which is their rights and freedom) needs to be made explicit. The author also highlights the worrying absence of ethics programmes on vocational courses and the enriching and realistic recommendations of the Student Charter (1992) including learner agreements and semesterisation.

Chapter 13, *The Application of Enterprise Skills in the Workplace*, compares the importance placed on personal skills by graduates, from the University of Ulster, with that of their main employers. But how relevant are enterprise skills at a time of changing graduate employment? Rather it seems all the more important to emphasize the experience of higher education as fulfilling in its own right. In fact there was a disappointing lack of debate in this chapter about educational methods acceding to the market and subordinating education and its purpose of developing cognitive processes. Another dimension to this issue which was not considered at

all was the wealth of resources that students bring to higher education and the opportunity that universities have to utilize these with student led programmes, a long standing and intrinsic practice in HEI in the USA.

Chapter 14, *Research Students' Perspectives*, seemed more alive than other chapters. In it Salmon discusses the ambiguous academic status of research students which, she argues, is particularly disempowering for mature students. The power dynamics she identifies between student and supervisor could have been usefully applied elsewhere in the book to highlight the reality of higher education relations for students.

Notwithstanding its shortfalls this book remains a useful introduction to the range of areas that comprise higher education, and the impact upon it of current political thinking.

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M. Ruth Hamilton, Research Assistant, University of Northumbria.

Harry Christian

The Making of Anti-Sexist Men

Routledge 1994

ISBN 0-415-09762-2

£9.95 (pbk)

pp 199

GARY COURTNEY MCGHEE

One of the latest in Routledge's overall rather inaccessible 'Male Orders' series, this is a refreshingly clear and useful qualitative contribution to a very neglected area of enquiry. That is the life histories and experiences of a group of 30 men chosen specifically because their commitment to living anti-sexist lives and facing up to 'issues concerning masculine-gendered activities and how those need to be changed in modern conditions'. The sample is relatively small precisely because this book is a successful attempt to offer intensive and rich data pertaining to the personal experiences and relationships of these men. The key theme is to explore the factors, in the men's own words, which have led to them developing anti-sexist, pro-feminist and anti-heterosexist attitudes and behaviours. The men were chosen for the research because they were or had been involved in anti-sexist men's groups, ensuring that their perspectives were

grounded in a commitment to developing in anti-sexist ways. The only structure was a series of two or three interviews with reference to a thorough and well thought-out checklist of questions. It is apparent from reading the men's accounts that this was done flexibly allowing them to explore their histories and subjectivities, as well as describe them. There is a good mix of men from manual/non-manual backgrounds and a wide age-range (21 to 54). Interestingly most of these men have gone on to favour careers in non-manual professions, thereby avoiding manual jobs which are usually all-male environments. However two weaknesses with this sample are that they are all white and only 4 are gay/bisexual. Although this is offset by the reality that few gay men join anti-sexist men's groups it does limit the research both in terms of fully contrasting differences and similarities of experience of men with differing sexualities.

I found that many of these accounts resonated strongly with my own experiences. They affirmed, for example, how my own strong preference for spending more time with girls/women when I was growing up has contributed to the development of my own anti-sexist outlook/practice, and was in itself a healthy and positive way to be a boy/young man.

The key factors which emerge in engendering this outlook are; non-identification with traditional (patriarchal) fathers or identification with nurturing fathers; experience of strong mothers, usually involved in paid work and parents who did not conform to conventional gender domestic roles; the influence of elder sister(s) or elder brother(s) and childhood friendships with girls, or with both sexes in situations where gender was de-emphasised. The overwhelming sense derived from the accounts relating to traditional fathers is that they were 'absent' as in emotionally unavailable, and that they were experienced as not good role models. What contrasts strongly with this is the fact that the positive, influential factors outlined above go against the grain of what is considered normal, healthy and conventional attitudes and behaviours. An overall conclusion to be drawn is that a traditional upbringing tends to engender negative attitudes towards women and men who do not conform to the masculine script, as well as negative intra-familial relationships.

