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# **YOUNG PEOPLE, UNIVERSITY, YOUTH POLICY and YOUTH WORK**

**RUTH GILCHRIST & TONY JEFFS**

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Readership surveys tell us it is reasonable to assume that the overwhelming majority of those reading this edition of *Youth and Policy* are or have been at sometime students. Most of you we suspect recall your student days with a mix of pleasure, disdain and embarrassment - possibly in that order. Accounts of student life over the years certainly confirm that the majority found it an enjoyable interlude. However the experience has never been a uniform one. Viewed through disparate lenses it has never been the same for men and women, rich and poor, Black and White, young and old; equally what course you followed and the institution you attended make a great deal of difference. The excitement, fun and enjoyment of student life must not be overlooked nor the challenge of the educational experience, the sheer pleasure of learning.

Informal educators and youth workers except as student and placement supervisors have traditionally had little involvement with students. Both, although within the 'education sector' and established to provide a service for young people, have had little in common with each other. To understand either the contemporary Youth Service or higher education it is essential to refer back to two documents. Over forty years on, the Albemarle Report (1959) on the Youth Service and the Robbins Report on Higher Education (1963) still stand as influential landmarks. Both were established by a government determined to dramatically expand provision in the two sectors. The remit of each committee was to provide the politicians with an overview of existing provision and guidance as to the best way forward. Those were by all accounts exciting times for educationalists. The dominant political consensus holding that investment in education was essential and urgently required in the interests of economic and social well-being.

Albemarle and Robbins were each concerned with provision for the same age group. Apart from that they had little in common. The attention of the former was focussed upon the 'social education' of those young people who left school at the earliest possible opportunity. The kids from the housing estate, the children of the terrace and the graduates of the secondary modern were the young people Albemarle had in mind as providing the clientele for a new expanded Youth Service. Robbins on the other hand was far more concerned about the sort of young people who passed their Eleven Plus full of promise then drifted out of education without fulfilling their 'potential'. In a period when 12 per cent went to a Grammar School but only 4 per cent proceeded to University, even those who dreamt of doubling under-graduate places never envisaged recruiting 'oiks' from the secondary modern or technical school. The mold was set and until recently never questioned. The Youth Service would cater for those with no hope or expectation of entering Higher Education whilst the University awaited those who would have had little contact

with the Youth Service, apart perhaps from an affiliation to a church or uniformed organization. Such a division of labour assumed that the sorts of problems and needs of the two groups had little in common.

The Youth Service dealt with young people who 'got into trouble', often came from a poor home and frequently went into dead-end jobs - they needed youth workers for guidance, support and a firm yet friendly hand. Students might be a tad boisterous at times but apart from the inevitable problems regarding relationships or their studies, the idea that they needed a youth worker hovering in the background was deemed preposterous. After all with a 1 to 7.6 staff student ratio there was always a concerned and interested adult available if needed.

What the articles which follow show is that this cosy arrangement no longer applies. Since the 1960s, for the reasons highlighted by Pat Ainley, Higher Education has grown beyond the wildest expectations of the authors and sponsors of Robbins. Then there were nationally 94,000 under-graduates, now we have 1.1 million. The appearance of mass Higher Education has produced dramatic changes. Women students are no longer a small minority but comprise the majority in many institutions; similarly 'mature students', 25 and over, have become the norm on many courses. Some university departments now have staff student ratios in excess of one to thirty, which along with the widespread use of part-time and temporary staff ensures more and more students have little, if any, meaningful contact with those employed to teach them. Expansion has produced an increasingly diverse pattern of provision and most disturbingly the emergence of clear divisions between rich and poor, good and bad universities. Not suprisingly it is the financially pressed and less academically prestigious institutions which have the highest proportion of students drawn from working class and ethnic minority backgrounds. They also tend to have an older age profile, more students residing in the parental home, more studying part-time and more dropping out. Inevitably they are also likely to offer students less in the way of support services.

As the proportion of young people entering Higher and Further Education relentlessly rises, so the numbers who correspond to earlier photo-kit images of the typical Youth Service client diminish. With over 80 per cent of young people now in full-time education up to the age of 18 and well over a third in Higher Education by age 19, so past divisions of labour between educational agencies have been eroded. Students are no longer a 'different kettle of fish' once being a student becomes the lot of the majority. Consequently it is now less and less realistic to talk of discrete student problems regarding for example housing, debt, safety, drug and alcohol abuse. Yet initiatives designed to address such issues still operate as if on the one side of a divide are to be found 'young people' and on another 'students'.

Within the university sector there has however been an almost total refusal at all levels to recognise or take responsibility for the changes wrought by the shift to a mass system. Either it is assumed the old tutorial system will suffice or that somehow students will muddle through. The notion that the university has a duty to pro-actively



intervene to help and befriend those it so actively recruits is almost alien to the thinking of the majority of institutions. The old isolation between 'town and gown' survives albeit in a new form. The new mass universities seem to have little sense of a responsibility towards the community in which they are located. It seems beyond the comprehension of those teaching in and managing them that students might sell as well as consume drugs; that they might commit as well as be victims of crime and that students might aggravate social problems within a neighbourhood as well as be casualties. The mirror image of this is to be found in the blinkered approach of the Youth Service and other agencies. Almost without exception these have either viewed students as a privileged group undeserving of help or as being lavishly catered for by the university. Their refusal to acknowledge the changing nature of the student experience has meant they have lost a valuable opportunity to widen the scope of their work and develop new initiatives. If youth agencies are not to become even more peripheral to the lives of the overwhelming majority of young people they will have to cultivate ways of working with and for students, just as the university sector, if it is to avoid growing disenchantment amongst students, burgeoning drop-out rates and conflict with local communities, must learn to transcend the narrow interpretation of their role.

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# TOWARDS A LEARNING OR A CERTIFIED SOCIETY?

*Students in Britain*

PATRICK AINLEY

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## The new students

Not since the events of the late 1960s have students been seen by sociologists, let alone youth workers, as a particularly problematic group of young people. Bourdieu and Passeron's 1964 classic account of Paris students as 'The Inheritors' typified the sociological view of the mostly white, male and traditionally middle-class minority for whom a university education had established itself since the war as transitional from school to work and from home to living away and whose 'performance...', the authors wrote, 'can only be understood in terms of the logic of the continuous conversion of social into academic heritage' (note 10, p.152). Even by the late 1980s, higher education students were excluded from, for example, the ESRC's large-scale '16-19 Initiative', reported by Banks et al in 1991. Yet today there are more than five million full- and part-time further and higher education (F&HE) students in the UK. Nor can further education (FE) students be any longer divided from higher education (HE) ones. Indeed, the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act has for the first time legally recognised the historical and logical connection between the two sectors. (On the latter, see Weaver 1974.) Four million students are anticipated in FE by the year 2000 and there are approaching one-and-a-half million more in HE. The female majority now in FE, where most students have always been part-time and also adult, is working its way up into HE. While in HE, proportions of adult and part-time students are also increasing towards majorities. About half of all students in FE, excluding those in sixth-form colleges, are over 26, less than one third are aged 16-18.

Nevertheless, most 'full-time' F&HE students are younger and in looking at patterns of provision for the future it is justifiable to begin by examining younger students and trainees. This is because the changes made over the past 20 years and more in provision for school-leavers have worked their way up the age-range. They have extended for all school leavers the period of transition into the labour market - if not into work. This protracted transition has raised the threshold of adulthood and lengthened what is regarded as 'youth', 'adolescence', or even the 'permanent adolescence', or 'post-adolescence', in which many young men particularly are allegedly trapped (see Adamski and Grootings, 1989). As Claire Wallace indicates in a richly suggestive draft paper, all these lifestage definitions are shifting in life cycles disrupted by economic uncertainty; particularly the idea (or ideal) of adult status as a completed state of psychological identity (or being), linked to the assumption of 'vocational maturity' - as in Talcott Parsons' or Erik Erikson's schemes of things, for instance - rather than the notion of continuous and provisional development (or becoming). For changes in childhood and youth impact in

turn upon older people. Images of youth and adulthood have become blurred and confused because, for example, whilst students become older, many adults engage in activities previously associated with younger people - by enrolling as students, for instance. They also stay single for longer, for another instance, so that the average age of first marriage has risen from its all time low of 20 for women and 22 for men in 1971 to 26 and 27 today (Irwin, 1996, 67-8). At the same time, there is a simultaneous lowering of the formal adult threshold; for example, the voting age has come down along with the age for marriage without parental consent and for undertaking hire-purchase agreements, etc. So the various phases of life in which age was linked to status have become 'uncoupled', as Wallace says. For, as she goes on, despite the vocational emphasis in schools and colleges, education no longer relates necessarily to work, nor marriage to childbearing. These simultaneous and contradictory developments are the source of much confusion, for younger and older alike. The state, which plays a large part in defining age statuses, has also contributed to confusing them by its attempts to meet the deepening crisis of permanent and structural unemployment that first began to affect new entrants to the labour market after the end of the period of economic growth and stability from 1945-73. Employment, training and education policies, backed by social security policy, then moved towards constructing just two groups of young people: trainees or students, as Jones and Wallace observed in 1992. The proportions aimed at for these two groups varied from 20:80, academic schooling:vocational training on the German model during the period from 1976-87 of what Finn (1987) called 'Training Without Jobs'. These proportions were subsequently reversed towards a goal of 80:20, continuing education:drop-out to residual training on the US model. This latest phase of 'Knowledge Policy' (Bergendal, 1984), marked by the 1988 Education and 1992 F&HE Acts, may be called one of 'Education Without Jobs' (Ainley, 1992). There has been, however, a partial resuscitation of vocational training for a minority (for example, with the introduction of Modern Apprenticeships) in place of the attempt to provide academic general education for all. This shift was signalled by Sir Ron Dearing's first review in 1993 in which he loosened up the National Curriculum in schools to make room for a work-based route at 14-plus and then by his second review of qualifications for 16-19 year olds in 1996 in which he sought to establish sixth forms as the royal road to HE and to associate FE with school failure. Accompanying these shifting knowledge policies since the end of the long boom, there has been a move away from the social insurance principle of 'dependency' upon the old Welfare State towards an encouragement of individual self-reliance and 'enterprise' in what is becoming a new Workfare State run on the contracting principle (Harden, 1992; Jones, 1996). Just as youth unemployment was officially abolished by the 'guarantee' of Youth Training for all 16-18 year olds in 1987, the new knowledge policy of the new Contracting State moves towards constituting all adults as either employed and supposedly learning on the job, or - alternatively - learning off the job, rather than actually unemployed or 'Jobseeking'. In both cases, there is a new relation of institutionalised learning to employment and to unemployment.

### **Towards a certified society?**

What these transformations in work, learning and leisure mean can be most clearly seen if the situation facing most 16 year-olds completing compulsory schooling today is compared with that facing 14 and 15 year-old leavers in the old Welfare State established after the upheavals of war. Then, for most people, including the social partners - employers as well as employees - who were involved in the old welfare settlement, a key feature of life was its age-graded predictability. For the majority of people (including 'dependent' women) their future prospects were predicated upon guaranteed full-time male employment from 15 to 65.

This was despite the fact that it was only with the introduction of CSEs, recommended in 1959 for the next third of school students after the top 20 per cent then attempting 'O' levels who were regarded as examinable by the Crowther Committee, that the majority of English and Welsh school leavers came to possess any educational certifications at all (as compared with only one in twelve without any certification today). Even without formal qualifications, as Anderson recorded in 1983, 'a young person aged, say, 14, looking forward in the 1960s could, with a reasonable probability of being right, have predicted within a very few years the timing of his or her future life course - leaving school, entering employment, leaving home, marrying and setting up home, early patterns of child-bearing and rearing' (p.13). None of this is now possible in conditions which have returned for most of us to pre-war and Victorian insecurities. Yet the loss of old certainties has also entailed the overcoming of restrictive limitations. In place of reliance upon a male breadwinner, women are gaining at least relative economic equality in the labour market. For, in another tendency working its way up the age range, 'the gap between the earnings of young men and women has narrowed' (to as little as a negligible 4.3 per cent, according to some accounts). This coincides with 'an increasing discrepancy between the earnings of young people and those of older age groups' (Irwin, 1996 114), together with a fall in the relative value of male income generally. What has been called 'the feminization of male labour' means that more and more men are coming to share the conditions of part-time, intermittent working that most women were long used to accepting. In fact, with the decline of heavy industry and the rise of services, both associated with increasing use of new technology, obviating physical differences at work, the persistence of so-called 'men's and women's work' is now open to question along with the whole social construction of gender. These transformations have occurred as the collapse of traditional industry removed its economic underpinning of full employment. They are accepted as normal by those who are born into them. Along with all the other changes now taken for granted, staying-on in education has also become normalised and this in itself exerts peer pressure on young people.

In the South of England more young people remain in post-compulsory education despite the greater availability of jobs there - but also because many of these jobs demand higher entry qualifications. In the North by comparison, the traditional tendency for leaving school as soon as possible persists to a greater extent despite

the lack of employment. So, although the labour market is generally judged to exercise the greatest influence on young people's choices, cultural factors overlay its influence in affecting decisions to stay on at school or college (Ainley and Green, 1996). Staying-on first became normalised amongst ethnic minority youth. Their participation rates in F&HE are higher than for their white counterparts. Black and Asian participation in HE, for instance, is high at 10.45 per cent of all admissions in 1990 as compared with the 4.8 per cent average ethnic minority population of the UK (Ainley, 1994, p.30 but see also Cohen, 1996). This is in part due to persistently higher unemployment for them and the same could partially explain higher continuing participation rates (in school and HE, not FE) in Scotland, though rates have always been higher there, reflecting other aspects of the national culture.

Yet remaining in education is now taking off amongst sections of white, traditionally working-class youth who had formerly been most resistant to staying on. Overall, on the DfEE's most optimistic estimates (summarised in Ainley and Bailey, forthcoming) that include all types of training as well as education, participation rates peaked in 1993/4 at 80.1 per cent of 16-17 year-olds in formal learning in a ratio of 6:4, FE:sixth form. Many of these full-time students stay for less than a year, however, with total participation for 17 year-olds being 67.5 per cent and for 18 year-olds 46.8 per cent. More drop out from sixth form than FE, or rather, many move at this stage from sixth form to FE. In HE, undergraduate non-completion rates vary from 2.7 per cent at Cambridge to 25.2 per cent at Salford (reported in the Times Educational Supplement 15/9/95). While, comparing two universities with contrasted 'attrition rates', Ainley (1994, p 61) speculated that 'with the age participation ratio rising to 30 per cent plus... "attrition" can also be predicted to rise to perhaps 30 per cent also', adding however that this tendency may be ameliorated by 'modular schemes of study with multiple exit and entry points'. As in FE, non-completion in HE is widely recognised to be closely associated with student poverty. Since the 1993/4 high point, Careers Services destination statistics for the United Kingdom show a slow-down in the previous dramatic increases in staying-on rates. This marks the transition from a minority to what Spours in 1995 called 'a medium', if not yet a mass participation post-compulsory learning system. In it, just under one third (in England and Wales) continue to some form of HE at 18-plus, while approximately two thirds remain in post-compulsory learning from 16-18, as one third drop out during this stage. Drop out in the past was often blamed on the relatively small pay differentials between jobs for unqualified and apprenticed youth and for qualified (and unqualified) adults. Employers have also been blamed for recruiting unqualified youth. But, even as the economy recovered sufficiently during the ephemeral 'Lawson boom' of the late 1980s and to a lesser extent in the mid-1990s, for some employers to revert to such recruitment, it did not affect more than a minority of mainly white, traditionally working-class, male youth. In the main however, young people's expectations of education are altering as a result of changing experiences and aspirations, shaped in turn by parental and wider social



attitudes also changing in response to new perceptions of what is on offer in education. Lack of employment opportunities may have encouraged many people to remain in or return to education for lack of alternative options or, more positively, to gain the qualifications to increase their employment opportunities in the future. As a result, expectations have increased generally, encouraging young people to raise their aspirations for education. A wide range of new courses have been offered which are now marketed more attractively by schools and colleges competing with each other for dwindling numbers of recruits. The second baby boom since 1945 peaked in 1983 with falling supply projected into the future thereafter. This means numbers in schools increased slightly in the early 1990s but declined thereafter. The number of 16 to 19 year-olds fell from 3 million in 1990 to 2.7 million by the mid-1990s returning to 3 million by the end of the decade (Deakin, 1996, p 33). Those most likely to remain in formal education are generally those who have had the most positive experience of compulsory schooling. Higher achievement by pupils in comprehensive schools, the majority of whom gained qualifications for the first time, gave many more that confidence (Benn and Chitty, 1996). As a result, parents of children now reaching the end of compulsory schooling are increasingly likely themselves to have undertaken extended education and are therefore likely to have higher aspirations for their children (Norwich College, 1996). Influences from parents, teachers and the media combined to persuade many young people of the importance of qualifications (Schagen et al, 1996). Rising success rates in GCSEs also encouraged participation post-16. Introduced in 1986 as a unitary exam merging the former CSEs and 'O' levels, their increased assessment via coursework rather than terminal exams - initially at least - gave more pupils more opportunities to demonstrate their worth. The new GNVQs were also popular when they were first introduced (like CSEs alongside 'O' levels, in parallel with the existing academic 'A' level exam), although not as many entrants subsequently completed them as the exams they replaced (Robinson, 1996). The incentive they and other means of accessing higher education offered also encouraged young people and others to consider entry to HE. On the other hand, higher education as a whole has lost the significance it once had for the small and elite minority it formerly catered for and appears to be less prized by today's students for its biographical significance than for the necessity of gaining qualifications of some sort in order to enter or secure core employment with prospects of permanency and progression (Ainley, 1994, Chapter 2). The erosion of student grants means that the student experience can no longer be what Giroux (1992, p.17) called 'a romantic celebration of adolescence as it sometimes was in the '60s'. For most students in the post-compulsory learning system today education without the certainty of employment is combined with education with part-time, casual employment as more and more students work their way through formal programmes of study. F&HE students form part of the substantial numbers of young workers identified by the GMB Trade Union in 1996 as paid below the Council of Europe's 'decency threshold', mostly in unprotected employments working flexible and often long hours both in vacations and term-times mainly in retail and catering where they are 'open to exploitation by

employers'. They also displace other, less qualified, workers, as HE leavers also do when they graduate to jobs that would previously have gone to less qualified applicants; (for examples see Ainley and Corbett, 1994.) Young people - whether they are students or not - increasingly form part of a large casualised labour market, one whose patterns of contract working are also extending up (and down, through similar employment of the semi-retired elderly) into the whole of employment. This combination of education with what have been called 'MacJobs' not only makes it harder for students to complete their studies but detracts from much of the personal meaning they might once have had for the smaller numbers previously pursuing them. Learning post-16 has become just a part of a pattern of learning and earning that is established early through work-experience and part-time work while at school, through sixth form or FE and on into higher education, with recurrent returns to full-or part-time learning from employment or unemployment thereafter. The negative impact of student loans and the prospect of paying fees also contributes to what Smithers and Robinson (1989) called a 'discouragement effect', putting off some potential entrants from going on to higher education. This disillusioned attitude and the widely reported increasingly instrumental approach to their studies by today's HE students may partly explain why the recent unprecedented expansion of the sector is unlikely to see any repetition of the student unrest associated with the previous and more modest expansion of HE in the late 1960s (and that of FE and Youth Training with the urban riots or 'uprisings' of the early 1980s). Moreover, the 1960s student rebellions were associated with a very different period of economic expansion and relative prosperity. Yet they were, as much as anything else, a product of frustrated expectations from a generation of students the majority of whose parents had not attended HE and for whom promises of access to new and more demanding job opportunities were unlikely to be met. So, with continued stagnation of the economy, the same frustration is likely to recur, only this time for the far larger numbers graduating with devalued qualifications, in debt and unemployed. The expression of such frustration is therefore a permanent possibility in an education system that functions at every level to contain as well as to inform its students, particularly in the generalised knowledge that employers now say they require of a workforce able to adapt flexibly to a variety of changing demands and not trained to perform only particular limited operations. Such generalised knowledge could also give a greater critical understanding of society as a whole and many teachers are dedicated to educating their students in such a spirit. (See, for example, the interviews with FE lecturers reported in Ainley and Bailey, 1997 and with HE teachers in Ainley, 1994). Many of them at all levels oppose the restriction of study to vocational competence and seek to make connections between isolated and disconnected programmes of study - although the latest academic fashion for postmodernism abjures such 'totalisations'. However, while post-compulsory education has expanded to a medium participation system, it remains internally selective and extremely hierarchical. In HE, an Ivy League of research and residential universities has consolidated its position at the apex of what was already a hierarchy of competing colleges, so that in the worst of both worlds mass universities for the many are now combined with elite ones for the few. (See Scott, 1996 for a definitive survey).

FE feeds students to the various levels of this reformed HE hierarchy so that, in relation to it, divisions occur not only within but between tertiary, generalist and sixth-form colleges, as well as between school sixth forms and FE, or between schools with academic sixth forms and those without them, or within schools between academic and non-academic sixth forms. Divisions within education are mirrored in training by distinctions between professional training to NVQ levels 4 and 5 and Modern Apprenticeships to NVQ level 3, alongside Youth Training to NVQ level 2, or no qualification at all, which is the outcome for half of courses at this level (Robinson, 1996). Dearing's (1996) proposals for 16-19 qualifications represent a tertiary tripartism of the most traditional type. The attempt to use the market in official learning to sustain eroded social divisions is a policy of going backwards into the future. It is opposed to the previous 'knowledge policy', which was once spear-headed by the Manpower Services Commission but is still represented by the Confederation of British Industry and its 'Learning Society' ideal. This alternative policy attempts to use the market in learning to deliver some sort of real economic modernisation.

For, beyond the effort to reimpose old divisions of knowledge, new divisions of labour are emerging as the latest applications of new technology undermine the manual/mental divide basic to previously clear-cut class distinctions. These include the more or less deliberate political and ideological construction of a new division within the working population, separating a regionally and racially stereotyped so-called 'underclass', stigmatized by the poverty that disenfranchises its members from equal participation in society. This new 'rough' is divided from the new 'respectable' working-middle of society by housing, immigration, social security and policing policies (Ainley, 1993). Education and training at all levels are also heavily implicated in the social exclusion of this marginalised group through credentialism (or rather through the lack of any worthwhile credentials). For, at the bottom of this certified - not 'learning' - society many of those without worthwhile certification drift into a black economy of irregular employment, if not criminality and drug dependence. The Training and Enterprise Councils Chief Executives Network estimated more than 100,000 'disaffected' 18-20 year olds not in education, training or employment in 1996. This social fragmentation in turn affects those above, making it increasingly difficult ever to meet the National Targets for Education and Training, even as revised in 1995. Indeed, the development of a normative pattern of 'staying-on' in post-compulsory education may only serve to further alienate a section of youth who have traditionally been most resistant to continuing in formal learning, particularly where there has been any other alternative available, as they see themselves more sharply distinguished from the social norm. Current offers of full-time education in sixth forms and colleges are unlikely to appeal to such a group.

### **Towards a new sociology of learning**

In recent interviews with students at two contrasted FE colleges (in Ainley and Bailey, 1996) there was some evidence for a categorisation by students of themselves in relation to such a stigmatised group outside school or college, as well as

for divisions some students perceived between students on different 'pathways' within their colleges. Their interviews also offer insight into the lives of young people adjusting themselves to the new social conditions which have been briefly outlined in this introduction. Many young people now have periods of education and training in which they move from one course or scheme to another without ever entering full-time, secure employment. This pattern of life is reaching steadily up the age range to include wider social groups beyond those for whom it has for long been habitual. As employment - particularly the prospect of one occupation for the whole of a working life - becomes increasingly less relevant for defining social identities, it is commonplace to remark that consumer and leisure identities become more important. There is a contradiction however, in that conventional consumer and leisure identities are harder to sustain without regular income and this has been widely held to partly account for the proliferation of counter-cultures amongst the young. Despite - or perhaps because of - the relentless vocational pressures for conformity to which education at all levels now subjects students, alternative youth cultures generally oppose the whole work ethic, or what Aronowitz and DiFazio (1994) call 'the Dogma of Work', which derives identity from occupation. There remains much systematic work to be done to relate the senses of identity of the new mass of post-compulsory students and trainees to their various trajectories within the new formal learning system, as well as to answer the \$64,000 question of what it is exactly that they are learning on new and modularised courses from NVQ levels 1 and 2 up to Masters and taught Ph.D.s at levels 4 and 5. On one side, are students whose pre-existing cultural capital is still legitimated by elite higher education. On the other, are those with special educational needs and on programmes requiring participation in training or work experience as a condition of receipt of welfare or unemployment benefits. Between these two groups, the participation of the mass of students and trainees, adults as well as younger people, is also often prompted by unemployment. This has implications for the motivation that is widely recognised as crucial to learning. To gain a grasp of this new and changing situation of mass F&HE requires what Bourdieu called a 'sociology of learning', one that would involve students themselves through a 'rational pedagogy' (in Robbins, 1991, p.37). Together with a new trans-disciplinary understanding of learning itself (derived from a number of sources including new approaches in anthropology, eg. Lave and Wenger, 1991, psychology, eg. Forrester, 1996, and elsewhere, including pedagogy itself, eg. Gardner, 1993), this would examine the opportunities - and obstacles - to learning that contemporary society affords to individuals, together with the use that they make of these affordances in the process of becoming what they are. Aggregated together, individual 'careers' (Coles, 1995) can inform a picture of 'Social Becoming' (Sztompka, 1991). With more young people from wider social backgrounds at all levels of education, it is ironic that less than ever is known about them and their lives by their teachers. Unlike their teachers, they live primarily in an aural and visual culture rather than a literary one. The tenuous connection between the generations is another consequence of accelerating social change disintegrating the old patterns of human social

relationships, and with them, as Eric Hobsbawm recorded in his epic history of 'The Short Twentieth Century', 'the snapping of the links between generations, that is to say, between past and present. 'So that, 'At the end of this century it has for the first time become possible to see what a world may be like in which the past, including the past in the present, has lost its role. So that 'The young live in societies sundered from their past' (1995, pp.16 and 328). Another of the many responsibilities the formal learning system now assumes more than ever before is therefore that of communicating the past to the future via the students who at present attend it. Or rather, affording students of all sorts opportunities to appropriate the cultures and technologies of the past on their own terms for their own common purposes (Denby, 1996). Certainly, having so many people, old as well as young, in some form or other of continuing formal learning represents a major cultural change for society. If they can be helped to think creatively, logically and independently by their extended educational experiences, this could also represent a fundamental challenge to society.

