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& *policy*

The Journal of Critical Analysis

Autumn 1997

Issue Number: 58

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For details of subscriptions, submission of material for publication and advertising see the inside back cover.

We acknowledge the support of Gateshead Law Centre for providing a venue for meetings.

Typeset and printed by:

The Art Department, 1 Pink Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 5DW. Telephone: (0191) 230 4164.

Proofread by:

Seaham Proofreaders, 5 Dene Terrace, Seaham, County Durham, SR7 7BB.

**Youth & Policy, 10 Lady Beatrice Terrace,
New Herrington, Houghton le Spring, DH4 4NE**

'PATIENT', 'CONSUMER' OR 'EMPOWERED USER'?:

The Impact of Marketisation on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in the UK

VICKI COPPOCK

Introduction

Throughout the twentieth century the mental health and mental 'ill-health' of children and young people has been constructed, interpreted and responded to within the hegemony of medical discourse and professional practice. It has been argued elsewhere (Coppock, 1996) that the medical model of child and adolescent mental health is not always a reliable indicator of, nor an appropriate response to, the mental distress of children and young people. Indeed, inconsistent institutional responses have been identified (ibid) which have had profoundly negative consequences for the lives and opportunities of children and young people.

The processes involved in defining, identifying, explaining and responding to child and adolescent mental distress have been governed by a subscription to 'illness' categories which draw artificial boundaries around 'normality' and 'abnormality'. Moreover, in spite of claims to scientific neutrality, these processes have been found to be profoundly influenced by historical, cultural, ideological, socio-economic and political contingencies. Many variants of the 'illness' model have evolved since its nineteenth century roots - psychodynamic, neurological, genetic, biological, social, familial, psychological - yet what they share is an ability to bestow on a professional group the power to decide what constitutes 'disturbance', who is 'disturbed' and how they should be 'treated'. Thus the issue of power is inextricably involved in conceptualising and evaluating human problems which seem to encompass emotions and behaviour.

The twentieth century has spawned a proliferation of state-sponsored welfare professionals most of whom have a specific role and function in relation to child health and development - doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, health visitors, teachers, social workers. They have been responsible for shaping and administering welfare policy, defining the needs of clients, and allocating state resources. Moreover, they have for the most part been self-regulating - free to control their own areas of work through membership of professional bodies. As Wilding (1982, p 70) states, 'professional power has marched hand in hand with public welfare'.

The medicalisation of mental health has informed professionalised assumptions about human behaviour and 'need'. It has positioned the person in mental distress as 'patient' - the problem - while the 'professionalised servicer' provides 'the answer'. This is a process which has been identified as profoundly 'disabling' and disempowering (McKnight, 1995; Pilgrim and Rogers, 1993; Rogers, Pilgrim and Lacey, 1993). At best it produces suffocating paternalism, at worst blatant oppres-

sion. For children and young people this process is compounded by their assumed 'irrationality', regardless of any mental distress (Fennell, 1992; Masson, 1991; Prout and James, 1990).

However, while for most of this century the medical model has been hegemonic in its scope and impact on professional practice in child welfare in general, and child and adolescent mental health in particular, more recently two significant discourses have emerged which have posed a challenge to the dominance of medical authority - those of 'consumerism' and 'user empowerment'. While these debates have been reasonably well articulated in relation to adult mental health, they remain relatively underdeveloped in relation to child and adolescent mental health. This paper represents an attempt to redress the balance. It critically analyses the transition of the child or young person in mental distress from 'patient' to 'consumer' in contemporary child and adolescent mental health policy and practice in the United Kingdom. It will be argued that the concept of 'user empowerment' reflects profoundly different political, economic and ideological priorities and thereby poses a fundamental challenge to both medicalisation and consumerism in the organisation and implementation of child and adolescent mental health services.

From 'patient' to 'consumer'

The changing vocabulary in mental health theory and practice clearly reflects a wider dynamic of change in the ideologies and perspectives which inform the development of services. In recent years those formerly called 'patients' have increasingly been referred to as 'service-users' or 'consumers'. Mental health workers have incorporated such phrases into their vocabularies alongside the traditional vocabulary of 'illness'. In fact Barker and Peck (1988) suggest that mental health professionals often fail to differentiate between the various terms and use them interchangeably. This can lead to a rather naive consensual view of the world where it is assumed that the new and the old vocabularies are compatible whereas, in reality, they often represent world views in conflict. For Barker and Peck (*ibid*) not enough attention has been given to the theoretical and political background of the new vocabulary.