So what use might these findings have for male youth workers? For those men already engaged in developing an anti-sexist, pro-feminist and anti-heterosexist practice this book makes affirming and valuable reading. For those men not fortunate enough to have had nurturing fathers or positive relationships with women the evidence provides accounts of a wealth of alternative ways for men of growing and developing as men who are comfortable with themselves, without having to buy into an over-masculinised and (self-) oppressive male identity.

Five overall messages leap out of these pages at me; anti-sexist men's relative alienation from 'traditional' chauvinistic men, their dissatisfaction with what goes on in most all-male environments, brutalisation is part of most men's experience of other men when they are growing up, and how much conventional masculinities are tied up with rejecting women

and gay/bisexual men as equal. Most important is the evidence that men can and do change in very positive ways and there's nothing inherent or biological about being misogynistic, anti-feminine, heterosexist or homophobic. Contradicting these patterns and presenting to young men and boys more positive attitudes and ways of being men is or should be an overriding priority for male practitioners.

This book is therefore important reading. It offers an accessible analysis of basic theoretical, political and philosophical issues, which contextualise the men's stories reasonably well. The book will be particularly useful to those coming new to this area.

Gary Courtney McGhee (M.Ed), *Student counsellor and writer.*

M. Elliott (ed)

Female Sexual Abuse of Children: The Ultimate Taboo

Longman 1993

ISBN 0-582-21497-1

£14.95

PAM CARTER

Apart from wondering just how many ultimate taboos still await us my main feeling when I began reading this book was one of extreme uneasiness. The claim on the back cover that female sexual abuse has been denied because 'it does not fit the received wisdom that sexual abuse is a product of male power and aggression' suggested a clear intention to dismiss important feminist work on sexual abuse rather than to build on it and enhance it.

Although the book provoked me into thinking further about sexual abuse and acknowledging the reality of women as abusers, in many respects my initial trepidation proved to be warranted. The book represents all the worst faults of an edited collection. The chapters are of very varied quality, some repeating or contradicting what has been said in others. There is no overall analysis and no coherent theoretical themes are pursued. The apparently random order of the chapters compounds this difficulty. It would have been useful to place those chapters which try to provide a conceptual framework at the beginning. Instead, following a brief chapter written by the editor on the experiences of some survivors, the second more substantive chapter addresses treatment issues. Putting these sometimes complex clinical issues so early in the book, and before any broader analysis is attempted, suggests that the book is intended for the already knowledgeable professional. Other chapters appear to be aimed at a lay audience. This mixture

does not always work well. In the first section of the book, called 'Professionals', there are two chapters which offer a broader attempt at analysis. One by Olive Wolfers addresses issues of violence, power and powerlessness and could usefully have been developed as an introductory chapter. As it stands it is short and a rather odd mixture of broader analysis and specific and somewhat speculative clinical issues. Extensive feminist work on power and violence is not used at all. Instead the feminist brief has been given to Val Young. Her's is a strange and deeply disappointing chapter. Young's version of feminism is highly individualistic and demonstrates no real understanding of gender inequality and discrimination:

Apologist theories are out of date, and self-responsibility is the issue of the 1990s in every area of life, whether it is saving the planet, personal growth, recovery from addiction, or buying a pension plan (p.118).

Perhaps after this revelation the reader will not be surprised to learn that Young demonstrates no understanding of feminist argument, scholarship or research. This chapter also has no references so we do not even know the models for her straw feminists. The lack of references is most frustrating when we read of 'one of the most important books of the decade' (p.116) without being told what it is! Her declaration that 'when dealing with child sexual abuse, there is little value in theories, academic studies, or statistics' (p.117) is extremely worrying. Although she uses feminist arguments about the dominance of male knowledge to justify this she ignores all of the different kinds of knowledge developed through feminist endeavour, both research and activism. Clearly it is correct that sexual abuse by female perpetrators poses difficult questions for feminists. But there are many feminists who recognise the complexity of power and the multiple forms of oppression cutting across, age, class, 'race' and so on. Feminists have tackled each other in all sorts of ways about the ways in which they can and do oppress one another. Although these debates have frequently necessitated conflictual encounters they have on the whole led to more thorough and thoughtful versions of feminism. So most feminists recognise that women are not all good. At least one well known feminist writer on male sexual violence, Liz Kelly, has begun to tackle female sexual abusers¹. Other writers on sexual abuse such as Judith Ennew² have pointed out the tendency within feminist writing to consider gender as the only form of inequality rather than recognising the significance of the powerlessness of children, not to mention other dynamics such as wealth and poverty, 'race' and so on. These writers are not mentioned here. It would have been entirely possible to use this book to enhance and develop feminist work albeit in a critical way rather than using it as one more opportunity to knock feminism.