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(It is intended to call a meeting of researchers and others interested and involved in researching F&HE students to be hosted by the National Union of Students in London with a view to establishing a research network and applying for funding for coordinated research efforts - details from the above.)

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## RESEARCHING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

PAM CARTER, RUTH HAMILTON AND TONY JEFFS

Whilst undertaking research relating to the sexual exploitation of students by academic staff (Carter and Jeffs, 1992, 1995) two of the authors spent many weeks spread over a number of years visiting American universities. During those visits we were constantly impressed by how they sought to address the problem of male violence towards women. We were surprised to find universities funding rape crisis and women's centres catering for both students and the wider community. And that most paid far more attention to, and took infinitely greater responsibility for, the impact the behaviour of their students had on host communities. Including a recognition that they could not 'wash their hands' of any liability for the sexual violence perpetrated by their students. Victims, student and non-student alike, we found were frequently offered counselling, health and legal advice, often available around the clock. Many universities also had well established prevention programmes. These generally incorporated high profile publicity in the form of posters, leaflets and handbooks; education programmes on sexual violence for all new students and staff; and specialist programmes which focused on groups such as male fraternity members (Sanday, 1990) and 'sports Jocks' (O'Sullivan, 1991) who had acquired a longstanding reputation for a predisposition for perpetrating acts of sexual violence and harassment. For the 'Jocks' some colleges went further requiring completion of a programme on sexual violence and relationship management mandatory for members of male sports teams. Overall, in sharp contrast to the UK, sexual violence it seemed was a highly visible issue on many American campuses. Why was this the case we wondered?

Generally those interviewed postulated two explanations. First that current concern reflected a long history of campaigning by academics and students against sexual harassment and violence on campus. Campaigning which had produced tangible benefits regarding educational programmes and provision (Franklin, 1981: Howe et al, 1982). Second that inaction has become for administrators a phenomenally risky option. This is because civil courts are showing a remarkable appetite for awarding punitive damages against universities found to be negligent regarding student safety. For example in 1992 one university was obliged to pay \$1.6 million in damages for failing to afford adequate security to a student raped on campus (Katz and Vieland, 1993: 134).

By way of contrast the issue of sexual violence involving students has attracted little attention in Britain. It is precisely this invisibility which made it so difficult for many readers in this country to understand the furore generated by the writings of Kate Roiphe (1993) or what she was attacking. Yet just as we were commencing our research on sexual violence involving students the issue fleetingly acquired a high profile here. Largely as a consequence of what became known as the Donnellan case and subsequently the Kydd case involving two Norwich students.

The case of Austen Donnellan, a post-graduate student at King's College London who was acquitted of rape in 1993, generated intense media attention. Because the impact of the case has been so far reaching in terms of policy it will be helpful to outline the basic details at this point. Donnellan and a very drunk woman student had been observed kissing at a party. He accompanied her back to her room where sexual intercourse took place. The woman had little recollection of what happened as she passed out, but the following day she accused Donnellan of rape. Initially she complained to the college authorities who 'informally' asked Donnellan to apologise to her. He refused and was asked to appear before an internal disciplinary tribunal which had the authority to suspend or expel him. By now it was three months after the event and on the advice of his tutor Earl Russell, Donnellan contacted the police to insist he stand trial on the charge of rape. Despite the lengthy delay in reporting the incident; the woman being drunk and expressing no wish for the case to go to court; along with a complete absence of corroborating evidence the Crown Prosecution Service, which normally only proceeds to court if the probability of conviction exceeds 50 per cent, inexplicably opted for Donnellan to stand trial. No explanation for this decision has ever been forthcoming but Lees suggests that

*Presumably it was considered to be in the public interest to clear Donnellan's name, after King's College disciplinary procedures had failed. It is possible that Lord Russell pulled strings to ensure that it did. One report did suggest that he had 'had a word with the Law Lords'. In any event, it must be the only case of rape which has gone to a criminal court in order to clear a man's name. (1994: 2-3)*

As the case unfolded apart from the usual ingredients it acquired the extra piquancy of the 'victim' being a bright, middle-class post-graduate male from a good home ably championed by his tutor Earl Russell who happened to be the son of a great philosopher, Titled and for good measure a front bench spokesperson for the Liberal Party. Donnellan's victory, which for those who followed the case seemed pre-ordained, along with a number of other high profile date rape cases such as those involving Angus Diggle, society solicitor, the actor Craig Charles, William Kennedy Smith and the boxer Mike Tyson merged in a short space of time to partially re-construct the debate about sexual violence. These 'date rape' cases helped produce in their wake new myths to set besides those we have long struggled to free ourselves from creating in the image of Donnellan 'male rape victims' (Wheatcroft, 1994).

In the United States the legal process primed the University sector that self-interest lay in taking pro-active action to prevent sexual violence and harassment; in Britain the opposite was to become the case. The Donnellan judgement being widely interpreted as a portent warning administrators against acting on the complaints of women students. During and after the trial a vitriolically anti-feminist popular press recast Donnellan 'The Perfect Gentleman' (Daily Star, 20 October 1993) as a heroic figure battling against asinine feminist 'political correctness'. For example *The Sun* informed its readers that 'Date Rape is Part of Growing Up' (20 October

1993) whilst Nigella Lawson, in a style highly reminiscent of that encountered in a *Private Eye* parody, revealed that 'To wake up and find yourself in bed with someone whom sober you wouldn't touch with a bargepole is not such a big deal. We've all been there, honey. It's called student life' (Evening Standard, 21 October).

Media coverage of the Donnellan and subsequent Norwich date rape case produced a series of media stereotypes which served to partially re-defined rape in the context of student life (Lees, 1996). Students we were 'authoritatively' informed lived in 'hothouse world', where unique rules of sexual engagement existed (Picardie, 1993). Descriptions of campus 'mating games', promiscuity, 'fuck a fresher weeks' and drinking which according to a forensic witness in the Donnellan case was 'unbelievable' (Braid, 1993, 1993a) conveyed to the world beyond the campus that students were significantly different. That they seemed to willingly engage in dangerous sexual games that sometimes went wrong. If this happened, as in the Donnellan and Norwich cases, and 'misunderstandings' (Hilton, 1993) occurred the young women concerned it was implied were as much to blame as the young men. Thus emerged for many a 'lower-order' rape so designated because it involved students, 'friends', drink and drugs, which was at odds with the norm (Burt, 1991) because:

- *unlike 'real' rape it did not involve considerable force;*
- *sensible decent women protected themselves by staying sober and certainly did not get into bed with a man unless they wanted sex;*
- *consent was a privilege reserved for the sober;*
- *students have lots of sex anyway, so therefore what does one more night matter to them?*
- *women make false allegations just because they have a hangover and have had 'bad sex';*
- *date rape was a suspect 'politically correct' idea imported from America and promulgated by man-hating radical feminists.*

By the time our research commenced British universities appeared even more desperate, if that is possible, than in the past to steer clear of this issue. The story of sexual violence on the British campus was in the throes of being hastily rewritten by those with something to defend even before it was fully articulated. For academics and administrators the whole topic was resplendent with danger signals. The Donnellan and Norwich cases led to the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP), comprising the head of every major British HE institution, establishing post-haste a sub-committee to consider how similar cases might be more expeditiously handled in future. The Zellick Report (1994) published a year after the Donnellan verdict never refers to the case. Nor do rape and sexual assault feature prominently as offenses requiring specific attention. However Judge Marcus Edwards, who wrote an earlier report for King's College on the implications of the Donnellan case, and Earl Russell were the only individuals consulted by the sub-committee. Zellick argued, contrary to the view of Edwards, that universities

should avoid reporting an alleged crime to the police against the wishes of the victim. Further that 'alleged misconduct, which also appears to constitute a criminal offence, should not be the subject of proceedings under the Code (of Student Discipline) unless there has already been a police investigation or prosecution' (Zellick, 1994: 24). The message is unambiguous, in future no University should act as King's College had. Unless the victim is prepared to go to the police and thereafter proceed to court, Zellick argued, the University should take no action against the perpetrator. Irrespective of the weight of the evidence or severity of the distress suffered by the victim the University must stand on the sidelines. This they believed was the only way the institution could protect itself against being embroiled in the sort of fiasco which ensued as a consequence of putting Donnellan before a tribunal and asking him to apologise.

Zellick was an astounding response but one it appears university administrators have chosen to accept. It means in terms of substantiating allegations of sexual violence the principle of 'reasonable belief' currently used in employment settings has been set aside in favour of the 'reasonable doubt' applied by courts. Therefore students who experience sexual violence or harassment are now in an inferior position regarding protection to that of university employees. This inconsistency is difficult to defend. For as long as the Zellick principles hold sway the protection of the perpetrator will be placed above that of the survivor (Carter et al, 1996). Leaving the latter with effectively only two options - to leave or alternatively endure daily contact with the perpetrator. Not surprisingly we have found it is usually the survivor who departs leaving the perpetrator in situ (Gidycz and Koss, 1991).

### **Methodology**

It was in this context we began investigating student experiences and university responses and policies relating to sexual violence. We had always seen our approach to this research as involving critical and feminist methodologies. These incorporate various characteristics but in this context the most important was that the achievement of change was to be a desired not accidental by-product (Mies, 1993).

The key American research on campus sexual violence has been undertaken by Koss and colleagues (Koss, Gidycz and Wisniewski, 1987; Koss and Cox, 1988; Koss and Dinero, 1988; 1989; White and Koss, 1991; Koss and Cook, 1993). In particular her survey of 6000 undergraduates at 32 American colleges recounted again and again the story of 'acquaintance rape' (Warshaw, 1988). The most publicised and controversial finding from which was that one in four female respondents had an experience which met the legal definition of rape or attempted rape.

Inevitably this statistic has been scrutinised and disputed (see Gilbert, 1993; Roiphe 1993). Widespread support for Koss and colleagues can be gleaned from other studies, therefore although precise figures will always allude us it seems indisputable that the scale of the problem is substantial if largely hidden. However it was clear from the onset that we lacked the resources to partake in the numbers game. Nor did we really want to replicate previous prevalence studies. For even if



Koss does over-estimate the scale of the problem, which we suspect is unlikely, we know as Moffatt found 'incidence of sexual abuse and "acquaintance rape" ... blight the lives' of a high proportion of female students (1989; 48: see also Randall and Haskell, 1995; Spitzberg and Thorndike, 1992) in the United States and Britain (EUSA, 1993). In addition we know from other research, especially the work of Liz Kelly (1988), that experiences along the continuum of sexual violence are commonplace and we wanted to look at this range of events in the context of the student experience. Since this is a research process through which we hope to influence debate and to learn through actively engaging in the field we decided there would be a number of discrete elements:

- (a) *a survey of student experiences and views on sexual violence conducted in a number of universities and covering both sexes;*
- (b) *a survey of university policies on sexual violence including responses to the Zellick Report;*
- (c) *a critical analysis of the Zellick Report including working on a feminist alternative;*
- (d) *interviews with a range of people including survivors of sexual violence, friends and supporters of survivors and staff involved in advising and counselling students;*
- (e) *a telephone survey of support systems and resources within universities and student unions.*

This research has been undertaken by a number of people, albeit most for only a small amount of time. This means we are able to explore as a group issues as they arise, again part of the process of undertaking critical research. This involves learning from the things that go wrong as well as the process of data collection. Two issues are worth noting. First it has often been difficult for us to talk with people about such painful and frequently hidden experiences and then have little to offer by way of support. Although we have given information about local resources to everyone who has taken part, this usually only serves to highlight that although some services may be of high quality, they are often thinly spread and inaccessible. This reinforced our conviction that there was an urgent need to make these issues more visible and develop adequate resources.

Second we decided early on to employ the term sexual violence to describe the range of experiences as a continuum. This has proved contentious and prompted discussions regarding its use. For the present we have opted to retain it as part of the process of politicisation of all it involves.

### **Stages of Research**

A questionnaire was used in the early stages as an instrument for trawling student experiences of sexual violence and uncovering the ways in which universities dealt with it. This method was accompanied by individual in-depth interviews with staff and students. In tandem with the student questionnaire we circulated one to university establishments which focused on their policy and practice. The latter achieved a 56 per cent response. One was also dispatched to a sample of US, Australian, New Zealand and South African universities.

The student questionnaire was administered via several methods - in lectures, Students' Unions and to Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual groups. To date we have visited 6 universities and had 101 completed 76 by women and 25 by men. The sample which was drawn from across the age range of students included 6 black students and those studying on a wide variety of courses. Approximately a quarter were mature students. Previous research on sexual violence indicates it is 18-21 year olds who constitute the high risk groups. As one older student put it:

*I think these areas are probably more applicable to younger students, especially those that live in students accommodation for older married students this is less likely.*

This quote illustrates the commonly held belief that the threat of violence emanates from strangers outside the home, thus making it possible for 'sensible' women to avoid such attacks. There is, however, ample research to show that you are more likely to be a victim of an attack if you are in a relationship. Indeed the link between 'domestic' violence and sexual violence is now routinely acknowledged and a number of mature students in our research described how male partners and family members felt threatened by their involvement in higher education. These examples demonstrate the relevance of 'outside' experiences to students current encounters with higher education illustrating how this impacts upon their participation. Moreover it underlines the inter-connectedness between different patterns of violence and lends support to the concept of a continuum of violence against women. Also it reinforces the need to establish, where lacking, appropriate links with the 'network' of university and community resources focusing on differing needs.

### **Type of incidents**

In order to prompt students' memories we provided a range of examples of sexual violence located along a continuum of general violence. Students were then asked if they had experienced this themselves, witnessed it or been told of such an incident by a friend. All such incidents, we believe, go towards forming a consciousness of violence which in turn shapes peoples' lives. We found violence, and in particular sexual violence, affected the vast majority of our sample with 79% (80% of the men and 80% of the women) naming at least one incident whilst a clear majority had suffered multiple forms of abuse and sexual intrusion. A lot of the men's incidents, however, involved sexual violence against women acquaintances by male perpetrators. Also nearly half of victimisation incidents reported to us by men were presented by Gay and Bisexual men. Previous research especially that conducted in America by Koss had fastened onto the heterosexual 'date rape' scenario. Initially we had avoided specifically asking for sexuality to be identified on the questionnaire but following requests by respondents did so.

Statistics on their own often hide the reality of sexual violence, as a consequence it is essential that those who have experienced it at first hand are given a voice. The case examples are varied so the following few examples of incidents experienced by students are merely illustrative:

*One man grabbed my hand and forced it onto his friend's crotch. As far as I know both were members of the public... I occasionally see the perpetrator (e.g. yesterday in the dentist's) and used to have to serve him when I was a part time shop assistant... I escaped from the situation feeling shaken and attacked, told my boyfriend who had a talk with the perpetrator about the unacceptability of his behaviour... I should have dealt with it myself, not used my boyfriend as a 'macho protector' but I was too shocked and shaken to do so.*

*We all sat in Samantha's room, shared a single bed. Me and Samantha lying on the bed thinking we were going to sleep here for the night and he can find a sofa or go home Steve was going - Oh what is going on? To anyone else it was obvious she isn't interested and she didn't make any effort to talk to him at the party... Samantha was going to sleep, she was unconsciously out of it anyway. And Steve started taking his clothes off. And I just remember... thinking oh god this is quite funny there is two of us here, its not like he is taking his clothes off in front of one of us, thinking he was going to sleep with one of us and.. And he got into bed in between me and Samantha. This was on a single bed. And first of all he turned around and he put his arm round me. And then he turned around and cuddled up to Samantha. I was thinking this is ridiculous, I have to get up early this morning... and I went and slept with a friend in the other room. I got a phone call from Samantha that afternoon and she said oh something terrible has happened I think I have been raped by Steve... she said that morning when she woke up she knew someone had been messing with her... (and goes on to describe the detail of this).*

*I was pressurized by peer group pressure into having sex when I was 15, when in foreplay I decided I couldn't go through with it, he still continued, it only dawned on me a year or so later that this is rape, and it has had amazing mental repercussions for me in later life - I get amazingly scared if the pressure is on for me to have sex in a relationship, brings back memories.*

These cases are examples of the numerous incidents recounted to us. After reading page after page of similar accounts, its repetitive nature becomes apparent as does the extent to which experiencing sexual violence is a component of what it means to be a woman in contemporary society.

As well as directly affecting their studies, here are some of the other ways sexual violence, and the fear of it impacted on students' lives:

*Hate walking alone. Serious depression and eating disorders after incident.*

*Cautious now of going out on my own at night. Often feel insecure in Halls of Residence.*

*Do not go out alone at night, am wary of strangers, particularly men, am nervous when driving alone.*

*...every meal, breakfast and dinner, we would be standing in the queue and you would hear something being muttered behind - fucking lesbian - and you turn round and you wouldn't see who it was that had said it. It would just be this sea of blank faces. And this is what I mean there was this core of people that actually did it but all the others in the hall just stood by and let it happen... We were really scared most of the time. We would be sat at a table and we would be jumping every time a tray was dropped. Your behaviour changes when you are in a position where you are always frightened to death for your life. You do become very sensitive. Sarah had tears in her eyes most of the time as well, we had mega bags under our eyes during that week, we went for sleeping pills to the doctors.*

This student was quite clear about why this was happening:

*...this sort of neo-nazi group - there was a group of about ten core lads. But the majority of people in the halls would just turn their back on it and just ignore it. There were about 200 people in this hall... and if the other 190 people did actually turn round and say collectively, 'that's enough', we would have had them but they didn't you know. So it was allowed to go on and it escalated.*

She paralleled this with the experience of a group of black students in her hall of residence:

*...right at the beginning of term, you used to go down to meals and there was about 20 black people, 20 black faces and by the second term there was none of them. Each one of them had been targeted individually and each one had left and moved into another hall or left. We heard stories... that there were four people living in one room because they were frightened to be on their own and they had moved out of their original rooms because they had been targeted... Each of them... would have seen it as an individual thing against them because... it happened so gradually it wasn't until you thought right at the beginning of term there were 20 black people here and now this term there are none. They didn't all move out in one week they all moved out very gradually.*

### **University Response**

We asked students what their universities and students' unions currently did to protect them from sexual violence and what might be done to improve the situation. A lot didn't know what, if anything, their universities did. Those who attempted to respond were often very vague and pragmatic about what might be provided giving examples such as security lighting and rape alarms. Thus reinforcing the notion that the threat came from outside - the 'strangers lurking in dark alleys' scenario. Furthermore universities over-whelmingly promoting such stock measures feed a false sense of security. Overall it was a piecemeal response to a question from which, had universities comprehensively addressed this issue, we would have hoped for something more cohesive.

One student contrasted the respective approaches of two hall of residence wardens. One she believed was racist and sexist and colluded with the victimisation of certain groups of students. The other, who had a higher profile, was quick to spot victimisation and nip it in the bud thereby averting escalation. He appeared to have a system of sanctions for people whose behaviour was offensive including letters of apology to the victim which he would then place on noticeboards around the halls. Our student was unable to identify a structure for reporting such incidents but had sufficient confidence in the latter of the two wardens to report what happened to her. Incidents such as this demonstrate the need for staff to be trained in anti-discriminatory practice. Equally they illustrate how in the absence of a clear and accessible system of dealing with violence responsibility falls onto individual students and staff to negotiate this potential minefield. Moreover to do so without having the support of a legitimating structure. If their efforts are unsuccessful then the responsibility for failure is transferred to the individuals from the university whatever the degree of negligence. The following account from a friend of a survivor demonstrates how victims are further brutalized by the university's failure to act:

*This student was frustrated by the lack of action by the university and, at further risk to herself, decided to deal with the culprits ... she just did it spontaneously. She saw a guy in the library who she knew was part of it and she just went up to him... (she) confronted quite a few of the lads individually, when she saw them in the library. When they are in a big group they are quite happy to go on but when they are there and on their own they went bright red.*

When we asked for ideas regarding what universities could do to better protect students, respondents exhibited surprisingly low expectations - an attitude commensurate with Zellick's intentions. In fact it would be fair to say that, with some exceptions, students predominately embraced a normative narrow, individualistic, pathological approach to sexual violence. Generally supporting the notion that it is the responsibility of women to avoid such incidents. This attitude gives no acknowledgement to the concept of a wider 'community' and with it an implied collective responsibility for the well being of its members. By their lack of knowledge of university and students' union policy and practice most respondents bolstered our conviction of the need, as a point of departure to publicize existing policies and practices, make them more accessible, 'user friendly' and meaningful. The following quotes are some of the more positive suggestions:

*I think we should have at least had an individual letter of apology off each one of those students. Sat in the same room with them with a mediator, if we could.*

*Promote awareness of specific cases of sexual assault of students.*

*Kick people out if they are guilty of an offence. Give warnings. Have a policy notifying everyone that they take a hard line on it.*

*Hold more talks aimed at offenses and better inform female/male first year students of the problems that may arise.*

*Raise men's awareness of what constitutes sexual violence. And women's awareness too. Take women's complaints seriously. Believe women.*

### **Expectations of women and men**

We included a section in the questionnaire which presented a series of statements which lent support to the mythology of sexual violence as something for which 'victims' were themselves often to blame. Here we did encounter, to a degree, the impact of feminism. Statements such as 'It is not surprising that some women students are raped if they have been drinking alcohol and taking drugs' and 'It is not surprising that some women are raped given the way they dress and behave' were repudiated. Equally a wide-ranging recognition emerged for men and women to be more explicit and open with each other about sexual relations. However this was not always translated into practice for in other sections women were overwhelmingly held responsible for avoiding such attacks. When asked to identify how both men and women might reduce the risk of sexual violence 86% of the sample suggested ways women might alter their behaviour but only 64% suggested how men might. It appears to be still designated a women's problem. Whilst violence against women is now a fairly common discourse a deep-seated reluctance persists regarding any willingness to hold men accountable and therefore demand changes in the behaviour of male students. Furthermore when accountability was doled out it was 'safely' transferred to strangers, and more pragmatic strategies were consequently suggested. Women, the majority of respondents believed, could prevent sexual violence by carrying rape alarms, not going out alone and dressing less provocatively. Some did acknowledge the threat from 'within', the existence of which is amply supported by research evidence, but even these rarely identified policies to counter this. One did suggest the risk of sexual violence could be reduced if students

*talked more openly about their feelings and expectations in order to clarify relationships with females and males. Ensure advances are what both parties really want and are happy with - talk beforehand.*

However notable by its absence was any advocacy of educational programmes on relationships and 'dating protocol' such as those encountered in many American universities.

### **Conclusion**

The university campus is increasingly identified as a location where crime is commonplace. Notices have proliferated in recent years warning of the need for constant vigilance to prevent the loss of staff, student and institutional property. Crime prevention officers tour Halls of Residence in many universities to warn students they will be the victim of burglary or opportunist theft if they fail to take precautions. Alongside exhortation the message is subliminally endorsed by the flourishing investment in safety - padlocks, lights, swipe cards controlling access, barriers, CCTV cameras, identity badges and security patrols. Halls of residence are fast becoming laagers and teaching areas fortified retreats. Although the emphasis is overwhelmingly on the need to guard



against property crimes everything fuels the impression that the university is a now a 'dangerous place'. After all those invaders who come to steal and sell drugs are, it is implied, capable of committing 'worse' crimes.

This debate has cast students and staff as the respectable victims of underclass denizens. It never being broached that either might themselves be the perpetrators of criminal activity. No university warns students that their classmates are as likely to be drug dealers, rapists or thieves as those young men walking past on their way to the shops. It seems the myth must be maintained at all costs that those attending the university to study or teach are intellectually and ethically superior to those unable to secure entrance.

If pressed to reflect upon their experience students usually concede the threat to their property and physical well-being is far more likely to emanate from 'inside' than outside the institution. Belongings which 'disappear' from the room or fridge, like the books missing from the library, are invariably stolen by peers. Victims of physical and sexual assaults also repeatedly confirm it is other students and staff who pose the threat. However the fiction 'of the pre-eminent danger being posed by outsiders' is rarely, if ever, challenged. To a lesser or greater extent all parties collude with this transference of guilt. Institutions can never publicly admit they have an internal problem. Anything which implies the behaviour of certain students might pose a threat to their peers being perceived as damaging to the corporate image. As a consequence all attempts to name the problem are frustrated. Sexual violence is not perpetrated by students upon students - full stop. Therefore the dangers which do exist emanate from outsiders and must consequently be inhibited by recourse to technical solutions and greater vigilance on the part of potential victims. Even those who have suffered from sexual violence committed by other students we found still tended to re-enforce this dominant view by focusing attention on the need for the same traditional technical solutions to the problem - lights, locks and lifts. Initially this seems difficult to account for, unless one reflects on the conspiracy of silence and the resultant absence of any serious discussion of the problem of sexual violence on campus. Because it is not discussed those who suffer at the hands of other students assume, wrongly, they are the exception which proves the rule. The posters, the talks on campus safety, the burgeoning appurtenances of security all speak of the danger beyond never the risks within, thereby conspiring to dispel any doubts that what they experienced might be commonplace. Whereas investment in alarms, lights and security staff conveys a warm and re-assuring message to potential students, a positive image of a caring and concerned institution addressing the question of the behaviour of their own students is seen as a far more risky option. Student date rape, like drug and alcohol abuse; and male to male violence is ignored because to permit discussion is viewed as tantamount to broadcasting to the outside world that you uniquely have such problems. Students must therefore be portrayed as potential victims of the underclass beyond the gates - never as a threat.