The notion of 'service user' or 'consumer' derives from a relatively new ideology informing health and welfare policy in Britain since the 1980s. 'Consumerism', as borrowed from the business world, describes the way in which consumers initiate pressure for change in organisational behaviour, usually through the exercise of purchasing power. It has been argued, however, that 'the public has never been supplied the information nor offered the quality of competition to enable it to make effective demands through the marketplace' (Nader in Barker and Peck, 1988, p 1). Moreover, the recent interest in consumerism in public sector services has had little to do with bottom-up challenges to power wielded by state agencies and welfare professionals. Rather it has taken the form of top-down initiatives generated by politicians and senior managers. In this sense, the consumerist emphasis

in child and adolescent mental health services in the 1990s can only be understood in the wider context of the restructuring of welfare provision in general.

Since the election of the Conservative government under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 the British welfare state has 'been passing through an era in which traditional arrangements for the delivery of welfare have been fundamentally questioned and in which major changes have been made in the organisation and management of the delivery agencies concerned' (Butcher, 1995, p 2). In the broader context of fiscal crisis and economic recession the new Conservative administration demonstrated an increasing antagonism towards the public administration model of welfare which had been characteristic of the post second world war period. This was justified on the basis of four key observations: that this model of welfare delivery was inefficient, provider-dominated, insufficiently accountable and distant from its customers. While these observations might have been more accurate than many would care to admit, the reasoning behind the solutions put forward to deal with them has been driven essentially by an ideological commitment to reducing the role of the state in the provision of services and a belief that the market is the most efficient way of matching resources to needs.

Unprecedented structural change has taken place in the delivery of health and welfare services. A market-oriented approach has been developed via such mechanisms as the mixed economy of welfare; the creation of the purchaser-provider split; the encouragement of general practitioner fundholding and self-governing hospital trusts; and the drive towards quantitative measures of services and outputs (Le Grand, 1993). This has been referred to as the 'commodification' of welfare services (Offe, 1984).

The introduction of general management principles has tended to modify the clinical view of services - challenging the dominance of professionals in the design and delivery of welfare. The importance of health and welfare services being accountable to 'the patient' has been emphasised (Griffiths, 1988) along with 'consumer choice'. It might be tempting to suggest that such structural change represents a sensitisation on the part of the British government to the consumer viewpoint. However, the extent to which this translates into substantive empowerment of users of health and welfare services is questionable. Despite the new management structures, health and welfare professionals still have the power to decide what services will be made available and to whom. As Pilgrim and Rogers (1993, p 167) state, 'the power of professionals to impede or dictate consumer choice renders it problematic'. In the UK quasi-market system, choice is mediated through 'care managers' and is also constrained by the rationing of state resources. If demand outstrips supply, then access to health and welfare services is determined by judgements of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' cases.

The chimera of consumer choice also fails to account for the fact that not all users of health and welfare services have the same capacity for making choices. Recipients

of health and welfare services are typically the most vulnerable and powerless in our society. Real choice is about being able to exercise power. Critical research in the field has revealed structural disadvantages, with choice being restricted by geographical location, ability to pay, class, gender, 'race' and ethnicity and age (see: Kelleher & Hillier, 1996; Nettleton, 1995; Ahmad, 1993; Blackburn, 1991; Payne, 1991; Torkington, 1991; 1983; Victor, 1991; Cornwell, 1984;).

Historically children and young people have not been well included in the design and implementation of services that affect their lives. Attitudinal and structural factors have militated against them being involved in decision-making. When given the opportunity, children and young people will tell professionals that they do not listen, or when they do, they only hear what they want to hear (see: Audit Commission, 1994; CRDU, 1994). Nor is there any reason to suppose that they have enjoyed an increase in personal autonomy as 'consumers' under the new arrangements. A critical analysis of contemporary child and adolescent mental health service provision in the UK supports this conclusion.

'Consumers' of child and adolescent mental health services

Child and adolescent mental health services in the UK have developed in a patchy, uncoordinated fashion across the spectrum of child health and welfare agencies (NHS Health Advisory Service, 1995). The different institutional frameworks of the various agencies have often proved difficult to bridge (NHS Health Advisory Service, 1986) and this has attracted a vigorous critique of service delivery and professional practice in this field (see: Coppock, 1996; Malek, 1991). Nevertheless, however inconsistent, it should be acknowledged that some examples of good, innovative, multi-disciplinary, child and family-centred practice have been developed in the public sector. Yet it is precisely these services which have borne the brunt of cuts in public expenditure in recent years, and have struggled in the face of organisational change. Health and local authorities have found it difficult to respond to the varying attempts by central government to break down the traditional structures of public services.