Sexual abuse and sexual violence do result from a complex web of inequalities and abuses of power. An introductory chapter exploring this would have made all the difference to this book. As it is the many important arguments raised in chapters such as those by Mathews and Eldridge

get lost in the analytical vacuum. I did learn something from these chapters about what might be going on when women sexually abuse children but I was offered these only as clinical insights which needed to be taken further if we are to have a deeper understanding. It seems amazing that the powerlessness of children and the context of ageism were not the central themes of the whole text.

The second section was called 'Survivors' and left me even more disturbed than the absences and contradictions of the first section. This part of the book is made up of story after story of survivors' experiences, one set concerning female survivors and the second set male. Once again the lack of any analysis or general discussion from the editor left me wondering quite what the point of 92 pages of such accounts was. The stories were extremely uncomfortable to read. Of course part of this discomfort may arise from a wish not to know, so bleak are some of these tales. But I think they were disturbing because of the absence of any attempt at commentary or theoretical development. They were presented as if they were simply truth. Now I don't for a minute disbelieve them. But many were products of therapeutic encounters and this influenced the presentation and message. I'm not suggesting 'false memory' here rather that all experiences are mediated in some way by the kinds of meanings which are ascribed to them and I would have preferred overt conceptual analysis to more disguised therapy talk. Overall the sheer volume of explicit sexual language begins to sound pornographic. Each person's experience is valid and important but greater thought could have gone into what argument they were meant to support.

Overall this book is a missed opportunity. An approach which built on feminist insights rather than starting from an attempt to discredit them would have been much more fruitful.

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Ira M. Schwartz and William H. Barton (editors)
Reforming Juvenile Detention : No More Hidden Closets
 Ohio State University Press 1994
 ISBN 0-8142-0635-2
 £39.95 (hbk)
 pp 199

DEBORAH MARSHALL

Despite the rather inelegant and tautological subtitle - aren't closets always hidden? - this book is quite a useful collection of articles spanning policy, research and practice on the subject of juvenile detention. Because this is an American book the reader needs to get to grips with the different context and terminology. For Juvenile Detention read Local Authority secure accommodation. In America, Juvenile Detention Centres replaced remands in custody to adult prisons for young people, following what is described as the juvenile justice reforms of the 1970s.

The term 'hidden closet' is attributed to Patricia Wald (1975) who described juvenile detention as the 'hidden closet for the skeletons of the rest of the system.'

This then is the main theme of the book: Despite the apparent improvement wrought by the reforms of the 1970s, conditions for young people in juvenile detention centres are frequently very poor and overcrowded and many, it is argued convincingly, are inappropriately remanded.

In the introduction, Barton and Schwartz summarise the main thesis:

The basic approach is simple : reserve detention for those who pose a truly high risk to public safety, develop ways to accurately assess the degree of risk an individual juvenile presents; develop less costly and less restrictive alternatives for the lower-risk youths; and closely monitor and evaluate the new detention practices and policies.

Despite the American context therefore this book is timely because current criminal justice ideas in this country can invariably be traced back to America: Boot Camps and Electronic Tagging. We know that section 60 of the 1991 Criminal Justice Act (not implemented yet) abolishes penal remands for fifteen and sixteen year olds and replaces this with a court power to remand to secure accommodation. There is an official commitment to expand secure units by 170 places, as well as opening it up to the private sector, and until this expansion takes place, section 60 remains unimplemented.