It is not merely the corporate fear of 'unwelcome publicity' which hinders the naming of the problem. Sexual violence like other key issues falls victim to a creeping managerialism every bit as oppressive as the paternalism it replaced. British university life, especially in the 'new' universities, provides few opportunities for either democratic debate or access to the decision-making process. Staff are disposable operatives and students customers - for both their daily treatment and isolation from the managerial core tells them it is a lottery as to whether they will be seriously listened too. Victims of sexual violence will know the score and have scant expectation they will be treated with respect or sensitivity. Their anonymity as students in the new mass university is a precursor of their anonymity as victim. Unless the university resembles more a community and less a transit camp issues such as this will continue to be ignored.

It would be naive to presume that all the available solutions to sexual violence on campus can be imported ready packaged from the United States. However the scale and diversity of the US Higher Education sector is such that pockets of good practice are much more likely to flourish than in our more centralised and regimented setting. Also their record of responding to this issue means they have acquired a wealth of experience which it would be naive and arrogant to overlook. Certainly our research has identified policies initiatives which rate further investigation and serious evaluation. Amongst the examples observed we would wish to highlight are:-

- (1) The adoption of policies designed to extend student involvement in all layers of administration. This would enable them to secure the experience and knowledge to make a meaningful contribution to policy debates. Student presence as equal partners in and contributors to the provision of counselling services, induction programmes, discipline procedures and security services have two main benefits. First they stimulate an awareness within those areas of student as opposed to managerial needs. Second they help create a constituency of informed, active and engaged students within the community. A group who know the administration and are in turn known by the administration;
- (2) The creation of a Dean of Students or equivalent with an explicit responsibility for student welfare. Someone at the pinnacle of the hierarchy who is required to listen and respond to student views and needs; act as a student discipline officer; and handle complaints. The presence of a Dean of Students within American universities holds out a promise that concerns will be heard and 'something done' which is absent in most British universities;
- (3) The introduction of induction programmes designed to help prepare freshers for the trials and tribulations of student life. Programmes which include units looking at the impact of violence, in particular sexual violence, on students along with discussion of such issues as drug and alcohol usage and the management of relationships;
- (4) Funding and encouragement of self-help and support group programmes for those who have experienced sexual violence and sexual harassment;

- (5) Publicity which names the problem of sexual violence and promulgates a strategy of zero tolerance;
- (6) Public redress for victims so that others can see that perpetrators are being dealt with and that the institution is sufficiently concerned to take action;
- (7) University support for programmes which assist victims and contribute to prevention. At present few institutions make any effort to provide help for students who have experienced sexual violence, or have been victimised by male students. Rape Crisis and Womens Centres receive no help from the university sector even though they provide an essential, if unacknowledged, service for students. Traditionally universities have been parasitic upon the goodwill of such agencies. Such an approach is not acceptable. Where such provision exists then universities should offer support, where it does not they should be willing to contribute towards making good the shortfall;
- (8) Finally in the United States Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments requires every campus to fund an Office of Affirmative Action designed to serve all the students and hear all complaints of sex discrimination and harassment and monitor their affirmative action and other anti-discriminatory programmes. Although most British universities have 'an Equal Opportunities Officer' these are usually somewhat marginal appendages of the Personnel Office devoid of a statutory function and possessing little more than a training and advisory brief. Perhaps the time has come to create a legal framework here which would oblige institutions to act in a positive manner with regards to these issues and hold them accountable for any failure to respond.

Overall we opt to advocate policies which are pro-active and innovative with the emphasis on prevention. Approaches which seek to foster a sense of community within the university and encourage collaboration with outside agencies. However in the absence of such policies the current refusal of institutions to challenge sexual violence leaves women vulnerable to abuse within higher education. The campus is not a safe haven. Violence against women acts as a form of social control within this sector as elsewhere. It creates conditions under which women often experience stress, apprehension and fear and therefore (consciously or otherwise) employ strategies to enhance their safety. Universities have made public commitments in charters and mission statements to provide a setting free from discrimination. Yet until they opt to openly address the problem of sexual violence such commitments will retain a somewhat hollow ring. In particular their tacit acceptance of the Zellick approach to dealing with the most serious examples of sexual violence conveys a callous indifference to the problem which makes a mockery of those laudable aims.

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**Note**

The research on which this article is based was undertaken by a team of people including in addition to the authors Karen Miller, Nicola Groves and Harrie Churchill. All can be reached via the Social Welfare Research Unit, University of Northumbria, Newcastle on Tyne NE1 8ST, tel: 0191 2274319.

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## 'STUDENTHOOD' IN THE 1990s:

*Is there life beyond the lecture theatre?*

ELIZABETH L KENYON

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### Introduction and Aims

In recent years Britain has committed itself to a system of higher education characterised by increased physical expansion, and growth in student numbers. As these moves from 'elite' to 'mass' higher education continue onwards, they prompt the realisation that undergraduate students are now forming both an increasingly large, and an increasingly diverse, sub-group of the urban populations of our university cities. This, commentators claim, means that the contemporary student cohort comprises such a varied set of individuals, that the conventional image of students living away from home in separate and segregated 'communities of scholars' is of little contemporary relevance. In today's mass system, where the undergraduate body comprises individuals from a wide variety of residential, age, social class, and ethnic groups, the traditional identity and experience associated with being an undergraduate is seen to be out-dated and stereotypical in its presentation.

Literature, both popular and academic, hails us with stories of students becoming more mainstream (King, 1995; McNay, 1994); some lamenting the loss of the special student transition to adulthood (Abrams, 1995; Elliott, 1995), whilst others are less complementary, asking if we should be mourning the loss of a life of privilege and escapism. Yet paradoxically, amidst this flurry of declarations about changes in student lifestyles and experiences, other literature continues to represent students in a very characteristic way; seemingly ignoring the weight of evidence that changes are afoot. In everyday usage, the term 'undergraduate student' continues to be associated with two separate issues: first of all, with the act of studying at a higher education institution; but secondly, and often more importantly, with specific behavioural characteristics, lifestyle traits, and membership of a student cultural sub-group.

What I find fascinating about these two polarised and seemingly mutually exclusive views (the 'new and varied' versus the 'traditional and singular' student experience) is that they are largely based either on subjective and anecdotal evidence, or hard statistical data about general structural trends in the age, social composition and residential status of students. What have not been considered, to date, are the actual perceptions and experiences of students themselves. I believe that without analysis at this individual level - analysis which reveals the dynamic everyday qualities of the student experience - it is all too easy to look back to the past and believe that in the immediate post-war period there was one static student experience, against which today's varied and new student experiences can be contrasted. This leads almost by default, first of all, to a general oversight of the varied and dynamic nature of the student experience throughout history, and secondly, to the assumption that 'traditional studenthood' was automatically and naturally encountered by all those who became students in the 'elite' institutions of post-war Britain.



To explore the student experience further, and to reveal its dynamic adapting qualities, the analysis presented here is based on students' own evaluations of their lives at university beyond the formal learning experience. What this article cannot achieve is a comprehensive analysis of all student experiences past and present. What it can do, however, is challenge two assumptions: first of all that the 'traditional' student experience is a static and natural truism which was automatically experienced within the 'elite' university system; and secondly, that the traditional student experience is of little consequence to undergraduates within the modern British system of mass higher education. The discussion will first of all introduce some of the various and eclectic factors which have led to the gradual development of the student experience we now deem 'traditional', and then will go on to consider why, for certain individuals, aspects of this experience are still meaningful. My evidence suggests that for those students who continue to move away from home and live in a student-only environment, and indeed for a number of those who do not, a variety of contemporary permutations of the traditional student experience are still salient and meaningful. What will become clear is that these experiences are neither an exact replication of traditional images of student life, nor a complete shift from them, but can be viewed as a variation on their theme.

### **The 'traditional' student experience**

Before we can consider the contemporary relevance of the notion of a traditional student experience, and indeed its origins as a concept, idea and lifestyle, it is first of all apposite to begin with a brief consideration of what is implied by this terminology. Notably, then, 'being a student' involves moving away from the parental home in late adolescence, and taking part in a self-absorbing experience of achieving academic knowledge whilst participating in a twenty-four hour student life, which exists above and beyond more formal learning. Here the student is protected from the harsh realities of everyday life so that s/he can concentrate wholly on social, personal and academic maturation. In this sense the student experience of developing new academic, social and personal skills and roles is closely tied to the idea that the student is an individual undergoing the transition from adolescence to adulthood. In this transitional stage between two statuses, individuals can be perceived as living an 'abnormal life', often with little status, both suspended outside of society and outside of time (Glaser and Strauss, 1971; Leach, 1976; Turner, 1969). And it is this distinctiveness and separateness, which has framed and developed the idea that a special student space and time can and should exist:

*Students certainly live and mean to live in a special time and space. Their studenthood momentarily frees them from family life and working life. Encapsulated in the autonomy of university time, they escape, even more completely than their teachers, from the schedules of society at large, knowing no other deadline than the dies irae of the examination, and no other timetable than the undemanding pattern of weekly lectures (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979, p.29).*

This separation from normal life patterns is additionally part of the conventional image of the university student experience and culture; a difference which is often structurally supported by the physical segregation of students away from 'real life' into student-only accommodation. In this new transitional world of few restrictions, students are also believed to subvert the norms and values of adult life (Aggleton, 1987), leading to tales of hedonism and debauchery (Campbell, 1995; Wheen, 1982). Viz Magazine's character 'Student Grant', the recently repeated BBC TV series 'The Young Ones', and articles and reports in both national and local newspapers, continue to portray images of the stereotypical student, and student lifestyle on an often weekly basis.

### **Transformations and developments in student life**

The common-sense 'traditional' view of students, portrayed above, is widely considered to have become a naturalised and normative part of university life, especially in post-war Britain. On closer investigation, however, it becomes evident that this segregated and special experience does not wholly originate from this one specific point in history. It is, in fact, the by-product of a number of philosophical and practical influences and supports which have arisen over seven centuries of university development. Within the parameters of this article it is impossible to provide an exhaustive discussion of the history of studenthood. However, what I hope to do is to begin to reveal some of the key events and factors which have accumulated at different points in history to influence today's image of student life.

First of all, the idea of the need to segregate students away from wider society in special accommodation, in part, originates from practical solutions to 'town-and-gown' clashes in thirteenth and fourteenth century Oxford. Records of interactions between students and townsfolk in this period reveal street brawls, some with mortal results (Hartley, 1988; Wheen, 1982). As Rashdall (1936) states, 'There is probably not a single yard of ground in any part of the classic High Street that lies between St. Martin's and St. Mary's which has not, at one time, or other, been stained with blood' (p.96). The provision of special segregated living and working environments to house the homeless young students who came to Oxford and Cambridge was one of the main outcomes of these conflicts. By 1400, seven colleges were built at Oxford for this segregative purpose, and six followed at Cambridge (Brothers and Hatch, 1971; Stewart, 1989).

Moving forward to the nineteenth century, a further factor which contributed to the gradual development of the idea and practice of a special twenty-four hour student experience, was the development of liberal arts philosophies in Britain. Liberal arts theories of university education supported the idea that intellectual enlargement and advancement of the character could only be gained if the student absorbed a connected and holistic view of a subject from all angles, including those beyond formal teaching and learning. John Henry Newman is probably the most well known defender of this liberal tradition, and early in his career, whilst still an undergraduate at Oxford in 1819, he was instrumental in influencing a distinct student character through his magazine *The Undergraduate* which was pioneered as a diversion from academic studies (Rothblatt, 1975).

A third factor, believed to be significant in contributing towards the image we now hold of undergraduate students, has been the age composition of the student body throughout the history of higher education in Britain. The student body has, from medieval times to the present day, been largely composed of individuals entering adulthood. In the medieval period, first year students were often as young as fourteen when they entered higher education. University therefore became an important venue for the transition to adulthood. As stated earlier, during this transitional period when the individual is between life stages, an element of separation from more mainstream society can occur. And it is this idea of a moratorium from reality, which has in part framed and developed the idea that there is a need for a special student space and time within which adulthood can be sought and embraced.

The idea of studenthood as a time free from timetables and restrictions, can additionally be traced back to the free time which has been integral to the student experience throughout history. In the middle ages, students as young as fourteen were free to roam the streets up to the hour when most townspeople were in the habit, if not compelled by civic statutes, of retiring to bed. Nocturnal escapades of students were therefore often recorded (Rashdall, 1936). This free and flexible lifestyle continued on into the 18th century when undergraduates (now at the older age of seventeen) were again recorded as having unusual amounts of spare time. Students rose late, had little to do, could choose which lectures to attend, dined for long period of time, and spent evenings in drink.

Moving into the post-war years of the twentieth century, practical changes to the British higher education system have again influenced and adapted common-sense notions of students and student life. In particular, logistical measures to cope with the number of students applying for courses in the 1960s resulted in the creation of a central admissions agency, the Universities Central Council for Admissions (UCCA), through which all British university applications were processed. This practical solution in turn encouraged students to apply further away from home, as they were now expected to make four choices from a list of all universities (or later polytechnics via PCAS). In addition, the introduction of the mandatory student grant and state benefits for students, gave undergraduates the financial freedom to live independently from their families. These financial awards indirectly supported and promoted the image of living away from home in independent accommodation as a central experience of studenthood in the post-war period.

The gradual result of the accumulation of these various supports, events and factors (with others too numerous to detail here) was the growth of the idea that the student experience was both special and different. This was, most significantly, supported and promoted in the early post war years by the move in 1960's Britain to nurture studenthood, both ideologically and structurally, in the very culture and architecture of the universities. The master-plans underlying the new-build 'plate-glass' campus universities of the 1960s (for example York, Lancaster and Essex), included conscious architectural efforts to engineer specific student experiences. This move came from the realisation that segregated student housing, which had initially resulted from

practical problem solving in medieval Oxford, could in fact be used as space to promote modern day 'communities of scholars'. The consciousness of the controlling and influencing power that residential accommodation could have over students resulted in the twenty-four hour university being consciously conceived and created. And, in combination with the other factors identified above, this worked gradually to consolidate the image of studenthood and student life which came to be viewed as natural and normative in the late twentieth century.

### **Empirical Setting**

The following analysis is taken from research conducted in Sunderland between 1992-1995, which explores the origins and formation of 'student areas' in residential districts of a city containing a newly designated university. Data collection has taken as its starting point the need to understand the meanings interviewees themselves attribute to their residential areas and their activities and behaviour therein. To accomplish this, seventy-two in-depth focused interviews were conducted with a variety of student and non-student residents within four 'student areas' of the city. Although the wider project is not exclusively concerned with the quality and meanings of undergraduate life beyond the lecture theatre, my research has certainly generated data which are pertinent to an exploration of this.

Having demonstrated that the 'traditional' student image and experience, often treated as a natural and static phenomenon, has in fact a dynamic and complex history, it is now possible to go on to reveal that certain aspects of the contemporary student experience are the latest manifestations of these earlier developments and experiments, rather than complete shifts away from them. This article specifically uses the responses of twenty-eight students chosen from the wider research sample. Each interview was chosen due to the fact that its respondent revealed a commitment to, and experience of, the 'traditional' student experience. The aim of using this sub-set of the wider sample was to investigate how some of the conventional experiences associated with 'being a student' are interpreted by members of Sunderland University's contemporary student cohort.

Thus, rather than providing a comprehensive exploration of contemporary student experiences, this article concentrates solely on contemporary manifestations of the experiences and variables believed to be central to the 'traditional' student experience. Due to the central association of certain ages (during the transition from adolescence to adulthood), and certain residential statuses (studying away from home in a student-only environment), with traditional student life, the analysis uses the two pivotal axes of age and residential status to explore the student experience.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

Analysis of the data has revealed three types of traditional student life (see figure 1), experienced by individuals of varying ages (school-leaver or mature) and residential statuses (incomer or local). For these individuals, a 'traditional' student identity, and its associated roles and experiences, formed a major and salient part of their lives. This section therefore outlines what 'being a student' meant to the three case-groups identified: school-leaver incomers; mature incomers and school-leaver locals.

Figure 1: The Student Experience: Patterns of Diversity.

	INCOMERS	LOCALS
SCHOOL LEAVERS	25	1
MATURES	2	

*Number of Students in Category*

### 1) School-Leaver Incomers

For this group of twenty-five individuals, 'being a student' involved many of the traditional expectations and conventions of studenthood. These students described their studenthood as a period of development from adolescence to young adulthood; a transition from a life of dependence on parents to one of personal independence. Student life also provided a world free from the restrictions and expectations of real life. The following quotation describes this feeling of suspension and freedom clearly:

*You have got to make the most of it. You have got to! Because you were constricted by parents and school as a kid, and you get a job and you are going to be restricted by what you have to look like, and time. So this is probably the only time when no-one cares how you dress and no-one cares what you do with your time. (First year environmental studies student, age 21)*

The interval spent 'being a student', during this transitional period, was also a time when individuals could sample all the positive experiences of their developing adult independence, without the associated responsibilities:

*I mean being here without having all the responsibilities is all part of the experience, isn't it. It is all part of learning about life. You see how to do things before you have to shoulder all the responsibility. (First year communications systems student, age 20)*

Finally, this period of transition was characterised by its specific time, place and people orientation; taking place within the confines of term-time, within a specific community of student-only friends, and ultimately often in university or student-only locations. This special student-only time and space was seen to be divorced from the city in which it was located, often so much so that students indicated that they could be at university anywhere, and the very same experiences could be occurring.

As well as representing a major period of transition for the individuals involved, 'being a student' provided a chance for this group to participate in new experiences which helped to further their personal and educational development. The first of these experiences was the physical break away from the parental home. By making this break, individuals had the opportunity to leave past identities and roles behind

for the duration of their student lives. Living with other students not only affected who these students predominantly interacted with, but also affected who they were most likely to value as significant others. The new relationships that were forged with student living companions were perceived as more intense than any previous friendships prior to university, when the intimacy of living together was reserved very often for family members. Furthermore, these students remarked that coming away to university had provided the new experience of mixing with a group who were all placed in the same position. Consequently, students experienced an environment which was singularly conducive to friendship formation. Respondents in this category also referred to the expectation that being a student required a change in living standards and arrangements, in terms of less emphasis on smart clothing, new lifestyle patterns and communal, often basically furnished, dwellings:

*I mean, once you become a student you don't actually give a shit where you live, do you really? I mean, before you came here if you got put in a real dingy dreary hole then you would have started crying wouldn't you? But when you are here you expect it... you expect the worst really. (Second year applied biology student, age 20)*

Finally, the period of transition, the growing independence and concomitant lack of responsibilities that characterised 'being a student' for this group, added to the high level of self time-management and free-time that attending university provided, meant that they experienced less restrictions on their time and behaviour than ever before. This freedom was believed to extend to behavioural practices that students anticipated their parents would neither condone nor tolerate:

*At my parents' house we wouldn't invent a game when we run at the door and see how high you can run up it with putting your hand on the chest. (Second year psychology student, age 20)*

*We make more mess than we would do at home. I put things in the bin at home, but here it is usually full so we end up putting them on the floor. (Second year pharmacology student, age 19)*

Thus for students in the incomer school-leaver group, the new expectations and experiences of student life often resulted in a life of indulgent socialising, and personal and educational development, in a twenty-four hour exclusively student culture:

*I mean sometimes something will happen in halls and you think that all these people are fulfilling the ideal of university and what it is supposed to be like. And you think yes, this is college, and I am here experiencing it!... It is unique. I mean moving out as a student is unique... as a student you tend to come here and say, 'what's in it for me?' (First year environmental studies student, age 21)*

Responses demonstrated that these expectations and experiences were influenced not only by their student peers, but also by the general expectations of both significant others, and society as a whole. As individuals who were still undergoing the transition



from adolescence to adulthood, moving away from home to become a student was both expected and valued by parents, teachers and peers. All of these expectations influenced the value students gave to their student identities, and the social and educational roles and experiences that studenthood encompassed:

*I mean, you can't have one without the other. You can't have a degree without the student life, and getting away. It is all part and parcel of university and what you expect it to be like isn't it? (Second year applied biology student, age 20)*

To conclude, then, this specific manifestation of student life certainly appeared to be a contemporary permutation of the ideas and images put forward in common-sense notions of studenthood. Here students were breaking away from previous adolescent roles by moving away from home to attend university whilst undertaking the status passage to adulthood. In making this move they joined a student-only environment in which most, if not all, new significant others were students. Within this group new student roles and identities were formed and valued:

*We don't try and shake the term 'student' off... We like being students! It is quite a status thing amongst our friends... You are very much influenced by your friends as well, and you meet people who influence your ideas and what you listen to. (First year communication studies student, age 20)*

Moreover the structure of the university day, and the free time this engendered for this group, matched closely to the traditional concept of student life as a time of freedom where the wider time and behavioural norms of society were easily exchanged for the new norms of student life.

## 2) *Mature Incomers*

Of the wider group of interview respondents who saw their student identity and lifestyle as salient, two students had taken the traditional step of moving away to university at a non-traditional life-stage. There is now an extensive literature in sociology and related disciplines, on mature student experiences (see for example Duke, 1987; Edwards, 1993). However, the majority of this refers to the 'unconventional' experiences of mature students in and out of the classroom. In contrast, the two responses analysed below do not fit into this mould. Although these responses may at first seem exceptional, it must be remembered that the purpose of this article is to chart the experiences of individuals who believe they are experiencing a 'traditional' student life. In this context it is therefore important to explore the fact that, contrary to popular belief, some mature students can experience a variation on the theme of 'traditional' student life.

Having already become adults in an environment other than higher education, these students could not relate the period of transition from adolescence to adulthood to their own particular experience of 'being a student'. This perceived contrast to normal undergraduates was stressed by both students in this category. However, these individuals believed their educational experience involved another form of status passage. They had chosen to make a purposive career break, leaving past identities

and significant others behind, to become a graduate. Thus the traditional idea of living away from home in a twenty-four hour student-only environment was adapted to become a support mechanism for their own particular transitional experience. As a result of making both a career break and a physical move away to support this, these students were able concentrate solely on the educational living and learning experience without past roles and responsibilities taking over:

*I felt to get the best for myself I needed to move away from home. I had worked before, so there was the attraction still at home to spend money and continue my lifestyle there as it was. So coming away and living as a student was the main reason. If I had stayed at home I wouldn't have lived as a student. (First year business education student, age 26)*

In contrast to their younger contemporaries, this break was not seen to facilitate liberation from parental constraints, but conversely indicated the making of individual sacrifices for the sake of education; leaving already established careers, friends and commitments behind in return for the opportunity to study for a degree. Thus, for these students, the experience of dwelling in a twenty-four hour living-and-learning environment of like-minded people was contrasted with other experiences of living in non-student shared accommodation:

*To me it is interesting as I have shared houses before, and rented places, and I have never found I have got on so well as I have in this house which is a student house. Maybe because we are all in the same boat. We have all come here from elsewhere and we are all in the same job. (First year business education student, age 26)*

Moving into student-only accommodation, and becoming a student, were directly associated with changes in living arrangements and standards. However, in spite of identifying a cut in living standards, these students admitted that aspects of their lifestyles remained unchanged:

*I'm not like the average student who lives on sausages and spuds all year. My biggest bill is my food bill... Lisa has to point out that I shouldn't really be eating trout as a student. (Third year biomedical sciences student, age 30)*

Unlike many of their school-leaver contemporaries, the decision to return to higher education was seen to result from the individual's own purposive choice. This positive decision helped to give them the courage to overcome the age stereotypes attached to studenthood, and thus participate in their own variation on the theme of the twenty-four hour living and learning experience. However, on closer investigation, these experiences could be seen to be influenced by the age norms of society, reflected for example in the students' decisions not to apply to live in halls of residence because of their age. Here, then, the student experience had adapted and extended to include some individuals traditionally believed to be excluded from studenthood: mature students. In this particular instance, student life was subtly altered due to the age of the students involved. In moving away from the pre-higher education home, these

students clearly revealed that they had made a status passage which broke with past roles and responsibilities. However, although the idea of a status transition being central to student life was maintained, the form this took was non-traditional: a career break which took them away from established adult roles to create a new life: in this case a student life.

### 3) School-Leaver Local

The individual discussed here conformed to the age norms associated with the traditional student experience, but had not physically manifested his status transition in leaving home to attend university. Thus, whilst embracing a full-time student role, and participating in all the concomitant social and educational experiences, he was still living in the parental home. This final combination of age and residential status therefore provides a third variation on the theme of the 'traditional' student identity and experience. And, with more students now living at home whilst they attend university, perhaps the student experience discussed below is not as exceptional as the single case presented here might indicate.