Paradoxically, the introduction of the internal market has signalled the demise of some of the most effective interventions developed in child and adolescent mental health to date (e.g. the closure of residential mental health facilities such as Peper Harow; the widespread dismantling of child guidance services; the extensive closure of special educational needs provision for those with 'emotional and behavioural difficulties' [see: Hankin, 1993]). High quality, co-ordinated, preventative interventions in schools and local communities have been lost in many areas, leaving local authorities having to buy in expensive services which they formerly provided themselves. Even those organisations which operate on a not-for-profit basis still have to struggle to survive in the new market-led environment and as such are invariably driven towards the same methods and practices as profit-led organisations.

Barker (1996), in his discussion of the impact of market force efficiency on child

protection services, provides a useful fourfold typology which can facilitate an analysis of the tensions and contradictions in the ideological orientation towards marketisation in child and adolescent mental health:

Co-ordination v fragmentation

The impact of the structural changes in health and welfare has meant that during the 1990s there has been a fragmentation of what have already been identified as patchy, uncoordinated child and adolescent mental health services (NHS Health Advisory Service, 1995). As Jones and Bilton (1994, p 36) state,

Although these process reorganisations have common threads, notably a determination to breakdown public sector command structures and to introduce competition, the way in which these aims have been pursued has been different for each service... this has made it difficult for each agency both to maintain a focus on the need for collaboration and to work out how to maintain existing collaborative mechanisms.

While the adage 'small is beautiful' might imply potential advantages of increased flexibility and decreased bureaucratic hindrances, these have been far outweighed by the undermining of existing multi-disciplinary, co-ordinated services. Ironically, conferences, seminars and workshops are now being convened across the country focusing on innovative, preventive and early intervention work in child and adolescent mental health (NCB, 1997). Newly established charitable trusts outline their successful projects, run on a shoe-string, and with all the philanthropic zeal of the late nineteenth century reformers. Meanwhile mainstream practitioners sit in stunned silence as they observe the wheel being well and truly re-invented. The very activities which less than ten years ago they considered to be the core of their professional practice have been repackaged and are being resold as new commodities in the marketplace. For example: the emergence of very specific charitable trusts offering services such as pastoral care of pupils through Home-School Link programmes (East London Schools Fund); community-based support for parents and children experiencing 'difficulties' (Fulham Parents and Children); the promotion of social skills and parenting skills for 'behaviour problem' children and their families (C'mon Everybody Project, Sheffield) [ibid].

This is not to dismiss the significance, nor demean the contribution, of voluntary effort in the provision of health and welfare - far from it. However, what must be exposed is the irony in such a situation whereby, ideologically, the clock is turned back some one hundred years in order to facilitate the political and economic priorities of government - namely the demise of the public sector ethos.

There are also serious implications for the lives of children and young people themselves as the consequences of fragmentation go further than patterns of service delivery. An holistic approach to the well-being of children and young people comes from integrated, well-co-ordinated services. The absence of such an

approach means that children and young people experience their lives as fragments which are picked over by an array of agencies. Moreover, the ability to challenge and exert influence over the policies and practices of such agencies (so accentuated in the consumerist model) becomes so much more complex and difficult since each agency would have to be pressured individually. A recent article in *Community Care* (20 February, 1997, p 23) noted how the 'Draft Guidance for the Community Care (Direct Payments) Act 1996 has recently advised that those in receipt of direct payments may complain to their local authority about an unsatisfactory local authority service but not about a private service'. Where then can those purchasing an unsatisfactory private service seek redress?

In the 'contract culture', localisation of services, represented as 'enabling' local control and responsiveness to local needs, produces another form of fragmentation which can lead to fundamental inequalities in access to services on the basis of happenstance or geographical location. Within the 'child as patient' model of delivery, such access often arose out of the 'ego' of the practitioner who can restrict the availability of options by asserting his or her favoured intervention 'tool', for example, family therapy, behaviour modification or individual counselling (McGeorge, 1997). Either way, the child's or young person's ability to 'choose' from a range of alternative services is minimal.