It is always assumed that Local Authority care is more benign; a number of the articles in this book remind us this is a dangerous assumption. Again, in this country it is not difficult to find parallels. Think briefly and recall the scandals of pindown and Aycliffe.

So those working directly with young offenders, either in the community or in institutions, those training to do so, and perhaps more importantly,

policy makers and tabloid journalists, would do well to read this book so that we don't repeat American mistakes. Regrettably, there is little evidence of rational debate on the subject of youth crime, which is an issue prone to moral panics and knee-jerk punitive responses as evidenced by the public clamour in this country for more secure accommodation. Rachel Hodgkin (Guardian 24.5.95) reminds us that: 'This demand redoubled amid the moral panic fuelled by the murder of James Bulger, lurid cases of persistent young offenders, and alarming television coverage of balaclava-clad car thieves challenging police to speed chases.'

Interestingly, a recent survey undertaken by the National Children's Bureau on the subject of whether more secure places are needed produced some surprising data that is supported by experience in America, as described in this book. The survey presents a snapshot of all the children locked up in secure units on 31st March 1994 - 193 in total. Chief among the findings was the surprising assessment from secure unit managers that 60 of these 193 children did not, in their opinion, require secure conditions. As Rachel Hodgkin observes however, these 60 children were not necessarily safe to be 'let out'; sadly alternatives often do not exist, largely because much needed money is drained away to fund expensive secure accommodations. This is unsurprisingly mirrored in the American context. Florida allocated 40% of its budget for delinquency programmes to the operation of detention.

Further, there is a real danger that an expansion of secure accommodation will quickly fill with children who do not really need to be there, as the NCB survey findings suggest would be the case. This will not be because youth crime has increased. In chapter 2 of this book, Martin's historical analysis of detention practices in Cuyahoga County Ohio shows that the number of youths in detention is primarily a function of policy decisions, independent of demographic and crime statistics. This is a critical finding. The various articles are packed with good information, strategies and techniques to control secure juvenile detention, which can be broadly grouped into three areas:

1. The development of intake criteria and procedures to limit admissions to secure detention.
2. The creation of less restrictive alternatives.
3. Case monitoring procedures that ensure youths are moved out of secure accommodation as soon as possible.

But unless these changes are accompanied by *political will*, they will not achieve the desired outcome. Florida is a case in point. In 1980 sweeping legislative reforms cut secure detention by 20% *without* increasing threats to public safety. Despite this success, these policies were overturned and detention rates rose immediately, despite the fact there were no marked changes in Florida's youth population or rate of juvenile arrests.

In America, both consensus and conflict strategies have been used to influence political will and bring about detention reforms; there are advantages and disadvantages inherent in both strategies. In chapter 3 the San Francisco experience is described by Stanhart. Here, following the

suicide of a youth in the juvenile hall in 1986, San Francisco hired Jefferson Associates to draft a new juvenile justice plan for the city, which concluded that only half the number of secure places would be needed if less restrictive and less costly alternatives were developed and objective detention criteria adopted. The recommendations were adopted and became official policy and, lo and behold, detention rates dropped.

The context of the Broward County Detention Project, described in chapter 4 by Barton, Schwartz and Orlando, was a lawsuit. The two-year project did reduce juvenile detention and a fledgling network of alternative provision was in place, but the authors conclude that 'gains can be fragile'. Legislation can be overturned and new moral panics can undermine progress. The message is 'Much will depend upon the continued local efforts of those supporting the reforms in anticipating and countering future threats to the gains'.

In chapter 7, Anderson and Schwartz outline the Pennsylvania case and show the value of preparing for change and developing a shared value base. Again, the context was a lawsuit, and interestingly, a mediator was employed to help the parties agree common values. There then followed a six month period of training and education before the newly agreed standards were operative. The Coleman consent decree now controls all admissions to secure detention. This is a good example of a conflict strategy - the litigation was the catalyst that raised the profile of juvenile detention and enabled consensus strategies to be employed.

Chapter 8: by Barton, looks at the four detention reform efforts described in the book and offers some summary lessons for those seeking to implement such policy changes.