First of all, this student believed that through a process of purposive decision making, he had realised many of the experiences associated with traditional student life. He continually stressed the number of choices which had been necessary to help to facilitate the break from past identities and roles, and the adoption of a new student identity. Responses from the incomer school leaver group discussed earlier, stated the belief that these individuals were free from a great number of responsibilities, due to their physical and social break from the past. In contrast, this respondent identified a number of responsibilities that he could not leave behind. For example, commitments to the upkeep of the family house and garden, and to spending time with his family, limited the amount of time he could spend interacting with student friends. But, by positively attempting to marginalise a number of less important roles and friends, and by concentrating on his new student life, he was able to overcome many of the pressures from his past life. This interaction with predominantly student friends, in spite of local friends being available for interaction, reflected an alternative physical manifestation of the role adjustments traditionally associated with moving away to become a student. However, this was tempered by the fact that the individual did not participate fully in the 'living and learning' student culture, returning to a non-student dwelling at the end of the working and socialising day:

*I think I missed out on gaining more of a... getting to know other people other than your family as if they were a type of family. I missed out on learning to live with others in a family situation. (Third year microbiology student, age 22)*

Paralleling the experiences of the other student groups discussed above, flexibility of time and lifestyle comprised an important part of studenthood for this student. This new student life, in addition, brought with it novel opportunities to experience a social life which was very distinct from past social experiences due, in part, to the different emphasis placed on student-specific times and venues:

*Students participate in activities, and go out more than local people of the same age... The culture is definitely different from the local culture. They go to different pubs, and go out on different nights. (Third year microbiology student, age 22)*

The stark contrast between past and present lifestyles was reiterated by this respondent to reveal his high level of commitment to student life. This was further consolidated by the individual mixing predominantly with other students who were living away from home. Consequently, in spite of living in the pre-higher education home, and not with other students, the individual was able to participate in a variation on the theme of the 'traditional' student life and experience.

### **Concluding Comments**

*To conclude, it is apposite to return again to a quotation introduced earlier in the article, Students certainly live and mean to live in a special time and space. (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979: p.29)*

Here Bourdieu and Passeron express the idea that the student experience is, in part, an actively constructed phenomenon, created and maintained by its members. In support of this, my own data have shown that students not only perceived the separate student community as a meaningful reality, but actively maintained it as such through their social activities and interactions.

The analysis has also revealed that although factors such as changes in the residential status and age of the student profile may influence the average student experience, it would be fallacious to assume that any adaptations engender a complete break from a static truism of post-war studenthood. Thus, in spite of structural changes in the composition of the student body, the traditional student experience still appears to be a strong image in many students' minds, and is reflected in their identities, roles and associated experiences. What this article has demonstrated is that this traditional experience is neither static nor uniform. There are a number of possible factors which affect its form, and the extent to which it is embraced by students. The above discussion reveals three contemporary variations on the theme of the traditional student experience - in this specific case, defined around the two pivotal axes of age and residential status - indicating at least some of the diversity which results from individuals adapting and reacting to the expectations, influences and often overt pressures stemming from peers, parents and wider society.

Although the scope of this article has not provided for the possibility of a comprehensive discussion of the dynamics and variations of all student experiences, the analysis presented certainly draws our attention to the fact that blanket assumptions about the changing nature of contemporary student life are unhelpful. It is only in considering the dynamic quality of undergraduate life, through the voices of students themselves, that we can assess how far the images of students and student life widely portrayed in the literature, and in the taken-for-granted assumptions of wider society, are pertinent for an understanding of the reality of studenthood in the 1990s.

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## Notes

1 *School-leavers*: those students who have come directly to university from school or college, with at most one or two 'gap years' away from the educational experience.

*Mature students*: those students who are over 21 years of age at the commencement of their first period of full-time study.

*Incomer students*: full-time under-graduate students (excluding overseas students) who are attending university away from the pre-higher education home.

*Local students*: full-time under-graduate students continuing to live in the pre-higher education home whilst attending their local university.

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# CHEAP DRINKS, HEAVY COSTS:

*Students and alcohol*

SUE MORGAN

Both the National Union of Students (NUS) and University governing bodies are becoming increasingly concerned about the negative effects of student drinking: bad behaviour including sexual and violent offences, damage to university and other property, nuisance and disorder. The long-term use of alcohol is also responsible for students dropping out of university or finishing their courses with a developing alcohol dependency. This paper discusses research undertaken with students and student union officials, it examines pressures facing students, current thinking about alcohol dependency and its treatment and looks at methods of prevention and intervention.

Young people drink more than any other age group in Western societies, (Cahalan and Room, 1974; Institute of Medicine, 1990) and usually more at one time than older people (Grant, Harfield and Grigson, 1988). Although most moderate their intake as they grow older, 30 per cent continue heavy drinking into mid-life (Fillmore, 1988). The single best predictor of young peoples alcohol use are peer influences, particularly peer drinking rates (Jessor and Jessor, 1977; Kandel and Andrews, 1987). Students drink at consistent rates with those people with whom they live (Baer, 1993). Students socialise each other into drinking, and living in close quarters with one another supports this.

DenHollanders' (1996) research was designed to gain an insight into the extent of student drinking and its associated problems in Universities. He noted the unique position of student union officials and welfare officers to assess the scale of the problem and gathered their views and opinions. He also sought the views of students about how and why they drink; how they develop their awareness of alcohol related issues; and how they might get help if they thought they had a problem. Officials and 430 students from 10 universities took part.

	Students who have dropped out of university with alcohol related problems	Cost of damage caused by drunken students to property	Bar takings in student bars all figures in £1000s		Average units of alcohol consumed per student per week in university bars
			1992	1996	
College of Amsterdam	80	£186,000	£673	£1283	24
Bristol University	no figure	£86,000	£907	£1276	31
Trinity College, Dublin	410	£206,000	£407	£747	40
Durham University	290	£372,000	£932	£1283	36
Edinburgh University	360	£273,000	£1083	£1407	36
Frankfurt University	no figure	no figure	£1183	£1672	34
Glasgow University	400	£302,000	£1287	£1750	36
Leeds University	415	£412,000	£1012	£1373	31
Leicester University	175	£57,000	£612	£913	27
Plymouth University	150	£134,000	£632	£903	26

*DenHollander (1996)*

DenHollander identifies problems of student drinking at high levels, dropping out of university and expensive vandalism. The table estimates students are drinking between 26 to 40 units each week. The recommended units are between 21 - 25 for men and 16 - 21 for women. It shows students spending increased amounts of money in the bars of the students unions, and approximately 20 per cent of this is profit which student unions use to fund their activities. The figures provide some indication of the high cost of vandalism universities are having to meet and of the number of students dropping out with alcohol related problems.

### **Pressures on students**

Some of the pressures students face are those which are common to other young people. In a cultural climate which reveres beauty and sees it located in youth most young people worry about their body shape and size, their looks and their clothes, striving to achieve the impossible ideals created by a fashion, health and beauty industry operating to undermine self confidence (Wolf, 1990). This pressure extends to hobbies, habits, places to go and people to be seen with. Like other young people they are often in the early stages of dealing with issues of sex and relationships. Many are setting up home for the first time and learning to take responsibility for their own finances, feeding and taking care of themselves. Students in their first year must cope with all these things, usually without having developed proven support structures, having moved to new areas and getting to know lots of new people all at once. The whole spectrum of difficult life experiences and events applies to the student sector as it does to the rest of the population. Individual circumstances and family background create advantage or disadvantage variously. The issues of ability, homophobia and racism will impact negatively on some students, and some will be dealing with issues of sexual, physical and emotional abuse and domestic violence.

Pressures more specific to students are those to do with the nature of the educational process. Young people are expected to make major life choices often with little understanding of what the wider implications are. Students often question whether they have chosen the right subject or course. They are expected to achieve good academic results whilst learning in direct competition with each other. For everyone that comes top of the class the rest haven't quite made the grade. This competition extends beyond university to jobs. Recent years have seen student grants reduced and benefits limited. Many need to balance studying with part time work and they must compete against those who do not need to work and have more time to study and socialise. Students must also take greater responsibility for structuring their learning times and schedules compared to the highly structured school environment which for most was their only previous experience of education.

Further pressure comes from the knowledge itself. Few students can get through their university years without confronting some knowledge about how power operates within society and without having to deal with moral and ethical questions of social justice, whether this comes from the course being studied or from the ideas of friends. Questions of equality and inequality may be acknowledged or studiously ignored, but raise the issue of responsibility. Many students are chasing jobs with the large multi-national companies whilst becoming aware, often for the first time, of

the unjust practices and the methods they employ to predict and avoid public criticism. Living with the hypocrisy of this situation brings its own kind of pressure. Similarly, exclusion from decision making processes, awareness of the shortcomings of democracy and lack of vision for change bring frustrations and feelings of powerlessness.

### **Why Drink?**

DenHollander found many students who said they drink in order to get drunk. They wanted to alter their mood or forget their problems; others felt it relaxed them and gave them more confidence as a prelude to sex. Students also said they drank because they were bored and didn't have anything better to do. Lack of confidence in starting relationships, academic and financial pressure, were all given as reasons for drinking by those interviewed. Others said they drank because it feels good, it is what everyone else was doing, and because their social lives revolved around drinking.

Student Unions are organised around the bars and the profits from these fund union activities, so it is hardly in their interests to change this. Instead it seems they would prefer to encourage a sort of 'responsible drinking'. This is problematic because it is just this lessened responsibility that is one of the appeals of being drunk. There is a very strong tradition that excuses bad behaviour by drunkards. Apologising in retrospect for offensive behaviour whilst being drunk gets people off the hook, reduces the blame attached to the act. Having been drunk means it wasn't really your fault, you didn't really mean to do it.

Students social life often centres around the Student Union bars which serve alcohol more cheaply than commercial bars off campus. In Students Union bar culture high alcohol consumption is seen as fun rather than dangerous. Drinking is entrenched in the culture and there are well established behaviours that surround it. Initiation rituals introduce new students into the lifestyle and set the tone for the next three to four years. Freshers week is one such occasion when various games and traditions are carried out by older students as a prelude to sexual involvement. Straight white male values still thrive in Student Union bar life. Despite some tokenist language adjustment, feminist ideals have not permeated so deeply as to make any great changes in men's attitudes towards their own sexual behaviour.

### **Having a good time?**

Amongst students and others there is a forceful attitude that being drunk is about having a good time. This attitude overshadows some of the unpleasant realities of drunken behaviour and long term high alcohol consumption. Many of the problems caused by alcohol are not perceived by students as such.

A recent U.S. study (Johnson, 1994) shows that 1 per cent of students said that they had a problem with alcohol yet answers to other questions demonstrate a lack of awareness about what a problem is. 38 per cent had been involved in drinking and driving, 56 per cent had been passengers with drunk drivers, 24 per cent had sex against their will while drunk, 10 per cent had complaints from their friends,

and family about their drunkenness, 11 per cent had caused family problems, 17 per cent drank in the morning, 15 per cent felt they needed to cut down on their drinking, 2 per cent had made people have sex with them against their will and 99 per cent did not identify having alcohol problems. This information demonstrates a huge gap between perception and reality and is a critical area for any work aiming to reduce problem drinking.

As far as alcohol dependency is concerned there is a similar gap, and also a strong sense that 'It won't happen to me', 'I can control it'. One of the main difficulties tackling alcohol dependency problems among students is the myths and stereotypes standing in the way of accurate self knowledge. Alcoholics are thought of as the bag ladies, the men in the park and around the monuments drinking from bottles in paper bags, the women stuck in the house hiding the sherry bottles in the dressing table drawers. They are perceived as being 'other' than ourselves, not students. The dangers of alcohol, like smoking, are often thought of as manifesting themselves at a distant point in the future, the illnesses connected with it take time to develop, and they are not associated with youth but rather with middle age and so are rarely seen as relevant to student life.

Alcohol plays a significant role in date rape and other sexual and violent crime; this is insufficiently acknowledged in the Student Union. Less violent but still important is the pressure and harassment put upon students to get drunk. Not all students drink or get drunk, but those who don't are often seen as different, as killjoys and can be excluded and isolated from the main body. Perhaps it is time for the unions to review the central position of alcohol in their organisations a decade after Tether and Robinson (1985) called for the NUS to reconsider their determination to provide cheap drink.

### **Drink and sex and gender**

Donovan (1996) working with teenagers noted young men's perception that they could take advantage of women who were under the influence of alcohol. Ward (1993) chronicles the force of the attitudes towards women who drink as being sexually promiscuous. Johnson (1995) cites a recent survey in the US in which 24 per cent out of 500 students stated that they had sex against their will whilst under the influence of alcohol, and 2 per cent claimed to have had sex with an unwilling partner.

A study by Klein (1994) suggests that women appear throughout the college years to gradually progress towards an adult like maturity, at least as far as their drinking patterns are concerned. The number of alcohol related problems that they experience will decrease over the years that they are at university. Men on the other hand demonstrated no significant changes with regard to drinking over the course of their college careers, suggesting that college for them may represent little more than a period of protracted adolescence. Klein argues that immature and irresponsible attitudes and behaviour can be expected from male students because they are in a more adolescent phase of development than female students, and men will

experience the same number of alcohol related problems at the beginning of their university career as at the end.

Klein also found women were far more likely than men to admit they had a problem and consequently to seek help and this likelihood increased with the time spent at university. Men on the other hand were far less willing to seek help and this remained stable throughout their college careers.

*Denial of the negative consequences associated with their drinking (as would be seen in any 'typical' problem drinker) undoubtedly plays an important role in his lack of increased willingness to seek help for an alcohol problem.*  
(Klein, 1994)

Klein's work adds further evidence, if any were needed, to the need for special resources and educational materials to be produced and for them to be aimed at male students.

### **Thinking about being drunk**

Drinking to get deliberately drunk, rather than being drunk by unknowingly drinking too much is an important point for attention in interventions designed to reduce alcohol related problems. This means that those materials aimed at students which focus on the question of 'how much is too much?' miss the point unless they also address why they want to get drunk, or how they can get drunk without harm. Some students had enjoyed the Alcohol Education Campaign which encouraged the use of scratch cards for self assessment of alcohol consumption levels and felt that they drank more rather than less because of it. Information which deals with safe quantities does need to be available, yet it needs to be alongside materials and interventions which focus on problems associated with being drunk and the underlying reasons why students want to get drunk. It is usually the individual who is responsible for having become drunk and effective work to curb alcohol related problems needs to make drinkers face up to this responsibility. It will be difficult to do this with the student population whilst it remains unaddressed elsewhere. To some degree it may be argued that the drink driving campaigns have had some success in dealing with this aspect of responsibility, but this could usefully be extended to consider acts of violence, sexual violence and vandalism. Prevention work must address the realities of drunken behaviour and alcohol dependency. The attitude that high alcohol consumption is an acceptable, normal and healthy part of university life, ignores the severity of the actual problems.

### **Thinking about alcohol addiction**

How we conceptualise alcohol use and abuse is not separate from wider cultural influences. Victorian attitudes towards alcohol can be seen to be rooted in the needs of industrial organisation. Machines and factories made greater profits when people fitted in with systems. Industrial production processes need workers to turn up regularly and promptly. This was a shift for the general populace from a situation where they had greater control over their own working hours. Drunkenness interfered with reliability. Powerful negative messages against drunkenness were in play

alongside those that were establishing the work ethic. Such ideology coupled with the dire consequences of poverty in Victorian Britain helped produce a reliable workforce. Illegalisation of alcohol would have been unrealistic and unenforceable as it was such a well established traditional part of life. Strong attitudes of condemnation and the association of heavy drinking with negative personal characteristics was a powerful tool employed by the wealthy to deter workers from drinking. Some of these ideas linger today and influence treatment and recovery methods. Foucault (1967) writes that dependency or addiction is seen in Britain as an illness, like insanity, and whilst it is not an offence or illegal, it is not socially approved. It is associated with madness, idleness and irrationality with the implication of a need to be purified. Alcoholics have been relegated to areas of exclusion, isolation and denigration.

Alcoholics Anonymous is based on the assertion that alcoholism is a disease. It began in 1935 in America when one alcoholic, Bill W., decided that the only way he could stay sober was to help another alcoholic. The next night he met Dr Bob who learned from Bill's experience and so they were able to give each other mutual support. AA subsequently developed a twelve step plan to recover from alcoholism which has been adopted and adapted by many other recovery groups since.

The adoption of the disease model of alcoholism absolves the alcoholic from implications of blame and means that in the USA treatment costs can be met under health insurance schemes. It frees the alcoholic from the associations with character flaws such as madness, idleness and weakness. The AA has groups all over the world, and the self help movements which it has spawned have developed a mass of popular literature and moved beyond the issue of alcohol to many others where people acknowledge feeling powerless and out of control. Treadway (1990) writes that the recovery movement has been significantly more user friendly than the mental health field in terms of access, support and providing simple explanations of human suffering.

The Biopsychosocial model of addictive behaviours, also known as the relapse prevention model, rejects the disease model of alcoholism. This assumes alcohol dependency develops from a complex mixture of factors which include cultural and psychosocial influences and biological propensities, learning principles and pharmacological effects (Gordon and Barrett, 1993). These result in the development of habitual automatic and unconscious reactions to problematic situations which are interpreted as attempts to cope. Blame is not ascribed to sufferers but they are responsible for learning new more appropriate ways of coping and for changing their lifestyles. Change occurs because of new knowledge and awareness, learning and accepting responsibility. Marlatt and Gordon (1985) argue that this approach leads to less relapses than the disease model because of the self efficacy that is developed. This approach does not identify the sufferer as permanently alcoholic, nor as mentally ill, and it denies the need for lifelong identity as an addict or victim or survivor (Gordon and Barrett, 1993).



Although few young people are addicted in the traditional sense, most young people do not feel powerless over alcohol, don't go to AA and don't volunteer for treatment, when they go it is often the result of being coerced by courts and family (Baer, 1993). Most young people who drink heavily in their teens reduce it by the late 20s and 30s but 30 per cent go on into mid-life. Any preventative measures must take into account the enormity of the deeply entrenched myths and misinformation and seek ways of conveying the reality of dependency and alcoholism, making students aware that they are vulnerable to develop long term alcohol problems.

Information for students needs to be produced which makes more explicit the nature of the process of developing dependency and relates this to their lifestyles. This is made very difficult because each has an individual life history, sensitivity to alcohol and circumstances; there is no single route to dependency. But rather a combination of environmental factors combine to either increase risk or protection - family relationships, peer groups, stressful life events, expectations of and beliefs about alcohol. Then there are further variances because of personality differences and how alcohol reinforcement is operating;

*Alcohol reinforcement can be conceptualised as the amount of pleasure, stress reduction, social facilitation or general change in hedonic tone accompanied by the consumption of alcohol. (Baer 1993).*

This means it is important to offer a flexible approach to treatment which can be individualised. Categorising and making generalisations about individuals can work against the process of self identification with problematic alcohol use. The needs and circumstances of the individual must be expressed alongside the body of the knowledge which has been built up around the issue.

### **Help from friends**

Even when students identify alcohol as a problem area in their lives, further barriers exist preventing them asking for help or knowing how to deal with the problem. Students are likely to discuss their problems with friends before approaching anyone else. There are two important points to be addressed. First as Ward (1993) counsels, people tend to choose friends who behave in similar ways and share certain attitudes. Drinkers' friends are likely to be other drinkers and are likely to reflect and hold similar values and beliefs about alcohol. Second, the nature of friendship is supportive and forgiving. We want to help friends get over their problems and 'do the right thing' for them. Yet, as far as friends with alcohol problems are concerned, this is not always the best thing to do and may make things worse. Alcoholics Anonymous assert that in order for alcoholics to deal effectively with their problem, friends and family must not continue in the role of enabler.

*An enabler is any one who reacts to the symptoms of alcoholism in a way that shields the alcohol dependent person from experiencing the full importance of the harmful consequences of the disease. Each time an enabler excuses the drinking, the alcoholic, hides the drinking or shields the drinker, the alcoholic loses an opportunity to gain an insight into the severity of her problem. (Ward, 1993, p 94)*

Sometimes friends and partners excuse the alcoholics bad behaviour believing it results from other more significant problems, and think the drinking will cease when the 'real problem' is dealt with. AA think this is unhelpful and the best way for a friend to help is to tell the truth and reflect bad behaviour back to the perpetrator in order for them to get the full picture of the consequences of their actions. This raises interesting questions about the nature of friendship and support. AA developed the idea of co-dependency which holds that those who support others in their dependency do so because they have their own needs met by having someone around them who is dependent on them. The co-dependency movement has been criticised for blaming the partners of alcoholics whilst ignoring wider sociological questions. Women have been conditioned into dependency and into meeting the needs of others. The recovery movement which aims to have us all as competent, independent individuals has put forward the theory of co-dependency which has gained widespread support and popularity. Co-dependency is held to involve placing ones sense of self worth, identity and purpose onto someone close, a partner, family member or friend. The co-dependent person may suppress their own feelings, have low self esteem, believe there is no way out of the relationship which would not be destructive. They feel an overwhelming sense of responsibility for the other person which means they are in the habit of taking care of them before attending to their own needs. Gordon and Barrett (1993) write that the appeal of the co-dependency movement has been phenomenal in the United States. This is currently impacting upon Britain. They feel this is because it offers easy answers to some difficult questions.

*Our view is that the symptoms and diagnostic criteria for co-dependence do refer to common personal and relationship conflicts that many individuals experience and are attempting to cope with, but that rather than originating in dysfunctional families, these problems reflect certain late twentieth century American sociocultural phenomena that are largely unacknowledged and unaddressed by proponents. These include issues related to power dynamics embedded in our culture, severe economic stresses and inequities, ethnocentricity, gender socialization, changes in the family and the community, the decline of spirituality, and enormous shifts and disruptions in lifestyles and values. (Ibid, 311)*

AA argue that co-dependency, like alcoholism is a disease, and applies the same twelve step plan to its recovery programme, the word co-dependent merely replacing the word alcoholic. There are several opportunities to discuss the issues of responsibility and dependency and the nature of friendship in university, school and youth club settings where friendship is often discussed, and it would be timely to tackle the co-dependent debate and offer alternative explanations before the current British climate of parent and victim blaming turns into parent, victim, partner and friend blaming.

### **Counselling**

One attitude that holds a lot of sway is that approaching the Welfare Officer, or Student Counselling Service, or indeed asking for any help is considered being

weak and somehow inadequate. This is a critical area interlinked with other powerful ideas and beliefs. Counselling with its roots in the field of mental health, is often associated with mental illness and madness and often people do not want to identify themselves with this, especially students who are often professionals in training. Alcohol problems have considerable stigma attached to them. Negative attitudes are not the only thing making counselling for alcohol difficulties problematic and unappealing.

Even though counselling is currently one of the main culturally approved methods of dealing with alcohol related problems, it is inadequate for several reasons. First, there are insufficient counselling facilities and those that are free of charge are often limited in the number of sessions available. This sometimes determines the counselling methods used which are often not the most appropriate. Long term open ended counselling opportunities are rare unless you have the means to pay around thirty pounds per hour. Secondly, there are many contradictions within the counselling fields. Although movement is taking place to standardise qualifications and bring practitioners into line with an agreed code of ethics, clients are still vulnerable and open to abuse from unethical counsellors (Rutter, 1989).

The therapy culture has spread way beyond its own practitioners and given rise to a mass of popular self help literature. Snippets of different theories, methods and terminology leak out of their particular frame of reference and intermingle, become distorted, misunderstood and misapplied. There is currently a mish mash of ideas and language drawn from various different schools of counselling, psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, self help and recovery groups which make it difficult for anyone with little experience of counselling to gain a clear picture of the process. The psychobabble of splitting, inner child, less travelled roads and so on mixed with New Age spirituality and healing to create an almost unfathomable confusion for a vulnerable person seeking help. It is too easy to assume that safeguards are in place to protect clients. The challenge here, for student and counselling services alike, is to produce information which unravels the half truths and demystifies the different counselling approaches and places them alongside other methods of recovery. Counselling helps some sufferers, but it is concerned primarily with healing rather than prevention, it can leave the wider sociological causes of the problem intact. There is also little evidence to demonstrate that counselling is a more efficient method of recovery than others. For some people, involvement in social action has been found to be therapeutic (Ewart, 1991).

### **University of Washington High Risk Drinkers Project**

The University of Washington High Risk Drinkers Project (Baer, 1993) resulted in a large reduction in student drinking. It integrated several different methods and approaches to identify students at most risk from alcohol and help them change their attitudes and behaviour with regard to drink and related behaviour. The project involves four stages. The first is the screening of all students entering their first year at university. All prospective students are sent a questionnaire and receive \$5 for completing it, as well as entry into a prize draw for book tokens worth \$100. The questionnaire seeks to identify those students most at risk based on two main criteria: (a) occasions in the last month of drinking more than 5/6 drinks; and (b) history of alcohol related incidents in the last three years.

The second stage involves the 25 per cent with the highest scores in those categories who are asked to enrol in a four year study of college lifestyles and drinking habits and are then interviewed to assess risk factors in much greater detail. Students are asked about drinking quantity and frequency, alcohol related life problems, alcohol dependency criteria, family alcohol history, and other psychopathology, sexual behaviours, history of conduct disorders. In addition information is collected with regard to living situation, sexual behaviour, perceived norms and risks, alcohol expectancies and psychiatric symptomatology.

The third stage has been carried out in two different ways: in groups, and in single feedback interviews. In the group method students were recruited into groups to take part in a 6 or 8 week programme, where their beliefs, attitudes and knowledge about alcohol were challenged. This resulted in students drinking 40 - 50 per cent less and maintaining this reduction for 1 -2 years. In single feedback interviews, similar reduction rates were achieved. These involved a member of staff giving individual students direct feedback of the assessed information from stage two compared to college averages. Information is given about risk reduction and beliefs again challenged. Both these interventions share the motivational approach which is specifically designed to minimise resistance of those with drug and alcohol related problems. They shift clients from a position of considering behaviour change into attempting to change it by giving them all the available evidence to allow them to adequately assess their own situation, whilst leaving the responsibility for change directly with the students.

Stage four encourages them to use the project as a resource to implement and maintain reductions in drinking and give feedback related to such reduction over time. Further evaluation, referral to other agencies, counselling, small group meetings and courses on safe lifestyles are all available to students as required.