Profit v professionalism

The fact that agencies have to 'prove their worth' in market terms - even when they are not-for-profit agencies - does not necessarily square with how service users measure value. It seems that there is an uncritical assumption that market-based 'efficiency' equates with 'effectiveness' or 'consumer satisfaction'. Such an assumption is misleading. The dominance of 'scientific' discourse and the striving for quantitative 'hard' data in health and welfare research has obscured those methods which value the 'experiential':

Experience is, therefore, the starting point and key term for all social science inquiry. But scientific, social, and philosophical conditions conspire to create frames of reference that shift the definitions of what is acceptable in the study of experience. (Clandinin & Connelly in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p 414)

An absence of quantitative data does not necessarily equate with lack of effectiveness. Moreover, the logical neatness of the business philosophy obscures the richness and complexity of the human condition, threatening to undermine that which it supposedly seeks to promote. How meaningful are terms like 'clinical audit' and 'health gain indicator' in defining and measuring child and adolescent mental health?

Although there may be scope for improvement in terms of cost-effectiveness for purchasers of services, this takes no account of the potential for financial considerations to dictate which services will be offered in the marketplace. A short-sighted 'cash-driven' rather than 'needs-driven' agenda can undermine established effective-

ness in service delivery. For example, agencies which have invested tremendous time and energy in developing accessible, child and family-centred self-referral services may be under threat in the contract culture - who pays?

Similarly, the pressures of competitive tendering can drive providers towards offering unrealistically cheap contracts, replacing costly highly skilled and experienced staff with cheaper unskilled and inexperienced staff. Jones and Bilton (1994) note the widespread concern at the increasing isolation of 'purchasing' fieldworkers from face to face relationship work with children and young people. Hearn (in Jones and Bilton, 1994, p 39) has observed the consequences of 'fifteen years of a mixed economy of care mediated through a purchaser-provider split' in the North American context. She notes:

The public sector purchasing function was under-resourced and of low professional status. Private provider self interest was dominant and driven by the profit motive. The services were costly, and didnot relate to the needs of children and families. (ibid)

Such an example, as with other research from the USA (see: Eamon, 1994; Weithorn, 1988), offers a stern warning of the potentially damaging consequences of allowing a contract culture to weaken a public service ethos. This is not to suggest that professional status offers an automatic guarantee of positive service delivery and practice. Indeed there is plentiful evidence of abuses of professional power, particularly in the child health and welfare field. Nor is it suggested that profit and professionalism are mutually exclusive. However it may well be that the drive for market efficiency compromises professional standards and ethics in a way which might not otherwise be the case outside of the market-driven context.

Planning v short-termism

Not only do agencies have to 'prove their worth' in market terms, but also at defined intervals. In the current climate these intervals are tending to become shorter and shorter as funding is only guaranteed in the short term. While this can facilitate an ongoing process of re-evaluation and review, so that resources are not tied indefinitely to inappropriate or ineffective provision, the downside is the temptation to only think as far ahead as the next financial year. This can lead to uncertainty, instability and a lack of continuity. Child and adolescent mental health services require a medium to long-term strategy. The belief that market forces operating on a number of small purchasers will work better than strategic planning in matching needs and resources remains to be proven.

Critical research into purchasers and providers of child and adolescent mental health services has revealed an absence of coherent, strategic planning. Purchasers' knowledge of the services they were purchasing was very limited to the extent that in many cases it was felt they would be unable to make informed decisions concerning changes in service patterns (Vanstraelen and Cottrell, 1994).

Kurtz et al (1994) concluded that the matching of provision of child and adolescent mental health services to local needs has hardly begun. Six years into the new market system, purchasers still largely do not know what they want. As Light and Bailey (1992) state, 'to put it bluntly, the purchaser does not know what it is paying for, the NHS does not know what it is providing, and the providers do not know what they are selling'.

Co-operation v competition

The market approach rests on competition and as such is in conflict with the major thrust of child health and welfare practice which is premised on co-operation. As Barker (1996, p 36) points out, 'co-operation demands openness within and between organisations while competition encourages secrecy'. If organisations become competitors or rivals in the child and adolescent mental health field it is hard to see how this would benefit children and young people. Each organisation's primary concern would be to protect their market position rather than working together in the best interests of children and young people.