The judge's viewpoint is discussed by Sharon McCully in chapter 9. Adopting a liberal and reforming perspective, the author acknowledges she is untypical of the majority of judges, who fiercely resist efforts to restrict their use of juvenile detention. She advocates a proactive role for judges in limiting the use of detention and encouraging the development of alternative provision. (Well, if there is one there must be others).

Finally Ira Schwartz sounds the clarion call in the conclusion and summarises the main arguments presented in the book. She argues compellingly that the politicisation of the juvenile crime problem functions to maintain high detention rates. She concludes that it may be good for politics but leads to bad policy, costs a lot of money, and drains resources away from alternative provision - sounds familiar, doesn't it.

Schwartz presents a nine point agenda for reform, drawing together all the points in the preceding chapters, which she hopes will provide support and serve as a catalyst for those who might be willing to 'lead the fight'.

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Gwyther Rees

Hidden Truths

The Children's Society 1993

ISBN 0 907324 82 70

£6.99 (pbk)

Mike Stein, Gwyther Rees and Nick Frost

Running the Risk

The Children's Society 1994

ISBN 0 907324 93 2

£8.50 (pbk)

VIV SCHWARTZBERG

The documentation of reputable research is not necessarily noted for substance and accessibility at the same time. You would expect to be informed and perhaps surprised by it, but it is a bonus if the content touches the reader. These two short volumes on young people's experience of running away and young people living on the streets of Britain today, are packed with telling information. Their deceptively simple text led me to reconsider my perceptions of youth homelessness as I re-evaluated some relevant personal experience.

At the age of six my son stole out of the school grounds when the rest of the children were making their way into class for morning registration. He was found less than an hour later, examining the plants in the front garden of a house a few streets away from the school. He had walked out of school, taking a friend with him, to escape what he felt was an unbearably oppressive and cruel environment. He had not been able to tell us about his feelings because he believed school to be an impenetrable world exercising absolute control over everyone and everything inside it. By crossing physical boundaries he broke the boundaries of control. While we were terrified of the danger he was exposed to while he was missing, he insisted that finding and sitting in the flower beds in that front garden, though awesome, was far less threatening than school. He could take no more and was determined to find an alternative experience despite the risks. He also sensed that by doing so he would enable those who cared most about him to do something about the daily emotional ordeal he had been enduring in the classroom. He was right. At one and the same time he made it imperative and possible for us to intervene directly in the business of the school.

When I read 'Young People's Experience of Running Away' and 'Running the Risk' it struck me that my son, like many more young people than I had imagined, had experience of running away. I was also struck with the similarity between his reasons for running away and those identified in the research documented in both books. What is more, the needs my son had been asserting some 12 years ago were generally the same as those met by the streetwork and refuge projects which were researched for 'Running the Risk'. What he had were trusted advocates within his existing network of

close relationships who were able to make an impact on the institutional culture that was damaging him. The young people whose information, accounts and comments give these books such authenticity, felt no such support. It is no surprise to learn that progress in the field of children's rights should have made so little progress since my son was in infants school, that teenagers can feel, unprotected or disempowered enough in the environment called home that their only option is to run away. It is however important that the research commissioned by The Children's Society and documented in 'Hidden Truths' and 'Running the Risk' throws new light on some prevailing issues.

Frost, Rees and Stein have produced some key findings and recommendations of broad significance to anyone working in almost any capacity with children and young people. We can all learn something from this research because it reveals as much about the condition of being a child or young person in our society as it does about the specific issues of running away. It challenges some of the conventional wisdom and gives a fresh perspective on the definitions and incidence of running away, what makes young people run away, where they run from and what they run to, their survival strategies and the kinds of responses which agencies and carers make.

At a time when folklore about youth, the family and social order seems to gain the status of legitimate political theory or philosophy, it is vital that we build and draw on knowledge based in the reality of the experience of young people in crisis and the people who work most intimately with them. 'Hidden Truths' and 'Running the Risk' are complementary books which contribute to the body of knowledge and should be read alongside one another. They make essential reading for field workers and senior policy makers providing services for children and young people.