This action-research project resulted in big reductions in first year student drinking after just one hour of feedback. It was also successful at challenging and changing what students regarded as normal about alcohol. This change was not restricted to those that participated in the project but spread throughout the student population when participants interacted with others. There is a need for more research to be carried out within British Universities and although this particular project may need some modification for use here, it may prove a useful basis on which to build.

### **Further Primary and Secondary Intervention Possibilities**

The NUS encourage student Union officials to run alcohol awareness campaigns. Guidelines for the campaigns recommend running an alcohol awareness week with stalls, quizzes, speaker meetings, alcohol free drinks promotions and social events. Student Unions also deal with pricing policies looking at how they can influence student drinking patterns by what they charge for drinks. The NUS argues that Unions have limited influence over students' decision making regarding drinking. Although they want to promote activities which are less alcohol centred, they think students will simply go off campus to drink if they adopt a heavy or

moralising approach. Caul (1993) writes that organising a Health Fair in the Students Union is an ideal way to engage students in informal group dialogue about health issues. Inviting local volunteer agencies to set up stalls to promote their services and bring educational materials, raises students awareness of these local services available off campus and gives the agencies insight into the specific needs of students.

Durham University Students Union is currently working on several initiatives after having experienced problems from student drunkenness, and received complaints about noise and behaviour from local residents. Codes of conduct for students and bar staff have been drawn up, alcohol awareness officers have been appointed with a remit to promote a sensible approach to alcohol use within the student bar. A residents forum has been established where local people can discuss the problems caused by students with the students, and a complaints hotline has been established which they can ring at any time if they experience problems. The role of card schemes and close circuit cameras are also being considered (DSU, 1995).

Tether and Robinson (1988) argue that student bar staff have an important role to play with regard to alcohol problems. They suggest staff should receive training in their legal and social responsibilities, which may stop them from continuing to serve students who have already had too much to drink and of intervening when they see the possibility of long term problems developing.

*many students are well known to bar staff who are in a position to recognise developing problems and to remind the student or friends of the student, where help can be obtained. (Tether and Robinson, 1986)*

All pastoral workers, they argue, should be ready to talk about drinking and recognise the early signs of dependency. They should inform themselves with knowledge and self help techniques, and have good materials ready to give students. Student counselling, medical and Nightline services and the chaplaincies need to be well informed and reflect on their roles and responsibilities.

Students interviewed in the DenHollander research didn't see Student Welfare Officers as having a role to play in dealing with alcohol problems. They were low profile, their purpose and remit perceived by the students as somewhat vague. These staff could usefully work on their image, their accessibility and student perceptions of their roles and responsibilities. Some students may not ask any university staff for help, fearing it will affect their reputation and consequently their academic achievement. Student Unions should be cognisant of this and ensure alternative off campus services are widely advertised. For agencies delivering such services, it is important they remember university students and target them appropriately where this is not happening. Union officials can contact outside agencies, make them aware of the situation and work together to devise a complementary strategy.

Although there are not many opportunities to deal with the issue of alcohol within the curriculum of university courses, this does not exclude lecturers from having a role in tackling the problem. Teaching staff are in contact with the students and are

monitoring their academic progress. They can intervene and refer students, can review the messages that they give out to students about alcohol, and are sometimes in useful positions to support or encourage research on the issue.

There is also much scope for consideration of the issue before young people reach university. Information regarding the size and nature of the alcohol problem can be sent to the students with the other routine mail outs, and be included in fresher packs. Alcohol issues are already included in the curriculum at secondary schools, and feature in the social education carried out by youth workers, but this needs to be targeted towards students headed to university and include the specific details of drink in the student lifestyle. Parents and teachers awareness of the problems and solutions could be raised with positive consequences, which may begin to turn around the myth that students' drinking is just having a good time and letting off steam.

Student Handbooks are an ideal location for some sound alcohol information and advice. Some of those published in the UK currently don't even include the subject of alcohol. Whilst others see it as a normal part of student life and give advice about levels of quantities for consumption, not acknowledging the broader associated risks. By way of contrast the American student handbook 'Your College Experience' (Jewel and Gardner, 1995) identifies and addresses important aspects of alcohol use in colleges and universities. It clearly states that alcohol is the number one cause of problems for college students and goes on to deal with the notion of normality and the lack of awareness about what constitutes an alcohol problem. It gives practical advice about reducing alcohol intake, exercises to practice in responding to peer group pressure to drink more, information about students alcohol research projects and an insight into students' experiences with alcohol. The British handbooks have something to learn from this approach and this chapter might usefully be adapted for use in schools and youth clubs as it deals with complex concepts and information in an accessible manner.

Another source of information that many young people regularly consult are the glossy magazines. Many of these run features on health, drugs and sex issues and sometimes focus on alcohol. Some of these can be particularly informative and recently they have addressed issues such as how to encourage friends to look after each other and stay together after they've been drinking, how to drink and avoid a hangover. There is an opportunity for further approaches to be made to these magazines to address the issues with special regard to students.

Finally, Universities have not traditionally been seen by informal educators as places where their work has been needed, certainly youth workers have never prioritised engagement with students, yet perhaps it is time for this distance to be questioned. Their skills and methods are perhaps those which might be the most appropriate to achieving the sorts of changes in attitude needed within Student Unions. Many students after all fall well within the age range youth workers target elsewhere. If in the past students have been perceived by such workers as too advantaged for their attentions,



this can hardly still be the case. But the issue of student drinking needs to be taken much more seriously by far more than just the youth and community work field. The profile of the problem needs raising. It warrants further consideration and wider research. Do we really want 30 per cent of entrants into the professions to be dependent on alcohol? Whilst this might explain some of the ludicrous decisions we often witness, it really is an intolerable situation.

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# HIGH DEBT AND POOR HOUSING

*A Taxing Life for Contemporary Students*

**ROBIN HUMPHREY AND PETER MCCARTHY**  
with Angela Braithwaite, Matthew Brook, Clare Brumby,  
Gareth Carter, Ann Chapman, Jonathan Codd, Jennifer Dunk,  
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## **Introduction**

British university education has expanded rapidly over the last decade. Student numbers have escalated and new universities have been created. How has this expansion impacted on students' lives? Research conducted at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne by undergraduate students themselves, under the direction of two social policy researchers, has shown that the student experience has been significantly, and adversely, affected in recent years by government policies in the fields of education, housing and welfare. In particular, government failure to fund students adequately has increased levels of student debt, while the shortage of university accommodation has forced greater numbers of students into the privately rented housing sector. For many students, this means living in poor conditions that can affect their health and their ability to study. The consequences of these unfavourable conditions are likely to include more young people staying in the parental home while they pursue their studies or choosing not to apply for, or take up, their university places.

## **Student Finances**

Over the past thirty years, the higher education system has undergone almost constant change. Perhaps the most profound change has been in the way student numbers have increased sharply, which in turn has sparked debate concerning the most viable way to finance undergraduate students' passage through university. As student numbers have grown, state expenditure on student grants has escalated. In 1962-3, state expenditure on student maintenance was £253 million: by 1987-8 it had risen to £829 million at constant prices (Cm 520, 1988, p. 3). Despite this rise, expenditure on student maintenance did not keep up with the growth in student numbers. The real value of the maintenance grant reduced over time, and the proportion provided via parental contributions increased (Cm 520, 1988, p. 6).

During the 1980s, changes in the state benefits system, and increased awareness among students regarding entitlement, led to benefits becoming an integral part of student income. By 1987, 77 per cent of students were in receipt of benefits and receiving an average amount of £249 per annum (Cm 520, 1988, p. 6). This conflicted with the Conservative government's aims of reducing state expenditure and encouraging independence and individual responsibility:

*The government believes that student dependence on benefits is inappropriate and undesirable. The benefit system is intended to serve social not educational*

*purposes ... it is undesirable that students should learn to depend upon a wrong understanding of the reciprocal obligations of the citizen and the state. (Cm 520, 1988, pp. 6-7)*

In response to the escalation of state expenditure on student maintenance, three measures were introduced which aimed to shift the cost of student maintenance from the state, and also from parents, on to students themselves: maintenance grants were frozen; a loans system was introduced; and students - except those entitled to disability allowances and single parents - were rendered ineligible for Income Support, Housing Benefit and Unemployment Benefit.

### **Debt**

During the academic year 1992-3 a group of students taking an Applied Social Research course at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne carried out a survey of student finances. This showed that many students at the university endured extreme financial hardship during their studies (McCarthy and Humphrey, 1995). The survey was carried out during the first term, when financial problems ought to have been at a minimum, but evidence indicated that debt was very much a factor of student life. At the time of the survey, 40 per cent of first year, 66 per cent of second year and 80 per cent of third year students were in debt. The average student had debts of £157 in the first year of study, £413 in the second year and £779 in their third year, but the real cost of undergraduate study to students is probably best represented by the average debts of £1,247 which were borne by those who had gone into a fourth year of study. One student with a smaller than average debt explained how she had been able to help finance her studies:

*I have actually got a three hundred pound debt but that is nothing compared to most of my friends. The reason why it is so low is because during all the summer vacations, Easter vacations and Christmas vacations, I've been lucky enough to find three jobs back in Cambridge, where I come from. That is working nine to five in one place, going working evenings in another and then working at weekends in a third institution. So, I've been very lucky but I have had to work very hard. In my final year, I've also had to take a bar job which has meant working evenings over my final exams, which has left me exhausted but its kept me out of debt. (Caroline Rice, graduated summer 1993)*

The student survey found that one of the important factors linked with students' ability (or inability) to manage within budgets was the requirement to pay for housing during their time at university. Newcastle University, along with most others, cannot normally provide accommodation for students other than first years. Students who go beyond the first year, with a few exceptions, are required to find their own accommodation, unless they are studying in their home towns and therefore able to remain in their family home. Even the few who could be housed in university accommodation in their final year found that the cost of a year's renting in the private sector had plunged them into debt:

*I have left university with a debt of sixteen hundred pounds. I am lucky that it is not larger because I was very fortunate to get a place back in university accommodation for my final year. My major problem was that during my second year I was paying five hundred pounds a term rent and that left me three hundred and fifty pounds to live on, including paying all my bills, water rates and maintenance costs for the flat we were living in, as well as all my food and general expenses. (Mary Hutchins, graduated summer 1993)*

The main source of accommodation for second and third year students is the privately rented sector. One of the problems students face is that private landlords are only prepared to let for a period of twelve months, whereas students' needs are for shorter periods and grants cover only the period when they are actually attending college. Thus, for three months in the year students are paying for accommodation which they do not need. Survey results would suggest that on average students pay almost £500 per year more for housing than they would need to if they could rent for nine months rather than twelve. The summer months are a particular problem: accommodation is paid for which is generally not occupied between July and October, a time when students have no source of income unless they are fortunate enough to find work in a rapidly shrinking summer job market. Prior to 1989, students coped by claiming housing benefit during the vacation period, but they are no longer entitled to this or any other form of benefit.

The few students who managed to stay in university accommodation into their second and third years were less likely to incur debts. Third year students in university-owned accommodation had average debts of £389, compared with £842 for students renting from private landlords. Those who remained in the parental home were the least likely to get into debt during their first two years of study, but by the third year students living at home had average debts of £542. This may be because some students return to living with parents as a result of the debts they have incurred during two years of living away.

### **The Housing Survey**

The increases in the number of students in higher education have occurred without a corresponding increase in the provision of student housing. In addition, the Housing Act 1988 deregulated rents in the privately rented sector and weakened security of tenure in order to make investment in this part of the housing market more profitable and thus increase the supply of such housing (Clapham, Kemp and Smith, 1990). Finally, the right of students to claim Housing Benefit has been removed. Each of these changes has contributed to the balance of power between landlord and student tenant shifting decisively in favour of the former.

The privately rented housing sector is also where housing problems are most concentrated, irrespective of whether or not the tenant is a student. In 1991, such houses were in a far worse condition than owner-occupied houses or those owned by the local authority and housing associations: 20 per cent of privately rented houses were deemed to be unfit for habitation, compared with five per cent of owner-occupied houses, seven

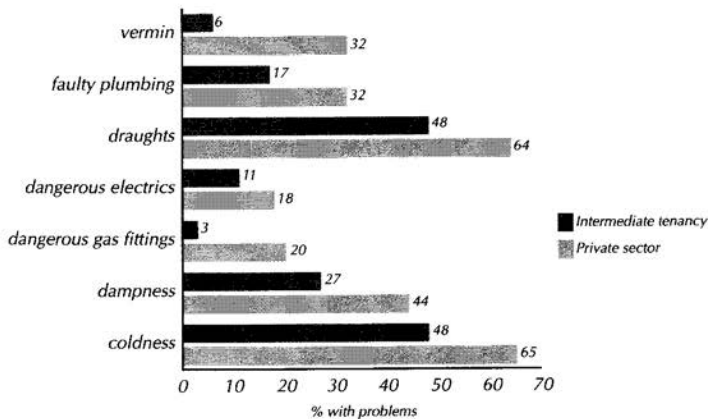
per cent of houses rented from local authorities and six per cent of houses rented from housing associations (DoE, 1993a). Almost a third of privately renting tenants live in what has been classified officially as the worst housing (DoE, 1993b).

Students from the 1993-4 Applied Social Research course carried out a study which specifically focused on the issue of housing for students during the periods in which they are not likely to have university accommodation allocated to them. This showed that the majority of students who had gone beyond their first year of study were indeed living in privately rented housing, though some had gained access to this sector via a university intermediate tenancy scheme under which the university sub-lets from private landlords: an arrangement which provides students with security and support they would be unlikely to get from most private landlords.

Out of the 749 second and third year students who responded to the survey, 14 per cent claimed they lived in housing let under the intermediate tenancy scheme, while 77 per cent had acquired their own accommodation within the privately rented sector where the university did not take on itself any intermediary role. The remaining students lived either at home with parents, in housing owned by themselves or a partner, or in housing rented from a local authority.

The housing survey revealed that students who obtained housing in the privately rented sector for themselves, and those who were participating in the intermediate tenancy scheme, both experienced housing problems. The former group of students experienced many more, however, but they tended to pay less for their accommodation: the average housing costs (rent, gas and electricity) for students renting directly from private landlords was £32.50, compared with £36.70 for students in intermediate tenancies.

Figure 1 Housing problems by type of tenancy



### Housing problems

Figure 1 shows the percentage of students, from each of the two main housing groups, who reported the presence of certain adverse housing conditions. In total, 39 per cent of students reported that houses were damp, with students renting privately being more likely to report dampness. This finding accords with the results of the local

Health and Lifestyles Survey of 1991, in which privately rented accommodation was more likely to be damp than any other type (Harrington, White et al., 1993). Also, 58 per cent of students reported that houses were cold, 29 per cent reported faulty plumbing, and 26 per cent said their accommodation was plagued with vermin ('the ubiquitous Fenham slug-', one respondent elaborated). Perhaps of greater concern, however, is the finding that one in six students said that the gas fittings in his/her home were dangerous, with the same proportion reporting faulty electrical fittings. In the year of the housing survey, six students narrowly escaped illness or death when the fire in their privately rented house in West Jesmond, a popular student area, began emitting poisonous gases (Howard, 1995). They were fortunate enough to realise that gas was in the house and vacate it immediately. One year later, a Durham University student died from carbon monoxide poisoning as a result of leakages from the heating system in her flat (*ibid.*). Since 1994, landlords have been legally required to have gas appliances checked every twelve months.

It would seem that living in cold, damp, vermin-plagued housing which has dangerous gas and electrical fittings is part of a way of life for many students, especially those who rent their accommodation directly from private landlords. Given that around one in five of such students reported dangerous gas and/or electrical fittings it is of some concern that almost half (45%) had no smoke alarms fitted in their premises.

Coldness was the most frequently reported housing problem, with 61 per cent of students saying that they could not afford to heat their homes sufficiently. However, 60 per cent of those who said they could not afford to operate available heating systems did so anyway, consequently getting even deeper into debt.

As Table 1 shows, the housing conditions students experience relate significantly to how much they pay for their accommodation. Students can get better quality accommodation if they are prepared to pay extra for it, but, given levels of student income, this is an option available only to a few. For instance, living in a warm house rather than a cold one would cost the average student approximately £100 extra per year, which might be beyond the means of those students struggling to manage limited budgets. On the other hand, it may be that some students are prepared to spend less in other areas - books, leisure, food, etc. - in order to be housed adequately. Alternatively, students may choose to pay for better housing by incurring extra debt.

Table 1 Housing costs by housing conditions

	Average housing costs per week		Whether difference is significant
	Condition present £	Condition not present £	
Cold	32.48	34.32	***
Dampness	32.30	33.80	**
Draughts	32.46	34.44	***
Dangerous gas fittings	31.70	33.47	**
Dangerous electric fittings	32.64	33.00	ns
Faulty plumbing	32.23	33.62	*
Structural damage	32.93	33.23	ns
Vermin	31.39	33.90	***

\* =  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  ns = not significant



## Housing areas

Students not living in University accommodation tend to congregate into three distinct, and radically different, parts of Newcastle. The West City area, which has the reputation for harbouring the worst housing and social problems in the city, stretches from the banks of the Tyne through Scotswood, Benwell and Elswick to Fenham, a traditionally popular student haunt in the north west of the city. Neighbouring Fenham, but separated from it by Nuns Moor, is the prosperous suburb of Gosforth which, along with Jesmond, another popular location for students, makes up the solidly middle class North City area. The third area, East City, consists of the 'respectable' working class areas of Heaton and Byker.

## Security

Although there are some differences between the areas of the city in terms of housing conditions, it can be argued that a problem even greater than poor housing which students face is lack of security. One in five students had been burgled while living in his/her current accommodation, and four students claimed to have been burgled on six occasions. This problem of security is neither merely a local problem nor restricted to students. According to national figures, young people aged 16-24 are twice as likely to be assaulted than any other age group (Barclay 1993). Also, many students can only afford to rent accommodation in the sort of areas that have the highest rates of household crime, including burglary: inner city urban areas (Mayhew and Aye Maung 1992). Table 2 shows various data on housing indicators for the areas of the city occupied by students.

Table 2 Area differences in income, housing costs and security

	Area of city			
	West	North	East	Other not known
Average income (£ per term)	975.64	1,133.78	1,012.90	955.00
Average housing costs (£ per week)	29.69	37.02	33.85	30.99
How safe feel in area (0 unsafe to 10 safe)	4.8	7.6	6.7	6.5
Have been burgled (%)	29.2	14.3	9.0	12.5

Students can get relatively cheap accommodation, but this tends to be in areas where they are at increased risk of burglary, and possibly assault. Data presented in Table 2 show that cheaper housing can be purchased in the west of the city, but this is an area with a high crime rate, including particularly high rates of burglary of student accommodation.

A city council report identifies the five wards in the West End of Newcastle as having had burglary rates of over 150 per 1,000 households in 1993, with the Elswick ward having had a prevalency rate of 225 (City of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1994). Students living in West City were twice as likely to have been burgled than those living in North City, and so West City is an area in which students tend to feel less safe. It is therefore avoided by students from higher income groups, who can pay the higher rents demanded by landlords renting properties in North City. Hence West City housing tends to be occupied by students on lower incomes.

### Security and gender

It would seem that there is a significant interaction between gender and area so far as feeling safe in the area is concerned (Table 3). We asked students to rate their feelings regarding safety from 1 (not safe at all) to 10 (very safe). On average, students felt most safe in North City and least safe in West City. Furthermore, we found a particularly low rating of safety among male students living in West City. This finding accords with national figures, which show that males in the 16-24 age group are twice as likely to be assaulted than females of the same age (Home Office 1992). This is particularly the case for young men who are single and who spend several evenings out per week. Also, people living in 'areas of social disorder' are more likely to be victimised (Mayhew, Aye Maung and Mirrless-Black 1993). Although female students living in West City rated their safety considerably lower than those living elsewhere, male students living there felt even less secure, which may explain why it is the one area with fewer male than female students.

Table 3 Mean scores for feeling safe in area by gender and area of residence<sup>1</sup>

	Area of city		
	West	North	East
Men	4.28 (120)	7.55 (133)	7.03 (58)
Women	5.21 (159)	7.62 (123)	6.36 (53)

<sup>1</sup> Figures in parentheses represent number of students

### High Debt - Poor Housing

The 1992-3 student survey revealed that housing is a significant cause of the high levels of debt borne by students. The 1993-4 survey, moreover, revealed that the housing they get is likely to be unpleasant to occupy during those periods when it is needed. A high proportion of students in Newcastle live in cold damp houses which they are unable to keep warm.

The number of students living in housing with dangerous gas and electrical fittings is a particular cause for concern. It highlights the importance of local authorities' rights to inspect houses in multiple occupation and to force landlords to make improvements; but it would seem that few local authorities exercise these rights. Moreover, many local authorities have apparently made specific policy decisions not to do so (Spittles, 1993).

One of the conclusions the 1992-3 survey of student income drew was that many students from less affluent backgrounds might be deterred from seeking higher education because of the inevitability of falling into debt (McCarthy and Humphrey, 1995). The housing circumstances students are likely to experience during their time at university seems likely to be a further deterrent. For some young people, the combination of debt, poor housing and unsafe environments may make the opportunity to study at university distinctly unappealing.

The present study was restricted to students at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, but we can think of no reason to assume that their experiences in renting

housing are different from those of students attending other institutions in the city, nor indeed from those experienced by students in other British cities. Indeed, the Northern region is not known for poor housing conditions: only in three regions in England have smaller proportions of the housing stock been declared unfit for habitation, and the Northern region is one of only two regions that has showed a decline, since 1986, in the proportion of unfit dwellings (DoE, 1993a). In particular, progress in housing in Tyneside since the 1920s has been as great as anywhere in the country and Tyneside now boasts a housing stock that is generally of good quality and low cost (Cameron and Crompton, 1988). The problem, then, is likely to be at least as big, if not bigger, in other university towns and cities.

The problem of student debt and its association with the renting of housing suggests a strong case for restoring the right of students to claim housing benefit, at least during the summer vacation. The poor standard of the housing students occupy could be addressed quite effectively if more university-owned accommodation could be provided, but in the current economic climate, coupled with the squeeze on higher education spending, this is unlikely.

In many ways, the privately rented sector is ideally placed to cater for the housing needs of students. A healthy privately rented sector can supply the extra flexibility, diversity and choice needed to satisfy the demands of students, who constitute a mobile and overwhelmingly single population (Best et al., 1992). Although the potential is there, however, the current provision is beset with problems.

The intermediate tenancy scheme currently operated by Newcastle University enables students to get access to better quality accommodation than they are able to obtain via their own contacts with private landlords, and is consequently worth extending. Through such initiatives, university housing offices are able to act as mediators between students and private landlords, monitoring standards in exchange for offering landlords guaranteed lettings. It works because it is a partnership which benefits students and landlords alike. If universities could also persuade local authorities to exercise their rights to inspect properties, and enforce improvements where needed, the circumstances might be created in which students might be adequately housed and, as a result, be better able to take advantage of the opportunities higher education has to offer.

The problems outlined in this article represent significant barriers to the development of open access to higher education. One consequence of students getting into financial difficulties and experiencing housing problems could well be an increase in the numbers of young people who will be compelled to stay with their parents during their university careers. Alternatively, the prospect of debt and unsavoury housing conditions could deter a great many potential students, particularly those without substantial private means, from considering a university education at all.

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**Leslie, Peter Parmenter and Carein Todd** were students taking the Applied Social Research course (1993-94).

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# WORKING SPACE

## 'STUDENT SAFETY MATTERS':

*but what matters and who cares?*

HARRIE CHURCHILL AND TANYA HONNING

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### Introduction

Our experience of student union activism is one where feminist action is not encouraged. Over the last few years the long standing women's group at the Student Union has had to struggle to maintain the group as women only. There has been repeated attempts by union executive members as well as other students to limit women's autonomous action on campus. In this climate, setting up another women's group is a daunting prospect especially when it will encompass support and action on the issue of sexual violence. Particularly if that group aims to be political, raise awareness, speak out about experiences (such as harassment, date rape and abuse) and support victims from a voluntary and collective basis. In this article we will recount our experiences so far in developing such a group.

### Why a Women's Action Support Group ?

Recently, we were reminded of the lack of concern about harassment perpetrated within the university community. In the Guardian Education Supplement (November 5th, 1996) there were two articles entitled 'Safety Matters' and 'Campus Crimewatch' reporting on the current 'drive to improve student protection'. This concern for student safety has been fuelled by recent attacks on students that were reported in the national press. Frank Woods began his article with the comment that 'life as a student is far from risk free' (p.vi). This at last challenges the popular image of carefree student days. However, according to Woods the most pressing safety matters for universities are IT theft and dangerous strangers (non students on campus). The solutions to these problems are to invest in high-tech security surveillance of campus buildings and to educate students on the dangers of travelling alone at night.

'Campus Crimewatch' reported on the recent N.U.S. initiative to encourage universities to publish crime statistics on assaults, burglaries and petty theft. These statistics should be published because '...They [NUS] say better information about the risks from day one of college is more important than the risk of scaring away potential applicants' (Guardian Education Supplement, November 5th 1996, p.vi).

Reading the two articles is encouraging, student safety is receiving national attention and at last there is some recognition that not all students are having a good time, some have bad experiences of harassment and in some cases assault. But again, 'campus crime' is mainly articulated as crime to property and when personal safety is discussed it is mainly defined as stranger-danger. There is no mention of harassment or assault (either sexual or racial) by other students or lecturers as being a pressing safety matter.