While inter-agency and inter-professional divisions and rivalries certainly predate the contract culture, these divisions have been accentuated by the legislative and environmental changes. Rather than rising to the challenge of the new market-oriented world of health and welfare provision, Bailey (1997) suggests 'different agencies have different priorities, and difficulties in working together may become more marked when all agencies are overworked and defensive about the quality of work they do'. The alignment of service provision with agency boundaries encourages narrowness and rigidity of perspective and a failure to conceptualise and operationalise a service which is 'whole' child and young person oriented and centred. It is this rigidity which needs to be challenged, whether it be as a consequence of professional self interest or consumerist philosophy. As Jones and Bilton (1994, p 43) state, 'asking "Do we need a teacher or a social worker?" provides no better answer than asking "Is the need social or educational?" Clearly, what is needed is a service which 'identifies shared goals and ways in which these goals can be pursued' (ibid).

Certainly, the philosophy of the market is both powerful and persuasive. However, the allure of consumer choice, efficiency, value for money and quality, disguises fundamental tensions and contradictions inherent in the commodification of human distress. As Wallace et al (1995) warn, 'the nature of individual differences in the aetiology, presentation and external circumstances of children and young people, as well as the resources of services, militate against a simple formula for linking need, intervention and outcome in clinical practice'. Therefore, while the valorisation of free market principles and economic libertarianism has ironically created a space for the development of 'consumer agendas', this has had little positive impact on the experiences of children and young people in mental distress.

From 'consumer' to empowered user

In contrast to consumerism the concept of 'user empowerment' is rooted more in experience than theory. This is not to deny the significance of critical theoretical analysis, but to emphasise its intrinsic relationship to political action and change. Phenomenological approaches valorise individual experience/identity/subjectivity. They make intelligible that which dominant discourse proclaims unintelligible. Structural approaches locate these individual experiences in their wider social contexts revealing the complex dynamics of power and oppression. In offering a critique of the medicalisation of deviance and of the power invested in mental health professionals to police the frontiers between the 'normal' and the 'pathological', such theoretical frameworks have given energy to the development of consciousness-raising 'survivors' groups and to the possibilities for resistance. In this, the process of challenging dominant professionalised discourses offers the scope for substantive change in contrast to the tokenistic rhetoric of the consumerist model. As Pilgrim and Rogers (1993, p 175) state, 'professionally delivered services are brought into question or are rendered problematic'.

While such theoretical and political developments have furthered the civil/human rights causes of many oppressed groups (black and minority ethnic groups, women, disabled people, lesbian women and gay men) the position of children and young people has remained locked into paternalism (Masson, 1991). The extent to which children and young people have had their demands for change heard has, for the most part, been dependant on adults (usually in the welfare enterprise) taking up their cause. Historically children and young people have not been responded to positively when they attempt to demonstrate individual, let alone collective, resistance. As Scraton (1997, p163) states, 'passive or active resistance by children and young people is always defined as negative, as a challenge to legitimate authority'. Indeed such action is often understood as indicative of 'dysfunction' or 'disorder' and as such provides a justification for the continued denial of their civil and political rights. This is well-illustrated in the influential 'Black Papers' written by Cox and Boyson (1975, p 1): 'Children are not naturally good. They need firm tactful discipline...too much freedom for children breeds selfishness, vandalism and personal unhappiness'.

There is an inherent contradiction between the philosophy of empowerment and the structural position of children and young people as powerless in society. They face the dual discrimination of mentalism and adultism. Therefore it is difficult to envisage the empowerment of children and young people in child and adolescent mental health services without a fundamental, and much wider, shift in adult-child power relationships.

The adult mental health service user movement developed out of anger and frustration at the way in which their distress is written off as meaningless within the medical model. It has been informed by the principles that everyone has the right

to be taken seriously and have their experiences recognised as meaningful. Crucially, this includes the right to own and define one's own distress and to have decisive influence in finding solutions to that distress. Things which are seen as important in developing mental health services are: the right to 'ordinary living', which demands a range of options in the community to facilitate it; the right to 'benign treatment', which demands genuine alternatives to the medical model; and the right to 'voluntary relationships', which demands the minimalising or elimination of coercion and the maximising of informed consent. While progress towards these demands for adult mental health service users has been limited and the struggle for substantive change continues (Campbell, 1993), the position of children and young people as mental health service users is, as yet, hardly on the agenda.