Viv Schwartzberg is a Training and Development Officer with Save The Children's 'Contract' Social Work Unit, base in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos

Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England

Yale University Press 1994

ISBN 0 300 05597 8

£25.00 (hbk)

pp 335

MIKE WAITE

On the second page of her book, Ben-Amos summarises it as being 'about young people in a broad spectrum of middling and lower groups of society, who, in the period between 1500 and 1700, spent at least part of their adolescence and youth away from their homes as farm servants, domestic servants, or apprentices. Although it begins with an overview of the way adults in early modern English society thought about youth, the book concentrates on the experience of growing up'.

This straightforward description is accurate enough in its way, but does not communicate the many different levels on which her book succeeds. It is becoming essential for all serious students of early modern England, as her particular focus on young people operates as the starting point for many suggestive insights on broader social issues in that period.

Readers of this journal who might doubt the value of a book packed with detailed information on the real lives of English young people three to four hundred years ago can be assured that it is accessible, useful and enjoyable reading for anyone interested in the ways that concepts of 'youth' have been shaped historically, and in the way that experiences at particular points in the life-cycle are shaped by broader social relations.

By organising her theoretical considerations around solid and detailed empirical evidence, Ben-Amos has avoided the trap of projecting back concepts of youth and adolescence which have been formed in our times onto the historical source material. At the same time, a lively first chapter summarises and develops methodological debates which have taken place in this century over the nature of youth and adolescence in pre-modern and early modern times. After brief but stimulating criticism of a number of prominent sociologists and historians, she sets out on her survey of patterns of youth and adolescence, which 'is viewed as a long and dynamic phase in the life cycle - a phase which consisted of a series of mental, social and economic processes through which the young were transformed into adults. These involved major events such as separation from parents, entry into and exit from service or a series of service arrangements, setting up in business or on the land and marriage, but they also involve more subtle transformations... Maturation did not occur at a specific point in the lives of the young, nor was it a steady, uniform set of gradual stages. It involved various transformations which differed in pace and intensity, and which varied along gender lines, between social groups, and to some extent also across time'.

If one criticism can be made of Ben-Amos' approach, it is that she does not adequately highlight or explore the variations in young people's lives at different points in her period. Her centuries were not a stable time in which experiences from one moment can necessarily be taken as similar to those from another. The social and political upheavals centred on the revolutionary years of the late 1640s cannot be averaged out over two hundred years to suggest a constant context for the young people's lives she considers. It is possible that this weakness results from Ben-Amos having decided too early in her work to organise her material thematically rather than chronologically.

The thematic chapters provide fascinating discussions on key issues: the mobility of rural youth; the travels and work experiences of urban apprentices; the specific experiences of young women; the 'widening circle' of social ties built up by young people in adolescence and youth. A chapter looking at the areas of spirituality, leisure and sexuality asks whether there was a 'youth culture' in this period. A final chapter and short conclusion focus on the various rites of passage that marked transition to adult life, and explore the ways in which young people shaped and reacted to the various degrees of independence which they won or found themselves having to handle.

Ben-Amos' substantial notes and bibliography shows that she has drawn on over seventy autobiographies from her period, and on considerable detailed research into apprenticeship records and parish registers. She has been sensitive to methodological issues in handling this material, warning us for example that many of these autobiographies, amongst the earliest by 'ordinary' people, were confessional texts aimed at promoting particular religious commitments. But substantial quotes from books such as *The Life and Convincement of Benjamin Bangs* and Arise Evans' *An Echo to the Voice from Heaven* are used alongside anecdotes and statistics drawn from wide sweeps of sources to give readers a convincing sense of how it felt to be young in England three hundred years ago. The main impression is of young people learning skills of adaptability and 'hardiness' at early ages as they move from the parental home to a variety of forms of service. These were often more dynamic than first impressions would suggest - alongside the dependency on and exploitation by 'masters' which they experienced, there were many ways in which young people found that they could assert their rights and interests as they moved to acquire adult status.