The predominant culture of being a 1st year student is about getting drunk and getting laid. Our Union stands for cheap drinks and entertainment. During freshers week there was a 'Full Frontal' event and the annual 'snog-a-fresher' competition where executive members competed with each other to see who could 'get off' with the most first years. The resulting atmosphere is one of sexual innuendo and harassment.

We are aware of many experiences that we have heard about through friends... One 1st year student was raped by a high-standing union executive, who then harassed and threatened her to keep quiet. Another 1st year was date-raped by a fellow student who lived in her halls. A woman student was assaulted by a male student she knew in the Student Union building during an evening event and although the police were called in nothing was done. A gay student was beaten up by fellow-students... to mention a few.

As a first year student a member of the group suffered a sexual assault which traumatised her for the remainder of her student years. She knew the attacker but was too scared and ashamed to report the assault. She also felt scared that her account wouldn't be believed as there was no substantial proof other than her word against his. During the next three years she had difficulties studying, sometimes feeling suicidal with few people she trusted to turn to, either for support or advice. The problem was silenced as there is no place on campus to talk about such experiences. Looking back, the worst thing was experiencing the trauma in isolation, without the support she felt she needed, which ultimately led to a suicide attempt.

It seems that if a student is assaulted by a 'stranger' there is a national outcry, but nothing is done for students who are assaulted by other students or even members of staff. Sexual violence within the student community is kept very quiet and this means students are suffering in silence and alone, desperately coping with such traumatic experiences with little support or concern for their protection from universities. This is why we wanted to set up a group.

### **The group so far ...**

#### *1 The aims of the group*

The Women's Action/Support Group was formed during July 1996 by a group of women (two post-graduates, two graduates, two undergraduate students and one youth worker), out of mutual concern about personal safety within the student population. The group has initially been concerned about student experiences of sexual harassment and assault. It is a women only, student orientated group, which aims to stage events to raise awareness of women's safety issues, students experiences and issues for the student community as a whole. In a recent meeting we defined our aims as :

- To raise awareness about sexual violence at University;
- To provide support and information about local resources for those who have experienced sexual violence;



- To provide an alternative model to therapy - which involves collective action and speaking out against the issue;
- To be student-orientated.

## 2 *The history of the group and its founding members.*

The group developed out of a merger of ideas and plans. A youth worker for Newcastle YMCA, approached us about the possibility of setting up a women's group tackling issues of sexual violence. The possibilities for such a group had been vaguely discussed a year earlier with a colleague researching sexual violence in higher education. The youth worker now felt able to offer support as part of the newly developed Student Settlement Project. It also emerged from the personal experiences of some of the individuals involved. Some of the participants were also involved in a sexual violence research programme and national conference (Carter et.al.,1996).

We are aware that for students attempting to come to terms with bad experiences or past memories of abuse, there seems to be little acknowledgement or concern about the issues. The popular slogan of 'fun' and 'loads of cheap beer' paints an exciting and carefree picture of student life. There are few talks about personal safety and few provisions for supporting victims such as providing a safe place, working through options, giving advice and advocacy with academic staff. The support that is available to students experiencing difficulties, beyond the academic, housing or financial, has an emphasis on the individual's need for counselling. Here, university services are limited and community services overloaded. Furthermore, for some women counselling is not helpful but adds to the feeling of isolation and inadequacy. Some women find it more helpful to talk to friends and other women with similar experiences, making the issue public instead of privatising their feelings in weekly therapy sessions behind closed doors. We felt that by setting up a group and by talking about the subject we could raise issues of student safety and break the prevailing silence. Rooted in feminist theories of sexual politics and feminist direct action, a group of us got together in order to examine what such a group could do.

## 3 *Developing the philosophy, aims and actions of the group.*

In our initial discussions about developing the group we identified that a peer-led initiative was of vital importance. We felt that safety and sexual violence is a community issue, it is everyone's responsibility and the community can support victims by acknowledging the issues and providing support. A far-reaching community response could include prevention and education work, which we would like to aim at as a long-term goal. Community led initiatives are often criticised for being too political (radical feminism) and unsafe for women because issues of sexual violence are raised outside the safe therapeutic confinements of a counsellor's office. We felt that these criticisms served to 'professionalise' sexual violence, making it a therapy issue for individuals and 'experts' rather than women participating in action and mutual support. The therapy model ignores the way women offer support to each other in 'networks of friends' as part of daily life.

Even though we believe in women taking such action we became concerned, after talking to local activists and rape counsellors, that we needed counselling skills. We wanted to develop skills for peer counselling but this was not possible, mainly due to financial constrictions. It wasn't until a later meeting that we realised that, although we explicitly wanted to be a feminist collective alternative to the medical model, the group discussions had been dominated with thinking about how we need to become 'experts' with 'counselling' qualifications. The group is not about being experts, none of us are 'experts' on the issues of sexual violence. As women, we have our life experiences and feminist awareness which has spurred us into taking some action. The group then tried to establish ways of collectively responding to what we understood the needs to be through discussing ideas, debating issues, sharing information and reacting honestly to each others views and concerns. In other words we wanted to concentrate on breaking the silence and discussing the issue from the personal, the political and the social. For example, we have decided to organise an evening event jointly with local university unions in March 1997. This event may involve a play and visual exhibition about sexual violence followed by an open discussion.

We seemed to repeat debates as different women got involved as indeed they will be repeated as long as the group exists. The flexibility of a broad voluntary response to sexual violence is that different women get involved for a variety of reasons and have different commitments. The group should develop alongside these as a dynamic process. In practice this flexibility at times feels frustrating, as arranging meetings and keeping the group together is difficult. Three members have child care commitments which limits their time and others find it hard to make evenings or weekends. We have been meeting at each other's houses, at the YMCA or at the university chaplaincy. When members cannot make meetings we have tried to maintain contact through telephone calls and by sending out the minutes to everyone. So far we have about 10 women supporting the group with numbers between three to six at regular meetings.

During the initial stages we began to develop the skeleton of a women student group, linking up and networking with local contacts and resources. We wrote to all the relevant local community agencies introducing ourselves, explaining what the group was about and asking for their opinions. There was a positive response from a number of agencies. By networking in this way we are able to refer students to other local services if that is what they require, it also encourages a dialogue between student and local community services. Local workers have offered their services in training and setting up a men's group, if such a group is required. The students' union women's and welfare officers have expressed interest and support. We are also in the process of compiling a resource list of local services and useful publications for students. We have contacted 'Freshers', both during the Freshers Week and with information about the group and subject through the Freshers Pack.

### **Concluding comments...**

The group structures are quite determinedly not fixed. It is not about regular attendance, women attend as and when they can. Women get involved through word of mouth or

by seeing a poster and for as long as they want. Such inconsistencies should not be problematic as the group is about doing what we can according to our capabilities, in order to make a difference in our own lives and for other women. The subject of sexual violence is vast and can be difficult to discuss, as it touches our lives in various ways. We hope to raise the issue amongst the students and local community - with the intention of encouraging more people to speak out against it and find ways of preventing and dealing with it. We know that this is very difficult for many women but by working together we will become stronger.

**Harrie Churchill and Tanya Honning** are graduates and members of the Women's Action/ Support Group which is part of the Student Settlement operating through Newcastle YMCA.

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SUE HARLEY

This is a timely little book, written to draw the attention of the general election contestants to the deepening crisis facing further education colleges. It follows on from 'The Modernity of Further Education', by Frank Reeves, also of Bilston, which gave a depressing account of the current state of further education in Britain. It is in similar ideological vein as other recent Bilston College publications, presenting a decisive conviction that the most effective way for further education (FE) to reach its market is through a community college approach, and that this concept has been shackled by government policy since 1992.

The central concern of this book is to provide a critique of the 1992 Further and Higher Education (FHE) Act. Firstly, it swept away all traces of democracy and established a 'quangocracy' of colleges, called corporations, under the super-quango, the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Secondly, it accentuated the divisions within the post-16 and FE sectors - those between academic and vocational, vocational and non-vocational, school sixth forms and colleges and education and training.

These divisions run contrary to the vision of many educationalists that post-16 education should be comprehensive and unified. The vision is, of necessity, complex because of the sectors diversity. In order to make effective policy, government ministers need to understand these complexities. But the further education sector, unlike schools and universities, is not a vote winner and therefore most government ministers have lacked the political incentive to grapple with it.

The further education system is undemocratic at national, regional and local level. At national level, the FEFC is composed of selected individuals whose power is not delegated to its regional offices. In college governance, there has also been a loss of democracy. The local education authorities (LEAs) are not now represented. This loss rules out the last vestiges of democracy as local councillors have, at least, to stand for re-election once every four years.

The FEFC controls the colleges through its mechanistic funding formula. Colleges can, therefore, neither take into account the needs of their individual localities, nor negotiate with the FEFC in making education and training provision. Meanwhile the FEFC can and does change its mind unilaterally about funding arrangements, whilst the colleges only means of redress is

# REVIEWS

recourse to court action. Effectively, then, the super-quango, the FEFC, grinds the smaller quangos, the college corporations, into submission and decisions of corporations, even when taken democratically, count for nothing.

The book also examines the major issues relating to the colleges and vocational training. Colleges originally trained for the dying manufacturing sector, not the growing service sector, and to this extent, they have not met the needs of the economy. It expresses the concern for this country's failure to meet the National Education and Training Targets (NETTS) in order to match our competitors abroad. It reiterates the argument for integrating education, training and economic regeneration. However, the infamous Schedule 2 of the 1992 FHE Act only funds courses leading to vocational qualifications. In doing this it ignores the education and training needs of millions of unemployed people, including the 230,000 or so young people neither in education, training or work. It is these groups which are of central concern to the writer of this book because they represent so much wasted potential.

In order to reach them, colleges need to take education into communities using a community college approach. In looking at suitable models, Wymer examines the USA community colleges, who offer a broad based educational programme, through working closely with the business community.

In his concern for an international approach, Wymer also examines the European Commission's (EC) education policy. He enthuses about its recent white paper 'Teaching and Learning: Towards a Learning Society', which emphasises the significance of the skills acquired in communities and points towards the integration of education, training, community/economic re-generation and development. This is a much broader view of the educational needs of young people than the narrow vocational approach advocated by the British Tory government. Britain's vocationalism is deemed to be very limited as a vehicle for meeting community needs and the FEFC are viewed as being way out of line with EC policies.

The community college structure at Bilston is described in some detail. It follows the ideals of R H Tawney who described the 19th Century discussion groups arranged by Trade Unionism, co-operatives, friendly societies and chapels. The community college approach aims to build on the experiences of people in their communities. It is involved with its partners on an equal basis with shared decision-making. Wymer argues that the FEFC and its officers have no significant experience of open access, off-site, community education for working class people and are therefore very out of touch with such ways of working.

Wymer is keen on the international challenge and the book attempts to locate FE on an international scale, arguing that Britain can and should

learn from other countries. Apart from the USA community colleges, the book also discusses the proposed South African model. It also describes and justifies the ventures of Bilston college in establishing education and training in Moscow.

The book examines the policies of both major political parties. It sees the Tories as having short-term market-led solutions with Labour as little better, providing similarly short-term solutions through its windfall tax. Neither seeks to address the real structural problems of the economy. The Labour party's view will, at least, embrace European policies, with their concern for the exclusion of many people from the technological society, and a corresponding wish to provide something appropriate for them. However, Wymer sees colleges as having a pivotal role in community, social and economic-regeneration, especially in areas of industrial decline and high unemployment.

The final chapter provides a blueprint for the action which future governments need to take to establish a democratic and comprehensive FE sector. There is a need for 'democratic subsidiarity', in which the aim is to avoid detailed decision-making by a remote high authority. He suggests the principles for a new FHE Act, and for resourcing a new comprehensive FE system.

As with previous Bilston college publications this book is very readable. It provides an up-to-date account of further education policy and its effects, giving a principled, visionary approach of a future for further education. It should certainly, in line with its declared aim, be of interest to any intending party of government, but also have equal relevance to those concerned with community, social and economic regeneration.

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*Les Back*

**New Ethnicities and Urban Culture:**

Racisms and Multiculture in Young Lives

University College London Press

ISBN 1 8572 8252 3

£38.00 (hbk)

£12.95 (pbk)

pp 288

T. A. SINCLAIR

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This book's stated purpose was to examine how the formation of identity, racism and multiculturalism is manifest within everyday life within a city environment among young people. It sought to make explicit contemporary understanding on the cultural dynamics of post-imperial London. The author conducted research on two council housing estates with different racial/ethnic composition and history to provide the empirical basis for the book's content. One estate was pre-dominantly white whilst the other multi-ethnic. Les Back is a white researcher of working class origins, currently working as a lecturer at Goldsmiths College. He lived in a flat on one of the estates and worked as a part-time youth worker during the research. The study is based on ethnographic methods which includes the use of participant observation, semi-structured (taped) individual and group interviews.

The book presented analysis based on 'detailed examination of the lives and culture of young people'. The conclusion suggests that in Europe's urban conurbations transcultural production exists simultaneously with extreme forms of violence and racism. In local environments (for example housing estates) cultural meanings are in a constant state of negotiation and evolution. The various young participants are sensitive to a myriad of political and ideological conflicts. For example, music (reggae) provides the site for dialogue between Black and White young people. A similar situation occurs around language use. Usually, depending on context, great emphasis is given to the appropriate language which changes in interaction related to the cultural composition of a group. These changes reflect significant cultural understandings and helps us to comprehend the dynamic nature of identity formation. The author's thesis rejects as simplistic a straightforward separation along Black and White cultures. In that sense there are new identities being developed at the local (micro) level that can be differentiated between estates even within close geographical distances. These changes according to Les Back do not always relate to those occurring at a national level. What is meaningful for young people happens in their locality among their peer groups and the cultural milieu of their interactions on their estates. Although he recognises that some cultural factors also come from outside these obtain their definitive meanings on the estate.

Social identities are constructed from a variety of influences and is therefore a multifaceted phenomenon.

The book deals in concrete terms with young peoples' interaction on the level of everyday culture and examines in minute detail how mores are developed and negotiated. The analysis sought to demonstrate the syncretic nature of cultural identity formation in a multicultural setting. How racial/cultural inclusion and exclusion is mediated, is recorded and analysed. This is done through extensive use of real illustrations, recorded dialogue and descriptions of observed interactions from both estates. The range of incidents includes conflicts, bullying and racist name calling. The youth club and its workers' interactions provides a rich source of analytical material. Through a comparative study of two post war estates a good picture is painted as to the complex processes of identity formation within recognisable contexts. Emphasis is given to the importance of music, language, recent history, demographical factors and geographical boundaries. The rigorous analysis of real situations are supported by meticulous research and extensive use of theoretical referencing.

The text is at times unduly complex and does not make for light reading. Hence, a real worry is that its overtly academic style may put some community and youth work practitioners and students off. There are also serious concerns over some of the conclusions drawn from the examples provided. There were major weaknesses in the understanding of power as a major aspect of oppression. Regrettably 'white culture' was never really analysed. In one sense by localising the power relations between white and black and through elevating the influence of music and language on young lives at a point before their transformation into adults an obvious distortion is created. The fact that peer group influences and behaviour do not always endure adolescence was not given sufficient weight. Thus the book contrives to give equal power of influence to black and white young people in the process of culture and identity formation. Likewise, through a process of localisation, the macro context and its role in perpetuating racism is negated. Similarly, by excluding a study of other major influences like school and work some of the significant dimensions of the lives of young people were omitted. The researcher's reliance on those young people who attend youth clubs ignores the lived experience of the majority and makes his sample less than representative. However, through the provision of extensive source material the reader is enabled to judge and can therefore arrive at contrary understanding from that presented by the author. The book's content, despite its obvious thoroughness, remains a white working class academic perspective of race, culture and identity in the lives of young people on inner city estates.

This book comes at a crucial time and provides a radical perspective on the multicultural world of young people and examines cultural identity formation within local contexts. It would make essential reading for all



those workers, students and lecturers who need to understand the changing nature of inner city culture, race and racist expression among young people. It could provide ideas for stimulating debates at various levels. Therefore, I would strongly encourage everyone with an interest in young people and their lived experience to read this book.

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*Kate Figs*

**Because of Her Sex:**

The Myth of Equality for Women in Britain

Pan Books, 1995

ISBN 0 3303 2849 2

£6.99 (pbk)

pp 259

JEAN SPENCE

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This is a book for those who have come to believe in a post-feminist paradise. The author has clearly suffered from the contradiction between what has been promoted as an Equal Opportunities society and the reality of her personal experience as a woman and she has set out to demonstrate the extent of continuing inequality between men and women in Britain today.

It is no accident that she begins the book by talking about her experience of giving birth to her daughter. In doing so, she is not only re-working the feminist theme of 'the personal is political', but she is also setting the scene for what lies at the heart of her argument: that discrimination continues to exist in the structures of modern Britain because these structures have failed to acknowledge that true equality of opportunity implies an equality of difference, an equality which recognises the biological difference between the sexes without stereotyping these differences into traditional patterns of gender inequality.

Figs is writing for the lay reader. Her journalistic style is punctuated by her own anger and passion for the issues she is describing. She is incensed by the manner in which the rights which women have fought for over the years have been turned into burdens by a system which persistently adapts at a superficial level whilst reproducing the same inequalities, sometimes even more intensely, at the structural level. So, for instance, if women have gained the 'right' to work, and indeed now expect to do so,

that right has turned out to be one of increased exploitation in a labour market segmented by gender, which has used women's needs for flexibility to accord them worse conditions, lower pay and lower status than men. This is particularly true in the part time labour market. At the same time, there has not been a shift in public attitudes about female roles in the family. Whatever personal changes men and women have made in their lives, the state continues to assume that women are primarily responsible for private life and caring. Lack of adequate childcare facilities or of adequate work place support for women wishing to combine motherhood with work or career, have left women peculiarly vulnerable in negotiating decent conditions at work. The consequence has been that far from achieving equality with men in recent years, conditions for women, particularly among the poorer have actually worsened.

Using conversations with a number of women from different social positions, as well as a plethora of evidence from a range of studies which have considered the question of gender and equal opportunities, Figes is able to demonstrate that gender inequality is endemic from the top of the social hierarchy to the bottom. Even where it appears that women have broken through 'the glass ceiling' the evidence cited shows that they still have not managed to penetrate the citadels of ultimate power. Men have simply shifted these beyond the range of women, frequently using their time-honoured 'clubbiness' to sustain and perpetuate the status quo. Whilst she accepts that it is undeniably positive that some individual women have managed to achieve positions in professions which have traditionally been exclusively male, Figes nevertheless demonstrates that this has frequently been at a cost. The most expensive cost is that of relationships and motherhood. Women in top jobs have frequently been forced to make personal sacrifices which would never be expected of a man in order to pursue their public life and career.

Whilst the struggles of women in 'top' jobs is indicative of continuing inequity, this is to some extent off-set by job satisfaction and wealth. However, for those who are unemployed or working in traditional 'female' jobs, and for those who are on part time contracts in particular, the consequences of gender inequality are profound. Figes reserves her deepest passion for the injustices endured by women working in conditions which are designed to extract greatest profit for the employer with least concern for those employed, which indeed rely on women's ties to children in particular in order to maintain access to a cheap and 'flexible' supply of labour. Some of the examples which the author uses to support her argument remind the reader just how difficult life can be for those struggling to work for low wages whilst caring for a family. The alternatives for many of these women are unemployment and no wages and because the state refuses to provide adequate and affordable childcare, many women are forced into unemployment and poverty.

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Central to the argument of the post feminist is the idea that the combination of Equality Legislation and Equal Opportunities Policies in the workplace have opened the door for women to participate in all areas of public life on equal terms with men. The evidence used by Figes to counter this argument demonstrates just how ineffective such legislation and policy making can be. Whilst the legislation is fraught with legal loopholes, with obfuscation and can ultimately offer little in the way of remedies even when a case is proven, equal opportunities policies are often a means of simply containing and marginalising the issues as they present themselves in the workplace. The implementation of a new law - such as when the Equal Pay Act was passed, might lead to a slight change for the better. Similarly, the expression of interest in developing and designing an Equal Opportunities Policy might lead initially to a number of changes in workplace practices. However, the real test of the effectiveness of these interventions is in the long run. And the long run does not in most cases indicate continuing engagement or change. Quite the reverse.

This is not an academic book. It is flawed insofar as the evidence which Figes has collected is simply a collection of snapshots of a number of people with whom she has spoken. She tells us nothing about how her data was collected or about why she chose to question those particular people. There is no suggestion that they are representative. Similarly, the data which she has collected from other sources is not always immediately comparable, particularly in relation to the dates when it was published. She sometimes uses anecdotal evidence which she must realise herself is a weak means of supporting her case. Nevertheless, she does not pretend to be writing an academic book. As I read it, I became increasingly sympathetic to her arguments and the points she makes. The book is accessible and a straightforward read. The quantity of evidence amassed should make even the most ardent anti-or post-feminist question their position.

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Phil Hodkinson, Andrew C. Sparkes and Heather Hodkinson

### **Triumphs and Tears**

Young People, Markets and the Transition from School to Work

David Fulton Publishers 1996

ISBN 1 8534 6442 2

£16.99

HELEN M. F. JONES

*Triumphs and Tears* concerns the transition from school to work. It focuses on the experiences of ten 'selected' young people leaving full-time education aged 16+ or 17+ in a pilot region for Training Credits vouchers. The book is intended to help professionals including teachers, lecturers, careers officers and TEC staff 'to understand the actions and perceptions of the young people in their care'. The critical assessment of Training Credits vouchers is useful and informative but it is unlikely that anyone already interested in the subject will gain many new insights into either policy or real life experience. The book's format is intended to assist readers whose interest may focus on the analysis of theory and policy or on the young people's 'stories'; the two are handled separately so one may focus on relevant sections. However I did not find this division successful since it resulted in the analysis not being situated in the 'stories'. *Triumphs and Tears* feels like two books.

The author's intention is 'to explore the middle ground, between ... broad structural patterns of inequality and the individualist idealism of current policy approaches'. The significance of structural inequalities including ethnicity, geographical location, gender and social class is noted but this 'middle ground' reduces the opportunity to consider their significance. For example, the research was conducted in an almost entirely white, rural area but the consequences of the location and of the fact that the ten subjects all appear to be white are not considered. This serves to establish a 'white-as-norm' syndrome and fails to address the possible difficulties associated with rural living.

The 'stories' themselves combine the young people's own words, material from interviews with professionals, employers and parents and the researchers' observations and commentary. The handling of some of the material included is open to criticism. First, although the term 'story' may be accurate when referring to an individual's sequential discourse, it tempts the authors into sometimes sensationalist phraseology. Experiences are described as 'often startling tales', and as 'dramatic and hopefully gripping'. This devalues real-life success and pain. Secondly, the power imbalance in the various relationships involving the researchers is not explored. The young people's rôle was to provide raw data. How did they think their 'stories' would be presented? Semi-structured interviews offer limited opportunities for self-expression. The manipulation of the data lay with the researchers. In particular, 'Laura's Story' demonstrates

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a lack of integrity in the use of judgemental, personal comments. Laura tried several types of work. The authors note a 'cyclical pattern': 'She began ... with naive over-enthusiasm, following a "choice" based on a combination of whim and opportunity ... [followed by] a period of tension ... [then] disillusion'. Did Laura have the chance to defend her decisions against such comments? One employer dislikes her 'wearing very short things', which they deem 'very unsuitable' and 'not nice' when working with small children. A trainer remarks that she appears 'to have let herself go'. Another adds, 'she was getting disheartened ... so she was going to go against the system, and bleach her hair and things like that'. The researchers, rather than critically analysing these comments, add their own, losing any semblance of objectivity; they note 'a dramatic change in [Laura's] appearance. She seemed to have put on weight and her clothes seemed brash and garish'. I searched for consideration of links between experimenting with appearance, establishing an adult identity and seeking an appropriate field of work. I searched for consideration of the tensions between youth style and employers' expectations, for examination of the gendered assumptions, for the researcher to focus on the validity of their own opinions. However, I searched in vain. Nobody seems to have discussed the issue with Laura. The message is clear. If a young person wants to explore the possibilities of style, they should stay in full-time education where garish clothes and bleached hair are not seen as unacceptable contraventions of convention!

Although Helen's appearance is not dissected, the examination of the impact of gender in her choices is unsatisfactory. She starts out car spraying before 'reverting to type, in a stereotypically female, working-class job'; she finds work in a record shop. First, I found the phrase, 'reverting to type' offensive. Secondly, the assumption that work in a record shop is a stereotypically female job is questionable. The retail sector's growth has led to product gendering: men sell computers, electrical goods ... and records. In fact, it could be suggested that Helen has again selected a gender atypical area of work, albeit less radical than car spraying. The mislabelling of Helen's eventual preference means all ten subjects are identified as opting for gender-stereotypical choices although the pressures in operation are not discussed fully.

A significant aspect of several of the 'stories' is the tension between the various adults involved. Professionals offer conflicting advice. Parents introduce their own ideas and networks. Employers question the relevance of college curricula and have their own theories about appropriate training. They all, no doubt, share the authors' concern 'to help young people ... against whom society appears to stack the odds'. A deeper discussion of the impact of this deluge of sometimes inaccurate or inappropriate advice would have been interesting. In combination with the economic climate and the young people's own possible uncertainty at a time of transition, I concluded that it is remarkable that *any* sixteen year olds find both appropriate work and relevant training.

I had hoped to gain something other than knowledge about Training Credits. However, whilst, as a text concerning an oft-neglected group, it is to be welcomed, the book does not achieve what it sets out to do. The decisions to work in 'the middle ground' and to separate empirical data from analysis were not vindicated. Some may find the 'stories' 'dramatic' and 'gripping' but generally, the failure to weave the analysis and empirical data together and the missed opportunities for various areas of discussion reduce the possibility of identifying lessons to be learned from this text.

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*Angela Devlin*

**Criminal Classes**

Waterside Press

ISBN 1 8728 7030 9

pp 187

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**TED HARVEY**

One of the more positive suggestions to emerge in the aftermath of the Dunblane tragedy was that rather than schools spending millions of pounds to make themselves into mini-fortresses, it would perhaps be better for them to develop ways of identifying and treating those sad characters whose school careers often presaged disaster in adulthood. More recently the exclusion of disruptive pupils has been in the headlines with the refusal of teachers to teach some of those who have been re-admitted. In this context 'Criminal Classes' is not only a brave and ambitious book but also a timely contribution to an important debate concerning the role schools play in the process of becoming a criminal.

Angela Devlin, an experienced special needs teacher, interviewed 100 prisoners to examine the links between education failure and future offending behaviour, basing her study on this collection of first-hand accounts by prisoners of their experiences. In nine chapters she explores issues such as the effects of fragmented schooling, social disadvantage, bullying, peer groups, unnoticed special needs and punishment and praise. These chapters are filled with powerful and gripping extracts from the interviews which are sometimes quite breathtaking in the extremes of feeling and behaviour which they involve.

Of course establishing any kind of causal link between these two factors is fraught with difficulties, the childhood of most of these prisoners was



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often chaotic and desperate, with family circumstances clearly playing a major role. However Angela Devlin succeeds in showing that school is never a neutral player in this drama. Time after time, one is left thinking 'if only...' when at some particular juncture either a negative experience occurred or some compensatory action, which it would be quite reasonable to expect, was not taken.

Joining the absorbing and intimate accounts from the prisoners, Devlin has included a perceptive and informative commentary, and in chapter ten offers some practical suggestions for things that could be done at school to limit future offending. Springing, as they do, from such weighty evidence in the earlier chapters these recommendations are convincing and forceful. However she is not over optimistic that these reforms will easily be effected as they carry major political and funding implications. Her call for teacher training to include attention to spotting and dealing with abuse and emotional disturbance in a climate which is emphasising academic standards rather than personal development seems unlikely to bear fruit in the near future, and her insistence upon the need for small classes so that pupils can receive individual attention seems similarly fated.

However I believe that this is an important and significant book, the author's commitment and humanity shine through as does the candour of her respondents. The book highlights an important issue and could inform the practice of professionals in a variety of fields (the unsettled school careers of children in care warrants immediate attention) as well as raising a number of areas worthy of further study - perhaps to be put into effect when a more considerate ethos prevails.

*Ted Harvey is Assistant Warden at a Village College in Cambridgeshire.*

James Avis, Martin Bloomer, Geoff Esland, Denis Gleeson and Phil Hodgkinson

**Knowledge and Nationhood:**

Education, Politics and Work

Cassell 1996

ISBN 0 3043 3580 0

£40.00 (hbk)

£14.99 (pbk)

pp 198

BERNARD DAVIES

Once the central arguments of this book became clear, much of my reading of it was filtered through a very personal preoccupation: how could it help me challenge current efforts to deprofessionalise youth and community work by forcing all its qualifications within NVQ/'competencies' frameworks? In the context of a National Youth Agency which, regardless of any opposition, presses on with 'feasibility studies' and 'mapping exercises', the answer turned out to be unambiguous. *Knowledge and Nationhood* should be compulsory reading for anyone still treating such developments as mere technical exercises devoid of political or ideological content or assuming they can be introduced without major damage, not just training, but to practice and the policies which shape it.

The book of course has much more to tell us than that. Indeed, it explicitly offers itself as a contribution to 'an urgently needed open debate about the relationship between (economic and financial) globalisation, education and national development' and in particular as 'a critique of policy issues associated with post-compulsory education and training'. Again explicitly, the authors 'have remained committed to critical education ideals and values ... (to) student-centredness, active learning, problem-solving'. They have thus continued to see education 'as having a critical and central; relation to wider society: to personal growth and development, to social cohesion and to economic stability'.

None of this makes the book easy reading. It is often very dense (a fuller index might have helped here); it sometimes seems too anxious to prove its academic credentials by citing other writers; and, perhaps because it is based mainly on separate contributions by each of the five authors, it is on occasions repetitive. However, it is not a polemic.

On the contrary, its arguments rest on a detailed analysis of key, especially state, papers and on some original and provocative qualitative research. And it follows these through relentlessly to show both the intrinsic flaws in New Right policies over the past two decades and - even when judged by their own aims - the huge damage these have inflicted on post-16 education and training.

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The book's institutional focus is post-16 education and training in Britain (mainly England) and its capacity to turn out the educated and skilled workers required by a so-called 'post-Fordist' age of global economic competition, flexible production systems and workforces and 'flatter' organisational structures. Here the authors' conclusion is clear and, once the political and ideological motivations of the policy-makers have been stripped away, hard to dispute: often in the name of an increasingly mythical 'sovereignty', we continue to insist on national solutions to problems with deep international roots. As a result, almost from the moment twenty years ago when a *Labour* Prime Minister (James Callaghan) launched a great education debate, attention has been distracted from the real weaknesses in the British economy such as chronic under-investment and short-sighted management strategies. The fall-out? Not just deeply demotivated students and staff but an economy which is being increasingly disabled for the world in which it must operate.

As always, for young people the consequences have been particularly damaging. The research which the book reports reveals how the rhetoric of the Thatcherite 'training revolution' has failed repeatedly to touch the personal and social realities of their lives, above all because it has assumed entirely rational 'career choices' and neglected their continuing capacity to be active agents in shaping their own futures. The results have not just been higher and disproportionate levels of youth unemployment but increasing casualisation of the work that is available and plummeting pay levels. These in turn have led to the poverty and homelessness which so many young people now experience, their wider political and social exclusion, their deepening anger and frustration - and many of their delinquencies. Running through all this too, as the book once again shows, is a 'gearing' of these experiences around class, gender and race so that historic disadvantages have been even further entrenched and exacerbated.

However, focused though the authors are on economy and education, in the end the sweep of their critique is much broader. They highlight too, for example, the hugely anti-democratic price we are paying for the ruthlessness of the New Right in reconstructing the state apparatus to serve 'the market' and the 'managerialist' versions of control they favour. They return continually to the crude 'intellectual disinvestment' - another intrinsic element of the New Right enterprise - which has succeeded in converting professional ideas and debates well within the British pluralist tradition into subversive left-wing conspiracies. Within in all of this, they show how language has been corrupted, with terms like 'empowerment', 'autonomy' and 'choice' being redeployed to serve narrow 'role-taking' rather than 'role-making' ends within the 'new' labour market. And they highlight how, in presenting *cultural* components of the new global village like the internet as unqualified gains, its much more destructive economic effects are being masked.

The book is not all critique. Some genuine attempts are made to offer positive alternative responses to what is happening and certainly to defend values and policies which have not just been rendered unfashionable but treated as unthinkable and even risible. However, its strength lies in its clear-sighted, hard-headed and *comprehensive* demolition of positions and policies which over twenty years have been made to seem 'natural' and 'inevitable'.

Memo to all those who continue to advance just such arguments of inevitability to support their advocacy of NVQs - read, absorb and apply what this book has to say!

**Bernard Davies** is the author of *Threatening Youth* and was formerly the Sheffield Youth Service's Training Officer. He now does some paid and unpaid training and consultancy work.

*Sandie Schagen, Fiona Johnson and Clare Simkin*

### **Sixth Form Options**

NFER

ISBN 0 7005 1389 2

£9.00 (pbk)

pp 165

**TED HARVEY**

Post-16 education has both expanded and diversified massively in the last fifteen years. Young people finishing their period of compulsory education can face a bewildering array of options, including the relatively new GNVQs, many of which are being quite aggressively 'sold' to them. On the other hand, if they live in a rural area they might realistically only have the 'choice' of three 'A'-levels at a school sixth form which would be instantly recognisable to someone who attended one thirty years ago.

This NFER report attempts to identify and explore the factors affecting sixth form provision and curricular organisation, the influences on students who choose to stay on at school, and the present role of LEAs in post-16 education. Through extensive research involving interviews and questionnaires in over 400 schools and nearly all of the LEAs in England and Wales this book incorporates perspectives from students, teachers and LEA staff and 'helps to provide a full and detailed map of what was hitherto largely uncharted territory - the sixth form of the 1990s.'

Undoubtedly the authors have achieved their aim and this book would be helpful to policy-makers in this area - if only to remind him or her of the

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size and complexity of the task faced. In many ways it is becoming increasingly hard to generalise about the provision being offered young people and the reasons they take it up or not, such is the variation in local circumstances. However this is an authoritative survey which exhaustively examines the situation regarding post sixteen provision in impressive detail and with rigour. One reaction I have often experienced in reading this was to reflect as to whether we do actually need all this to tell us that the whole area is an unholy mess.

There is more serious point here, in what seems to be NFER's style there is here a mass of data and what might be called low-level analysis but the reader is left to make his or her own inferences at a higher level. Certainly questions are posed, particularly in the 'issues arising' and 'questions for consideration' sections at the end of each chapter, but I found that in this respect the balance was wrong, less empirical detail and more generalised discussion would be more appropriate.

A dominant theme which emerges from the research is that of the market-place. Although there are a few remaining examples of collaboration between schools and colleges, it is clear that competition rules and that its effects are by no means always positive. There is no need to rehearse here the arguments surrounding the place of the market in public services in general and education in particular, but the lack of any such discussion in this report strikes me as being at best a regrettable omission and at worst an avoidance of the controversial for perhaps political reasons.

The book finishes with seven case studies of different types of sixth forms which illustrate well the issues referred to in the earlier chapters. For some audiences this may be of special use as the ways each institution has responded to its circumstances are shown resulting in each establishment having its own character with consequences for those students. Hopefully, the information provided by this report will provide an awareness of this process and eventually a more rational and coherent provision might emerge.

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*John Tierney*

**Criminology:**

Theory and context

Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1996

ISBN 0 1338 0155 1

pp 324

*Peter C. Kratcoski & Lucille Dunn Kratcoski*

**Juvenile Delinquency**

Prentice Hall, 1996

ISBN 0 1306 4577 X

pp 432

STEVE ROGOWSKI

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These are two contrasting but interesting books. 'Criminology' provides an excellent introduction to criminological theory itself while 'Juvenile Delinquency', although discussing some criminology, takes a broader view of its subject matter also discussing, for example, the trends and scope of delinquency as well as ways of tackling it.

As Tierney writes there are daily references to crime and punishment but what do these concepts mean, how are these meanings and understandings constructed and to what extent are they shared by members of society? These are some of the issues and questions he examines, by and large successfully. He explores the history of British criminology, discussing the main theories and presenting them within a wider social and political (and one could add ideological) context. As such the book is divided into five parts each covering a particular period in history. It should be noted it is sociological criminology that is the book's concern although there is a recognition of the contribution of other disciplines such as psychology, biology, economics and political science.

Classical criminology can be traced back to Beccaria and Bentham and their focusing on the original act (not actor) and the desire to create a fairer, better regulated social order whereby punishment should be proportional to the crime thereby deterring others. From the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth century this criminology converged with Lombroso's positivism which tried to use science to classify criminals in the hope of finding the causes of crime and the most effective ways of dealing with it. This led to modern criminology with biological determinism being to the fore earlier this century, its focus being on genetically determined psychological traits such as 'moral degeneracy' and 'feeble-mindedness'. The changes can be linked to wider economic, social and political transformations as Britain changed from feudalism to agrarian capitalism and mature capitalism.



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During the post-war period psychology dominated criminology with the emphasis being on empiricism involving research leading to practical results, for example predicting who would become delinquents and what to do with them. This coincided with the development of a more interventionist state, including the welfare state itself. The 1960s saw the emergence of the sociology of crime or deviancy, initially drawing on the work of the Chicago School in the USA. But it was in the late 1960s - early 1970s that the real development of sociological criminology took place. It was a reaction against traditional, positivist criminology with its causal-corrective concerns and its growth can be linked to the Counter Culture and New Left movements of the 1960s. There was less concern about what causes delinquency/deviancy and how to stamp it out and more concern with the deviants' motivations and official reactions to deviant behaviour. A key question arose as to whose side the criminologist (or for that matter probation officer/social worker, youth worker, teacher etc) was on - the judiciary, police etc. who were maintaining the status quo or the deviant who was threatening it?

The 1970s saw the influence of US ideas continuing, with some of the main developments being: deviance being seen as resistance to bourgeois rules, leading to Taylor, Walton and Young's 'New Criminology'<sup>1</sup> and attempts to develop a radical/Marxist criminology; attention was turned to the powerful in society, either as self-interested rule makers or cynical rule breakers, leading to a sociology of law; and the growth of feminist criminology. During all this, however, orthodox criminology, possessed by positivism remained powerful in both the US and Britain.

The 1980s, as we all know, saw the rise of the New Right and 'law and order' ideology came to dominate. Rising crime and the seeming inability of various forms of penalty to either deter or rehabilitate offenders saw the rise of what can be called administrative criminology involving issues of crime control - situational crime prevention (increased security, lighting etc), the mobilisation of the community (home watch and the like) and more effective policing.

The 1990s has seen the growth of more explicit New Right approaches to criminology such as right wing classism which advocates punishment as retribution, and sees the 'underclass' and their 'culture of poverty' as leading to crime. Or again, right wing neo-positivism advocates strong socialisation of children within families, and sees imprisonment working when there is a certainty of being caught, seeing crime itself resulting from 'permissiveness' and the 'dependency culture'.

As well as the continuance of mainstream, positivist criminology and administrative criminology, the 1990s also continues to see developments in feminist and radical/critical criminology. As for the latter, although there are differences between the 'left idealists' and 'left realists'

such criminology is based on: the nature and extent of crime being analysed within capitalist society; such society is characterised by class conflict and other conflicts based on notably patriarchy and racism; crime, law and social control are understood by locating them within material and ideological contexts; the ultimate goal is the transformation of society along socialist lines; and individual, positivist explanations of crime are rejected. Despite current preoccupations with post-modernism, for me radical/critical criminology still marks the way forward.

Turning rather belatedly to 'Juvenile Delinquency', this examines delinquency in the US. The preface notes, for example, that the arrest of juveniles has increased in the 1990s particularly for serious and violent crimes, minority groups are over-represented, female delinquency is increasing and there has been a surge in gang activity. The book then looks at these issues as well as others such as psychological and sociological theories of delinquency, the juvenile justice process, secure facilities and community programmes for delinquents, and preventing, treating and controlling delinquency. At the end of each chapter there is a useful summary followed by discussion questions.

I found the chapter on gang delinquency and violence of particular interest, not least because teenage gangs do not appear to be such a major problem in Britain at present (though should we wait for the next moral panic?). The incarceration of juvenile offenders was also well covered with it being pointed out that 'institutions have not demonstrated their effectiveness in deterring youth from criminal behaviour'. There is also a valuable reminder of the Massachusetts experiment of the 1970s. Its juvenile institutions were closed down and the experiment showed that 'community placement can be safely and effectively used instead of the institutionalisation of juvenile offenders'.

A surprising omission from the book, in relation to delinquency causation, is the work of Quinney<sup>2</sup>. In some ways he can be seen as the US equivalent of the aforementioned Taylor, Walton and Young seeing crime and delinquency as a product of capitalist society. His omission is especially remiss given that right wing writers such as Murray<sup>3</sup> and Wilson<sup>4</sup> are referred to.

Overall, both books are certainly worth a read but in the case of 'Criminology' I would go further. It gives a clear, readable and up to date account of the development of British criminology. I guess it will be essential reading for criminology/sociology undergraduates as well as being of great interest to those, be they policy makers, managers, practitioners or the general reader, who are concerned about crime and delinquency and of ways of dealing with it. Indeed, to such people I would recommend they buy a copy!

**References**

- 1 Taylor I, Walton P, Young J. (1973) *The New Criminology: for a social theory of deviance* Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- 2 Quinney R. (1980) *Class, State and Crime: on the theory and practice of criminal justice* Longman.
- 3 See for example Murry C. (1990) *The Emerging British Underclass* Institute of Economic Affairs.
- 4 Wilson J. (1975) *Thinking About Crime* New York: Vintage.

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*Frank Mort*

**Cultures of Consumption:**

Masculinities and Social Space in Late Twentieth-Century Britain

Routledge 1996

ISBN 0 4150 3052 8

£13.99 (pbk)

pp viii and 280

**MIKE WAITE**

Mort's book is a detailed and well-informed exploration of one area of 'the consumer society' central to British life during the eighties: the creation of a distinctive market around fashion and lifestyle aimed at young men. He argues that following and understanding any particular or any set of 'consumption chains' cannot be done without reference to the broader social and cultural histories of which they're a part. And thus the relatively narrow area covered by 'Cultures of Consumption' becomes a site from which to form views on some of the values and broader trends which shaped the last decade.

Mort's way in is to profile what he describes as 'a clutch of esoteric personalities ... talented individuals ... cultural professionals', mainly living and working in central London. His first focus is the 'coalition' of independent journalists, designers, photographers and others who sought from the early eighties to create a 'new type' of consumer journalism for men ... these include Nick Logan, founder editor of *The Face*, the graphic designer Neville Brody, journalists Robert Elms and Julie Birchill, and stylist Ray Petri.

He suggests that the success of such figures in representing 'young men to themselves' led to the increasingly visible homosexual marketplace exercising its own influence over more mainstream visions of masculinity. The choices of these members of the 'taste-elite' began to be taken up in the worlds of high street fashion design, advertising, marketing and retailing.

Mort traces the resulting complex 'alliance between the mainstream and the avant garde' commercial experts, looking at the different ways in which particular cultures of 'homosociality' were created. And this is where one of the wider stories of this book emerges: a study about men and their relationship to consumer culture opens up broader questions about contemporary changes to masculinity.

Mort relates his detailed knowledge and fascination with cultures of consumption to insights and patterns of thought drawn from debates about sexuality and sexual politics. His conclusions, which he describes as familiar but important, are that 'masculinity is multiform, rather than unitary and monolithic. The object of inquiry is masculinities, not masculinity'. And he argues that 'late twentieth century promotional culture has been extremely active in the construction of more plural versions of identity for men'.

These points, and the methodological approach taken by Mort, are likely to be more interesting and stimulating to readers of this journal than the particular empirical investigations which he undertakes. As he returns in the third part of his book to unpick the meanings of meetings and activities which took place in the shops, cafes, restaurants and night time venues of London's West End during the eighties, readers involved in youth work and social life in far less fashionable and less affluent parts of Britain may wonder what Mort's story has to do with them.

But frustration with Mort's focus on highly paid advertising executives and the style-conscious *habitués* of Soho wine bars would be a self-defeating response to this multi-layered and carefully constructed book. Mort's approach of taking consumption seriously, and interrogating all of its levels and origins and consequences for their meanings and lessons, is one which points us in very promising directions. Whoever we are, and whoever we are working with, we will find that issues to do with forms and patterns of consumption, and the meanings of these forms and patterns of consumption, are central to self-awareness and identity. That Mort has focused on these matters in relation to one particular area, and at one level of society, does not imply that the experience of and meanings of other 'cultures of consumption' is not important. Indeed, Mort seems often to be encouraging and inviting others to set out to map and critically interrogate the many different but inter-related 'consumer systems' which shape so much of social life.

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John Cotterell

**Social Networks and Social Influences in Adolescence**

Routledge: London & New York

ISBN 0 4151 0974 4

pp 242

GWENDA RHIAN JONES

Friendship and Peer groups are generally considered to be the second most important socialising influences in a young person's personal and social development and well-being. This is the central theme of the book, how young people develop a social identity, while others experience difficulties in doing so and the tendencies of antisocial behaviour.

The analysis of Social relations in adolescence is often fragmentary and a neglected aspect of study, which makes the book all the more welcome.

Drawing upon Social Psychology theories such as attachment and social identity theory, the author combines both and examines the realm of study, in terms of Social Network analysis. This is used to describe the structure and clusters of network relationships, which are deemed crucial to our understanding of the processes of establishing identity.

The framework of the book is structured into three sections. In the first part, social network analysis is used to distinguish between friends, acquaintances and cliques, and the way social ties make up peer clusters. In Chapter Two, I felt that a detailed examination of the methods employed by the author would have been useful in gathering and distinguishing cliques and crowds. However, the author makes up for this in Chapter Four. Here, some of the reasons accounting for loneliness and peer rejection, which is an 'intensely personal' problem is experienced and deeply felt, more so, during adolescence, is thoroughly aired.

Part Two I found to be the most useful and interesting. Attention here focuses upon some of the influences on young people within the wider social environment. Young people face considerable changes within education, for example, the author highlights America's decision to consolidate small local schools into impersonal, larger institutions, which led to lower levels of student participation, increased apathy and misbehaviour. Peer pressure on initiation and maintaining substance use such as smoking and alcohol is reviewed in Chapter Six, both important markers of the social transition to adult lifestyles and reflect 'a striving for independence' and enjoyment, rather than deviance and immorality. This accounts for the ineffectual and anti-productive health educational programmes concerning long-term substance use. The programmes are charged with being 'too informative, too rational and too parental' (p 149). A similar stance is discussed in Chapter Seven, in relation to the way groups influence antisocial behaviour, and it is implied that such behaviour is a response to boredom, fostering group solidarity and identity.

A realistic and indeed a workable framework of support is offered to deal with the growing 'problem' of 'unattached youth'. Focus is placed on connecting young people with adults within youth organisations and schools, which comprises a variety of social niches to develop and nurture emotional growth, freedom and expression - and not an attempt to curb group identity and influence, nor 'a protection of youth from new experience.'

An invaluable text for youth studies in the 1990s.

**Gwenda Rhian Jones**, *School of Sociology & Social Policy*  
*University of North Wales, Bangor.*

*Bette L Bottoms & Gail S Goodman*

**International Perspectives on Child Abuse and Children's Testimony**

Sage Publications 1996

ISBN 0 8039 5627 4 (hbk)

ISBN 0 8039 5628 2 (pbk)

£14.99 (pbk)

**MAXINE GREEN**

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What attracted me to this book is that it offers a comparative perspective - a series of windows on how children and young people are viewed, primarily by justice systems throughout the world. The book's different cultural perspectives and case histories give the reader a chance to reflect on a range of issues relating to children's testimony. It is not just for the legal expert but for all of those who are involved in hearing the voice of young people.

All but one of the chapters are written by people who speak about their own work in their countries of origin and have a directness and integrity. This is made more obvious by the exception, written by an American about India, which is more abstract and inclined to generalisations and lacks the feel of the first hand writings of the other chapters. Each chapter provides, firstly, a comprehensive, historical overview of the development of a nation's recognition of and legal response to child abuse and secondly, a description of research related to key issues in the country's struggle to accommodate children's testimony. There is a striking similarity in the struggles of different countries to enable children to be effective witnesses and in the processes which frustrate this.

There are key issues which are raised and explored in the different cultural contexts. One of these is the adversarial nature of law in some countries, and how the right of protection for the child is in tension with the right of

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the defendant to a fair trial. This has implications for a whole range of processes designed to aid the child's ability to give a good testimony. The difficulties which are faced by children because of the adult nature of the court can be offset by using smaller chairs, enabling children to see from the witness box or by using a video link or taped testimony and saving the children from the trauma of an appearance. There are also schemes where individual children are introduced and educated about the court processes. Although such measures are welcomed for individual children sometimes these result in fewer convictions as the prepared, remote testimony of a child may be seen as contrived and untraumatic by the jury. This question of balance is crucial through the whole debate.

Children's place in society also affects the process. There has been much work done on the perception of adult jurors concerning children's evidence and until recently in many countries judges warned the jury of the fallibility of the child's testimony. Experiments undertaken to test children's ability to give evidence showed that they were, if anything, slightly better witnesses than adults if the time between the incident and the testimony was fairly short. There are also shared perceptions of children lying and not understanding the oath in court and, of younger children especially, wanting to please.

Another issue is the language of the court and how the style of legal questioning is complex and obscure. This feeds into the issue of the 'adult' nature of the court and not surprisingly in experiments it was shown that the more straightforward the interview process the more coherent and accurate was the child's testimony. The book also reflects on different methods of confirming evidence. There is a chapter which looks at Statement Validity Analysis where testimonies and evidence can be statistically analysed to show coherence and integrity.

In short, this book raises a large range of issues concerning children's testimony. It also makes clear that the situation is very complex and that the solutions to immediate problems can raise other issues and create wider problems. The advantage of the book is that these situations are discussed with honesty and the range of consequences of different 'solutions' is made apparent. This will therefore be a good resource for anyone whose work involves debating issues concerning testimony and it will be especially useful for those working with children in court.