Mike Waite is Head of Response and Senior Worker on youth issues for Wirral Youth Service

Malcolm Grundy

Community Work

A Handbook for Volunteer Groups and Local churches

Mowbray

ISBN 0-264-67323-9

pp 162

JOHN ELLIS

This handbook is the latest in a series of such books published by the major church publisher Mowbray. While some of the series only have relevance within a church setting others, including this publication, are aimed at a wider clientele. These handbooks have the reputation of packing vast amounts of useful information into a slim volume. This latest addition to the series is a worthy representative of this tradition.

As might be expected a christian worldview is assumed throughout and some chapters (e.g. Chapter 9 Beliefs, Values and the Churches) will apply mainly to those working in a church setting. Workers involved in church community work will find much here to assist them to think through the values that lie behind their work. This is Grundy's starting point. For him churches are in partnership with their local community. Each has much to give to the other and there are a number of useful diagrams to illustrate this two-way traffic. 'Communities are not raw material, fodder, for churches to use to undertake their work and projects. Communities and churches are partners in which each gives to the other in a reciprocal relationship'. It is the working out of this relationship that Grundy is at pains to explore.

It is a fact that a voluntary organisation like the church can find itself drawn into community work almost by default. This book provides a framework in which to think through the various issues involved. This enables the Community Worker to recognise possible areas of confrontation *before* they arise.

Thus for example he discussed the problem of success. When a piece of community work is successful the time will come when it is felt appropriate to move towards the employment of a full-time paid worker. This, Grundy points out, can lead to all manner of tensions within the group of voluntary workers who have made the project a success.

It will be seen from the above that this book has relevance to those who are not working in a church setting. The book comes from a church publisher and the word 'churches' appears in the title. This may restrict its circulation. It would be a great pity if this book did not find itself in the hands of a wider readership, for it is indeed a 'handbook' in the sense of a book that is useful to have to hand. The amount of useful information Grundy has packed into this relatively small book is truly phenomenal. Do you want to know about the best way to advertise a full-time post - or what you should put in a job description - or how best to recruit and manage volunteers - look no further it is all here. Not only that but if you need more information you are given useful contact addresses.

So, for example, under the heading 'Disciplinary procedures' you are given a brief clear jargon free statement of things you should do and pitfalls you should avoid - and then you are given the address and telephone number of ACAS for further detailed information

The breadth of the discussion is also impressive. In the second chapter 'What is Community Work' Grundy takes us on a guided tour of the whole spectrum of approaches, discussing Community Care, Community Development and Community Organising and Community Ministry. In the case of Community Organising we find ourselves looking at work which has taken place on the other side of the Atlantic. In what may well be a first for Mowbray he quotes from an interview with Saul Alinsky, whose name is most associated with this kind of model, published in *Playboy* magazine! He then alludes to a 1984 study by Pitt and Keane of the cultural religious and political differences between the United States and the United Kingdom which conclude 'it is absurd to think that Alinsky-type organising could or should be transferred to Britain. It developed in a particular country and context and must be understood in the context'. Grundy points out that this is not a view universally held and goes on to draw the readers attention to a number of projects using this approach in the United Kingdom.

Christian Community Workers will find his penultimate chapter on values and beliefs challenging and disturbing. He draws attention to Doreen Finneran's 'Faith in Community Development' published in 1984 on the basis of research into church community projects in Manchester. He mentions her conclusion that 'Where local churches have done "successful" pieces of community work it has been as a result of their moving outside mainstream structures and of collaborating with others - the principal denominations while describing themselves as agents of change, actually have a primary task of maintaining their own existence!'

This book will no doubt be valued in the christian community. I do hope that the above will encourage a wider readership. Don't miss this little gem.