*Maxine Green is National Youth Officer for the Church of England.*



*Janice Joseph*

**Black youths, delinquency and juvenile justice**

Praeger

ISBN 0 2759 4909 5 (hbk)

£43.95

pp 209

*Bruce Kirk*

**Negative images, a simple matter of Black and White?:**

An examination of 'race' and the juvenile justice system

Avebury

ISBN 1 8597 2119 2 (hbk)

£32.50

pp 167

SONIA THOMPSON

Set on opposite sides of the Atlantic the books show the power and consistency of ideas about the relationship between 'race' and criminality, concentrating on the treatment of young people of African descent. Despite different histories and localities, one group being relatively recent migrants and the other 'residents' of some centuries, both groups are consistently over represented at all levels of the juvenile system. Each author is concerned with the over representation of African diasporic people at various stages of the juvenile justice scheme. In Joseph's case the work is centred on African-Americans, whilst for Kirk the emphasis is on Africans (most of whom are Caribbean) in Britain. Joseph's work is concerned with transforming the wider social, economic and political context which affects young African Americans' vulnerability at all levels of the justice system, and includes an analysis of the social circumstances which might lead to their over representation in more violent and anti-social crimes. Kirk's work on the other hand also recognises the racist context of British society but is focused upon developing an anti-oppressive framework for juvenile justice workers as creators of specific types of court report. Decidedly more theoretical, Joseph devotes a sizeable portion of the book to problematising crime statistics and the nation of delinquency. The book brings together research from criminology, criminal justice, sociology and victimology to address the relationship between young African-Americans, delinquency and the juvenile justice system. What is admirable about the work is the scope of its exploration, a willingness to engage in an extensive debate around Black involvement in juvenile crime, and the ability of the author to take you through the intricacies of a complex debate. The discussion is both compelling and very well presented and the book leaves the reader with a clear idea of the extent of social injustice towards the African-American community. One of the many results of their oppression is the massive over representation of African-Americans at numerous stages of the justice system. Problems of such a deep-seated and wide-ranging nature obviously require extensive social

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responses, and this is the information that Joseph provides, not only by suggesting changes to America's social structure eg. improving the educational system and creating better job opportunities and providing more services to families, but also by evaluating prevention programmes and community based alternatives to incarceration. As such at each stage Joseph contextualises the issues by using the evidence of extensive privation and discrimination facing African Americans. Thus the book critically considers the nature and extent of Black delinquency, provides an overview of explanations of the situation, and highlights the experiences of Black young people by the police and throughout the system including adult court. What is so refreshing is that despite the depressing situation, Joseph displays a faith in African-American resilience and does not fall into the determinist trap of considering Black people simply as hapless victims. Instead she recognises the resistance strategies that they have, and continue to employ against the racist structures in which they live. It is as a result of this that the section entitled the 'responsibility of the black community' is both a valid and valued addition to the book. This section has allowed the writer to examine the role and responsibility of the community in resisting as much as possible the effects of racism in this area, allowing a celebration of successful Black community initiatives and inspiring the prospect of future social agency.

Kirk's approach to the over representation of Africans of Caribbean descent within the British juvenile justice system is aimed at affecting the practice of those working in specialist juvenile justice teams. He provides a brief but disappointing backdrop of information about racism as it affects the Black community, beginning with an examination of the emergence of racist Britain, immigration control, institutional racism and the impact of anti-racism. However when one considers that the book focuses upon the over representation of Black people of African descent one would expect there to be more information about the specific image of the African and the role of Britain in shaping the history of African people. It is after all this image of the African which contributes to the type of racism which African descent young people face when they come into contact with the justice system.

It is however useful that Kirk's work is close to home, (the research was based in the West Midlands) and that it is able to reveal the ways in which well intentioned Social Workers effectively contribute to the racism which is part of the juvenile justice system. His book details the effect of a tension between the two doctrines of 'welfare' verses 'justice'. Whilst many Social Workers are gearing their work toward a welfare system of justice, those who sentence are operating within a punitive framework. The effect of these differences is particularly damaging for African-Caribbean young people. Kirk's research reveals that African-Caribbean defendants received significantly higher tariffs compared to their Asian and White counterparts, and that this was regardless of any other circumstance, eg. the seriousness of the offense, the number of charges or previous

records. Moreover, producers of Social Inquiry Reports (SIRs) were implicated in this negative process in several significant ways. Firstly they believe that African-Caribbeans were over represented within the system and they took steps to address this. The result was a worsened condition for those very young people they hoped to protect. In wishing to avoid the risk of custody they often suggested alternatives to it, this often effectively moved individuals to a higher point in the sentencing tariff than would normally be expected given the circumstances. In the hope of engendering compassion for the individual concerned, and by way of offering an explanation of the offending behaviour, practitioners frequently included welfare material in the SIR and referred to the background of the young person. Unfortunately this information was often perceived in stereotypical ways by magistrates, helping to confirm ideas about the deficiencies of African-Caribbean family life. Kirk's book is insightful, offering a glimpse into the processes by which well intentioned anti-racists might worsen the outcome for Black users of their services. Furthermore by a process of investigation he has been able to make recommendations which should be more effective in the fight against racism, including monitoring local sentencing trends to ensure that certain groups are not being accelerated through the tariff system, the monitoring of reports to avoid collusion, raising the profile of the Supervision Order so that Magistrates are more likely to consider useful intervention strategy and thus a possibility for Black offenders. As a women of African descent I did however find aspects of the book frustrating, it was not helpful that the position of Black workers was left unaddressed. Did this mean that Black social workers had discerned the anomaly between the Justice and Welfare models and therefore knew to avoid the use of welfare material in SIR reports concerning African Caribbeans? We will never know because that issue is not acknowledged never mind addressed. The entire book refers to the racism and ethnocentrism of white workers.

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Janet Batsleer

**Working with Girls and Young Women in Community Settings**

Arena 1996

ISBN 1 8574 2303 8

£35.00

pp 166

ANNA WHALEN

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In this book the author manages to achieve a coherent balance between feminist theory, historical context, practice issues, themes and examples and future directions of work with girls and young women. Accessibility of reading matter is of prime importance for many busy practitioners and students. In terms of structure, the chapters in this book interconnect, yet stand on their own. Each chapter is broken down into linking sections, which help the reader focus and follow the discussion through a logical process. Sexuality, poverty, motherhood, disability, violence, culture and identity are looked at in specific chapters, but these themes are woven into the rest of the book too, which gives a sense of integration. The five chapters which do focus on issues around oppression and identity are practical - answering at times basic questions, but also full of information, practice examples and debate.

The author promotes the need to maintain and develop a strong feminist value base, but continually advocates the strength in diversity of practice and approach. Empowerment is not viewed by Batsleer as a method, but is based in our 'purpose and direction' (p 23). This statement, made early on in the text, clarifies her perspective and gives the practice examples she provides equal weight and acceptance instead of placing them in positions of critical comparison. This allows the reader the freedom to think through examples, rather than rely on prescriptive analysis from the author. Given the very different ways we work with young women this way of presenting practice examples is helpful - giving the reader space to be a creator rather than just a consumer.

Women youth workers have continually argued for the need to work at the pace young women, in situations and approaches young women feel most comfortable with. The book reinforces this message throughout, examining the way work has developed according to the particular demands and situations relevant to groups of young women. Batsleer offers a feminist critique of Mullender and Ward (p 20) which asserts that self-directed groupwork, as a means of working to challenge structural oppression, is not diametrically opposed to working with individuals: to miss the relationship between the individual and structural discrimination is to miss a vital link in the way society operates to perpetuate inequality - the personal is political. Having

struggled to present this view in male-dominated youth work arenas, Batsleer's challenge was music to my ears.

Batsleer touches on many areas that, in themselves, warrant far greater discussion, for example, codes of ethics and professional boundaries (p 53). This is a complex and highly important area for youth and community workers, but is often not given adequate space in training and supervision. The interface between the personal and the professional is not always easy to manage, perhaps particularly in work with girls and young women. Batsleer highlights this, but an example from direct practice might have demonstrated just how central ethics and boundaries are to practice. Managing relationships with young people is just one aspect; relating to colleagues, other agencies, the media and funding bodies all raise questions about integrity, ethics and boundaries.

There are pointers throughout the book regarding the changing role of the State and the implications for young women, but a section focussing on this specifically would be useful to clarify what the issues are for both young women and practitioners. Strategies are needed to counter the portrayal of young women as convenient government stereotypes - irresponsible, at risk, scroungers, victims etc. Batsleer does highlight some legislative changes but some attention to detail is lacking perhaps: - more clarity on the Gillick ruling in the chapter on sexuality would be useful for example. Some of the information on welfare benefits (p 86/7) is very out of date and significant changes have occurred since publication - housing benefits changes for under 25s and Job Seekers Allowance. Imminent are the freezing (April 1997) and planned abolition of lone parent premium and benefit (April 1998). These changes will have a huge impact on many young women's lives in terms of safe accommodation and income.

In the final chapter Batsleer reflects on the current funding situation and the direction of work with girls and young women in the future. Partnership working, separate provision and the impact of contract culture are discussed briefly. Inevitably how government and society views young women will translate into what funding is most widely available to develop work. Batsleer argues for a long term feminist approach to the current situation - one which avoids the stigma and 'false identities' (p 141) created by categorising young women into problem groups, but promotes the values and practice methods women workers use in order to enable young women to define their own identities. What is worrying is that funding is increasingly hard to obtain for the informal educational work which is the bread and butter of generic work with girls and young women. The setting of target groups and outputs means that young women are only deemed fundable if they have or are a problem. Victimising and problemising, then seeking solutions which are dictated by funding contracts rather than young

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women's own views runs counter to the feminist values present in our work. Also, it is not the most effective way to invest in this work.

Reading a book about working with girls and young women is a very personal experience for anyone who has been working in this area. Whilst trying to be objective, what I gleaned from the text is not necessarily what others might have.

I enjoyed reading this book for all sorts of reasons. Parts of the book were a pleasure to read - affirming and validating much of the work many women youth workers have developed and supported. Other sections were challenging and thought-provoking, which removed any self-satisfying complacency on my behalf and got me connecting issues around inequality, feminism and the gaps in existing practice. Overall the book left a clear message that there is still - and will probably always be - a need to work with girls and young women separately. But the question of on what basis, on whose terms, remains unanswered. Can women workers who identify as feminist be heard in a funding culture which continually favours victimising and controlling young women?

*Anna Whalen works for Save The Children Fund in Hull.*

*Sarah Irwin*

### **Rights of Passage:**

Social Change and the Transition from Youth to Adulthood

UCL Press 1996

ISBN 1 8572 8430 5

pp 244

**PHIL MIZEN**

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The long-standing enthusiasm for conceptualising 'youth as transition' has re-emerged in recent years as an increasingly influential starting point for the analysis of young people's contemporary social lives. Underpinned by the idea of the 'life-course', whereby individual biographies are given historical and social meaning according to age-related institutional arrangements, the most recent version of 'youth as transition' seeks to capture the movement into adulthood as a socially constructed process of adjustment and change. More specifically, through the progressive erosion of the relations of dependency characteristic of childhood, 'youth as transition' has come to depict that phase

of the life-course through which young people obtain the economic, cultural and political resources necessary for a certain level of adult independence.

Much of the appeal of this approach stems from its apparent ability to capture the peculiar impact of economic and social restructuring on the lives of the young. It stresses that, as little as 20 years ago, the twin pillars generally regarded as marking the end of adolescence were relatively unproblematic events. Jobs were plentiful and the age of marriage and parenthood was in long-term and steady decline. Yet within the space of little more than 20 years the situation altered radically as jobs for school leavers either disappeared or changed out of all recognition, and benefits were withdrawn or severely restricted. Alongside this, young people displayed less ability to leave home, marriage appeared to become a less attractive way of developing long-term relationships, families became less nuclear and parenting took place both later and with fewer children. Not only did the experience of these new youthful transitions seem a long way from those of earlier generations, but they appeared both longer and more problematic to complete.

This lengthening of youthful transitions and the consequent deferral of adult independence provides the focus of Sarah Irwin's book, although she retains a degree of critical distance from a literature which is often too readily endorsed. More specifically, Irwin begins by placing centre-stage the little acknowledged reductionist implications of the youth as transition approach. Simply put, the successful completion of youthful transitions is seen to depend upon the availability of waged labour. With the onset of unemployment and economic retrenchment, employment opportunities for young adults have disappeared with the consequence that marriage and independent families are no longer affordable. In contrast, Irwin's own thesis suggests this emphasis on production needs to be re-integrated with an appreciation of the importance of reproduction, via the family, in structuring youthful transitions. For Irwin, the family provides both a resource and a set of obligations essential to understanding youth. For youthful dependence to be feasible, the family must be sufficiently resourced to support a non-productive member, yet before a young person can achieve a family of their own they must generate a sufficient level of resource before the cycle of parenting, with its own obligations, can begin again. An appreciation of the changing organisation of family structures and the different modes of contributions and obligation this entails, is therefore essential to any understanding of the changing nature and experience of youth.

To support this claim, Irwin embarks upon a detailed empirical investigation of long-term trends in youthful transitions, particularly through the formation of new families. This includes an interesting review of the changing



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demography of adolescence and family formation over the past century and an informative analysis of the more recent changes to the structure of young people's pay. Her contention is that during the early 1970s (and before the austerity of the 1980s set in) the reversal of the long-term trend towards earlier marriage and parenthood coincided with significant changes in the gender and age-related structure of earnings. In particular, the earnings of young women relative to young men improved, while the earnings of young men relative to adult men declined. Her claim is that, in the context of the family's increasing ability to support dependents for longer-periods across the 20th century, the deferral of household formation and parenting over the past 25 years has been the result of the increasing importance of young women's wages in providing the standard of living that new families anticipate. This is further elaborated through an investigation of the significance of 'lifestyles' on orientations and occupational choice, although the relevance of the chapter on age-related distributive justice to her argument is far less clear.

Irwin's book should therefore be of interest to a specialist readership, although its wider interest remains less certain. The clarity of argument does suffer at times from an arid presentation and overly-dense prose, however. This is a pity because the demographic and wage data is particularly interesting, despite resting a little incongruously alongside the use of her own interview data to illustrate some of the more general points. A more significant reservation, however, is whether Irwin succeeds in freeing the youth as transition thesis from its economism. Even taking into consideration her emphasis on the family as a structure of resources and obligations, the reader is still left with the feeling that, whether mediated by the family or not, the idea of youth as transition is still basically economicist.

**Phil Mizen** teaches social policy in the Department of Applied Social Studies at the University of Warwick.

Vered Amit-Talai and Helena Wulff (eds.)  
**Youth Cultures : A Cross-Cultural Perspective**  
 Routledge 1995  
 ISBN 0 4151 0984 1  
 £12.99 (pbk)  
 pp. 245

MIKE WAITE

*Youth Cultures* is shaped by the determination of its editors that the discipline of anthropology should increasingly contribute to the study of youth culture. This means that useful questions with which to read this book are : what can *anthropology* offer which is distinctive? And what limitations does anthropology show up in familiar analyses of youth culture?

The book does not address these questions satisfactorily, and this reviewer was frustrated by a sometimes crude counter-position of anthropology to other disciplines, particularly to sociology. This problem is underlined by a one-dimensional characterisation of work by the so-called 'Birmingham School' of writers which formed around the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the seventies.

Claims for the benefits of anthropological studies made by the editors and key contributors include the fact that they have value because they are ethnographically based. Amit-Talai and Wulff also point out that the book's contributors have a consistent theoretical concern to show how young people are active agents in the construction of the meanings and symbolic forms which make up their cultures. Wulff's introductory chapter asserts that the distinguishing mark of anthropologists is that they 'deal with living people in the midst of the flux of the complexities of life'.

Although anthropology can obviously generate useful, interesting and original work - examples of which are included in this book - it seems excessive to back up this fact by implying that it is the *only* discipline which can use ethnography, stress agency on the part of young people, and connect with 'people in their real lives. Such anthropological arrogance is carried further by weak and caricatured polemic against studies based in sociology. It is suggested that the CCCS school focuses only on 'exotic' moments of resistance and deviance, rather than on more 'ordinary' youth. The school is also criticised for being long on theoretical analysis, whilst having produced only short and 'insufficient' empirical studies. Such points mistakenly lump together the actually quite varied work of CCCS scholars, and can only be asserted on the basis of a *partial* reading of the *early* work in the tradition. A broader criticism is that Wulff's introduction sometimes conflates sociological approaches in general with a particular - and wrong - perspective on *socialisation*, through which young

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people tend to be viewed as 'incomplete adults ... who know less than adults, as opposed to knowing something else that has to do with their particular situation'.

Looking in the text for reasons behind the editors'; arguments, this reviewer came across a couple of indications that their counter-position of anthropology to other disciplines has to do with debates which have been taking place within anthropology. Those anthropologists who want to focus attention on questions of culture are seeking to win allies amongst their colleagues by asserting the particular contribution they believe the discipline can make.

There is also a debate going on about the location and meaning of 'culture'. Virginia Caputo's chapter on 'anthropology's silent "others"' illustrates this, and most of those readers of this journal prepared to tolerate her prose style will sympathise with her argument that 'the social spaces of difference are important because these sites are constituted by the presence and activity of people whose voices continue to be silenced ... culture, portrayed in terms of a unified system of meaning, privileges the voice of the powerful ... cultural meanings that may be held by the groups that oppose dominant interpretations continue to be excluded in order to uphold this representation of culture'.

Such values lie behind the choice of subject matter made by most contributors to *Youth Cultures*. An advantage of the late arrival of these anthropologists in the field of youth studies is that they can avoid the focus on white males taken by sociological pioneers. So here we find material on rai music in Algeria, lower class young men of Surinamese origin in Amsterdam, friendships between teenage girls of different racial backgrounds in London, and the handling of various conflicts and confluences between 'tradition' and 'modernity' by young people in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Some of the time, some of these chapters move sufficiently beyond theoretical self-absorption to allow extended discussion of young peoples' lives. Those involved professionally with young people (in non-academic settings) and other readers with an interest in youth cultures may be attracted to this book by these passages. But its overall tone will leave them frustrated. It stands as evidence that the artificial boundaries of 'disciplines' constructed and policed by institutions and grant making bodies sometimes stand in the way of writers and researchers learning, understanding and communicating as well as they might if work *across* such boundaries was valued more than work within them.

**Mike Waite** is a community development worker in Lancashire.

*Robert L. Hampton, Pamela Jenkins and Thomas P. Gullotta (eds.)*

**Issues in Children's and Families' Lives : Preventing Violence In America**

Sage Publications, Inc. 1996

ISBN 7619 0041 1

£18.95 (pbk)

£36.95 (hbk)

pp 328

*Joseph A. Durlak*

**School-Based Prevention Programs for Children and Adolescents**

Sage Publications, Inc. 1996

ISBN 8039 5632 0

£13.95 (pbk)

£29.50 (hbk)

pp 128

**KAREN HAGAN**

The two books provide a frightening picture of the level of violence in America, especially worrying when the impact is so clearly seen in the young. There is a warning to the U.K. in the figures of increasing social unrest and an indication of ways to avoid catastrophe - if it has not already happened. The focus of the books is positive, around prevention and cure at early stages (probably one reason why they look so much at the youth element). They both manage to hit home the seriousness and immediacy of the problem without scaremongering and quickly use the facts to move into examining programmes of habilitation or prevention.

*Preventing Violence in America* starts off with a gentle review of how past literature gives some insight into the range of violence that exists and its historical development. Towards the latter stages of the book it returns to literature and media to update the reader and round off this discussion. There is a social-historical account of the context of violence through causes - dependence, alcohol abuse and lack of morality through to newer ideas of environmental stress, lack of education and mental instability. It comments on societies coping strategies of 'blaming the victim' and setting the perpetrator aside from the rest of society as 'the other'.

The editors provide a useful base section on the theoretical perspectives, from the biological, medical model to sociological perspectives. I would have liked more of this in detail and some further application (though there are some relevant illustrations), especially of systems theory. Better explanation of Straus and Gelles 1990 study would outline the controversial methodology and how they reached their conclusions.

Throughout, a vast array of appropriate and related research is cited - making this a very useful book for cross referencing! Case studies lighten

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and illustrate how domestic and community violence overlap - an area for which there is little research. What may have been interesting to add to this discussion would have been the actual views of the perpetrators and victims. I was also aware at times that there was a basic debate over the term victim - in many instances people now prefer to be known as survivors. However this is really quite an academic collation of information and the lack of such familiarity with the ground level considerations of the subject is fairly common. Further areas to add could include an analysis of the different types of violent crime and an exploration of the criminal justice system as exercised in the courts. Perhaps this is more appropriate for another piece of work and it is more to the credit of the creators that they left me with a renewed interest in the issues and questions to follow on with.

Chapter 4 - Violence in communities of colour- perhaps had the least relation to the U.K., though this could be just evidence of my own naiveté. It appears that the social make-up, systems and structures in these regards have significant differences. This was an interesting account but I felt it was so vast it could have constituted another book in its own right. The balance of cultural differences and socio-economics was recognised as a problem, as were the effects of confounding variables, but they were not, and could not, be examined in the proper depth they deserved. The main point of use was that culturally sensitive prevention and intervention is the way forward.

Martin Bloom's section on resilience was a welcome look at the 'exception that proves the rule'. Werner's 'Protective Factors' e.g. positive family context was a way into current thinking into primary prevention, protection and promotion. Biological and social influences are integrated with cognitive processing to build up a picture of strengths for resilience. The next chapter adds to resilience by citing Carver's work on religion as supportive/motivating and guiding/controlling. This is more of a philosophical discussion but it gives scant attention to the possible negative impacts of religion.

The overview of media impact, however, is much more balanced. The interactive model (Anderson and Meyer 1988) provides depth and again relates to earlier chapters on predisposing factors. Drug abuse is covered with a degree of thoughtfulness, the writer displaying the complicated inter-relatedness of problems. Unfortunately, the public health model for education and training in violence prevention, while it is an inventive adaptation from the medical model, risks oversimplification of the inter-connections and puts too much power in the hands of the professionals. The ecological model for intervention concentrates on the individual through to the family and community/societal level with education and social development approaches. This has definite support but the final, important point, is that basic cultural and ideological changes are needed.

Durlak's book follows on with many of the basic ideas presented in *Preventing Violence in America*, though less complex, it more clearly defines basic concepts and focuses more specifically on the young in schools. It takes a mental health approach with maladaptation and its suggestions are on prevention of emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Again it reviews the background literature (though not in the same depth) and highlights the problem. It works, comprehensively through all levels of prevention; primary - looks at person centred approaches etc. - secondary and tertiary. I would have preferred to see these linked more closely with theoretical bases e.g. sociological and psychological models of maladjustment and therapy, and I found some of the approaches a little old fashioned i.e. deviance is negative and maladjusted. I was a little surprised to find health education and learning disabilities treated as maladaptation but accept the challenge since apparently 'the best single prediction of academic performance ... is the families socio-economic level'.

This book also advocates the use of a multi-level approach, including parental co-operation as well as school and community based programmes.

**Karen Hagan**, *Social Worker and Open University Tutor.*

*Richard J. Altenbaugh; David E. Engel & Don T. Martin*

**Caring for Kids: A Critical Study of Urban School Leavers**

The Falmer Press

ISBN 0 7507 0193 5

pp 215

**GWENDA RHIAN JONES**

This book deals with a growing and deep-seated problem concerning young people, that of early school leaving in the United States. By focusing upon students' perceptions of schooling, the author seeks to gain an understanding of the school leaving process. It is maintained that the problem transcends social class, gender, race and ethnicity, and recent school reforms, it is suggested, may even 'exacerbate' rather than 'ameliorate' the problem.

Structured into three parts, the first section of the book provides a contextual framework and an introduction to the history of the school leaving process and a historical, economic and social overview of the Pittsburgh school system. The second concentrates on student perceptions of schooling

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in Pittsburgh, why they leave and further return, their views on school personnel, vice principals and teachers. The final section concludes by analysing the research findings and offers some policy recommendations.

Definitions, causes and solutions to the problem of school leaving, according to the author, have at times confused the issue. Different states vary in their definition of a 'dropout' and their recording procedures. In addition, too many have neglected the other side of the issue, ie the number of students returning to education, which according to the author represented an oversight. Causes and solutions differ as well, which range from blaming student background and others solely on the school structure. The author follows Wehlage (1989) in his use of the term 'school leaver', which effectively avoids the negative implications associated with 'dropout'. Drawing upon a relatively small sample, of a hundred 'dropbacks', predominately urban minority students, between 1986 and 1994, the author explores school leaving and resumption experiences, from 'their own frames of references' (p15).

Emphasis in chapter two is placed on the conflict of authority over children's welfare, between compulsory education and the rights of the family; followed by an examination of the context of the research approach in chapter three. Students consistently described non-traditional family structures, 76% of them lived with one parent. These students according to the author were from highly distressed economic backgrounds and families, which were unable to help their children. However, the author notes that this did not 'in itself cause students to leave school... it also may not totally mitigate that experience' (p 58). Moreover, schools rarely addressed students' educational and social needs.

Limited and predictable are the author's chapters on the schooling factors and school knowledge. The emphasis on students' views about the impersonal approach, the estrangement and unfriendliness of large schools is somewhat predictable of student alienation. The violence, drug abuse, fighting, the formal curriculum as dreary and uncreative etc...is not measured. Consequently, the research appears too general and fleeting. This could have easily been avoided by simply working out how many of those interviewed said what they did. This would add weight and credence to the students' responses. The reasons for leaving school early (chapter seven and eight) do not suggest anything new in terms of research findings, other than those returning to education are included in the analysis.

Public schools therefore, according to the author appear inflexible and static in the light of school reforms, whilst students' needs and society



demands have changed. A 'caring' approach is advocated in chapter nine to deal with early school leavers and a 'profound reformation' (p 184) of public schools is called upon to 'create and sustain true learning communities' (p 167).

Policy recommendations, inevitably, emphasise child care facilities, volunteer monitor programmes flexibility and better access to counsellors.

The value of the book is in supplementing available statistical and other literature on the subject matter.

*Gwenda Rhian Jones, University of Wales, Bangor.*



## SUBMISSION DETAILS

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**Subscriptions:** Annual subscriptions (of 4 issues) for statutory organisations, academic institutions and libraries £43, youth and community organisations and individuals £25, overseas add £3 postage EC, £6 postage elsewhere.

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**Articles:** of normally between 2,500 and 8,000 words should be sent to Sarah Banks, Umme Imam or Ruth Gilchrist. They should take an analytical approach to theoretical, practical and/or policy issues concerning young people in society. On receipt of the article the author will be notified whether it is being considered for publication. This process involves the editorial group seeking comments from three referees.

All articles must be typed with double spacing on white paper and authors should send three copies.

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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, cmd 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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