John Ellis is the Vicar of an Urban Priority Area parish in Grimsby. He is also manager of the parish's youth project - *The Shalom Youth Project*

Short Cuts*CHAR***Planning for Action: the Children Act and young homeless people, a Black Perspective**

CHAR 1995

ISBN 0 906951 70 4

£5.80

pp 64

(available from: 5-15 Cromer Street, London WC1H 8LS)

*Amanda Allard, Katie Argent and Mandana Hendessi***No fault of their own: the plight of homeless children and young people**

NCVCCO 1995

pp 17

(available from Unit 4, Pride Court, 80-82 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF)

*Noel Smith, Andrew West and Pam Davies***Lives of the Young and Homeless**

Save the Children Fund Humberside 1994

ISBN 1 870322 92 4

pp 40

(available from: 373 Anlaby Rd, Hull HU3 1AB)

*Andrew West***Responding to Youth Homelessness**

Save the Children Fund 1995

ISBN 1 899120 02 5

pp 40

(available from: SCF 17 Grove Lane, London SE5 8RD)

*Devon County Council Community Education Service***Drug and Alcohol Guidelines For Youth Workers**

Devon County Council 1993

ISBN 1 85522 405 4

pp 10

(available from: Crossmead, Barley Lane, Exeter EX4 1TF)

TONY JEFFS

The first four of these publications reflect the widespread concern amongst practitioners regarding the continuing absence of a coherent response, both nationally and locally, to the problem of homelessness amongst young people. Although discernible advances have been achieved in certain localities, all express disquiet about the unevenness of provision and the short-term nature of the funding upon which programmes increasingly depend.

The *CHAR* publication commences with an account of the sections of the Children Act (1989) relating most directly to the plight of homeless young people. The balance of the publication comprises information on

projects seeking to specifically address the needs of young Black homeless people plus three case studies. Unfortunately none of the latter relate to the implementation of the Act. The accounts of the organisations however are helpful and the recommendations although focusing on the needs of Black young people possess much wider applicability.

Allard, Argent and Hendessi have produced a gem of a pamphlet. A brief outline of the key legislation prefaces a rebuttal of probably the seven most oft repeated myths peddled concerning youth homelessness. The writers demolish, for example, such assertions as 'young people leave home on whim' and 'young women frequently get pregnant to get a council house'. The myths are those regularly encountered in general conversation and employed by politicians and administrators seeking to scapegoat the young homeless and justify their own indifference. The pamphlet could easily be adapted for use in a training session. It is a pity the authors did not include a reading list although they have carefully referenced each section. Perhaps they will consider adding one if this valuable pamphlet is re-printed.

An excellent illustration of the extent to which local initiatives are essential in the absence of a comprehensive response is provided by *Smith, West and Davies*. Their report of the Hull Emergency Winter Shelter for young people, opened in 1993, conveys the degree of hidden demand for such provision and the desperate need for a 'coordinated, comprehensive and pro-active package of help'. They rightly stress such an approach will entail the building of new and the adaptation of existing housing stock. Without an adequate supply of suitable property all the 'inter-agency collaboration' in the world will achieve little. This is a guide for action which many are likely to find helpful. The *West* publication is a report from a conference held in Hull. It gives a good idea of the different ways various agencies interpret the problem. However those who did not attend the conference may not, I suspect, get a great deal from this document. Reading yesterday's flip-charts is not often an illuminating experience.

The *Devon Community Education Service* guidelines are not a set of rules and regulations as the title implies. Instead they are responses to an extensive list of questions which are likely to emerge from a discussion amongst a group of full and part-time youth workers dealing with drug and alcohol use by young people. Rightly the authors emphasize that for the worker 'relationships with young people are of paramount importance', a central tenet which should underpin the style and content of any intervention. Few will agree with each and every response here, though it is a document to help clarify thinking and stimulate debate. A most helpful paper for those involved in training.

Tony Jeffs, *University of Durham*.

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Thus, for a book:

Hutson, S., and Jenkins, R. (1989) *Taking the Strain: Families, Unemployment and the Transition to Adulthood*, Milton Keynes, Open University Press.

For an article:

Willis, P. (1984) 'Youth Unemployment: Thinking the Unthinkable', in *Youth and Policy*, vol.2, no.4, pp. 17-24.

And for a report:

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

Any information which is supplementary to the main text should be noted by a number in parentheses and listed in numerical order at the end of the article before the references, under the title of Notes.

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