In reality, the situation for children and young people in distress has worsened - not only in relation to the principles outlined above, but also generally. Fuelled by a series of moral panics surrounding a small number of high profile cases, a bitter contempt for 'childhood' and 'youth' as a whole has emerged and an unprecedented attack has been launched on those children and young people who are defined as 'disturbed' or 'disturbing' (see: Scraton (ed), 1997). This has taken place at the level of popular and professional discourse and political posturing. The two main political parties in Britain are virtually indistinguishable in terms of their prescriptions for the reassertion of adult authority, discipline and control over children and young people. Enormous challenges are facing children and young people and their families in this climate and there is seemingly little space or support for notions of increased empowerment. On the contrary, it is suggested that children's rights agendas have gone too far and have themselves contributed, if not caused, the presumed increase in 'disturbance' and 'disorder'. Research highlighting children's and young people's experiences of poverty, of homelessness, of racism, of abuse and neglect, of school exclusion, of incarceration, to name but a few, seriously casts doubt on the extent to which it has been possible to speak of an increase in their 'rights' at all (CRO, 1995; Howard League, 1995; Thompson, 1995; Utting, 1995; CLC, 1994; CRDU, 1994; Middleton, 1994; Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1993; EPOCH-WORLDWIDE, 1993; HMSO, 1993; Burrows & Walenkowicz, 1992).

In relation to child and adolescent mental health, research continues to accumulate evidence of negative practices which give cause for concern, from ongoing segregation outside mainstream institutions and schools, away from family, community and friends, to the use of 'restraint', locked rooms, degrading behaviour modification techniques and enforced medical treatment (Bates, 1994; Children's Legal Centre, 1995; 1993; 1991; Fennell, 1992; Hodgkin, 1994; 1993; Lawson, 1991). The tradition of paternalism, where the professional 'knows best', persists (Masson, 1991).

The scope for user-led child and adolescent mental health services?

If there is one positive aspect to all of this, it is the renewed flurry of activity on the part of professionals and advocates in the child and adolescent mental health field. Whether this sense of urgency has been motivated primarily out of concern for children and young people and the future of child and adolescent mental health services, or professional self interest is, of course, a matter of debate. Nevertheless, such activity has informed a series of official documents reviewing child and adolescent mental health services (DoH/DFE, 1995; NHS Health Advisory Service, 1995). A substantial overhaul of current provision is proposed which would involve 'the adoption of a co-ordinated, tiered, strategic approach to the commissioning and delivery of child and adolescent mental health services' (NHS Health Advisory Service, 1995, p 2). A four tiered service is suggested which ranges from the promotion of child and adolescent mental health in the holistic sense through to the provision of highly specialised interventions. It is acknowledged that all people who are in contact with children and young people have a part to play - parents and carers, teachers, school nurses, GPs, health visitors, social workers, etc. However, it is suggested that this wider context for understanding and promoting child and adolescent mental health has to be underpinned by a core of specialist services, and it is these services which purchasers and providers need to scrutinise and strategically develop in relation to their local area. The concept of 'healthy alliances' has been used to emphasise the need for collaborative approaches to commissioning (DoH, 1994), particularly given the structural inconsistencies in service development to date.

While such proposals are to be welcomed it is important that they are informed by an empowerment, rather than a consumerist, model of service delivery. If not, it is likely that the outcome will merely be a modification of the same professionally - led, paternalistic responses which have dominated policy, legislation and practice in this field. An empowerment model begins with a recognition of, and a genuine commitment to creating, the conditions which will promote positive mental health in all children and young people. This means understanding the effect of social, political and economic forces on children and young people's lives and establishing a commitment to combating those factors which contribute to mental distress, such as poverty, homelessness, violence, racism (AMA/CRO, 1995; BACCH, 1995).

Children's Services Plans became mandatory in England and Wales in 1996. They offer an opportunity to develop an holistic approach to the health and welfare of all children and young people. However, as Jones and Bilton (1994) suggest, they need to be developed in response to the answers from children and families to the question of what they want and hope for from the services which are there to support them. This means the development of what McKnight (1995) refers to as 'capacity-focused alternatives' based on the capacities, skills and assets of individuals and communities rather than disempowering 'deficit' models which create dependency

on professional elites. Such an approach is epitomised in the development of the St Matthews Multi-agency Project in Leicester (NCB, 1997). It is a project which has facilitated the active participation and decision-making of residents in developing and sustaining local services, giving the community a vital sense of ownership. One centre in the heart of the community is the location for a large public meeting area, a coffee shop, a play centre, community rooms, a GP's surgery, a primary health care team, a local policy office, a drug and alcohol advice centre, a community mental health team, a Benefits Agency, and representatives of numerous voluntary organisations such as Shelter, Home Start and Relate.

There are many further examples of innovative practice in different parts of the country. For example the work of the youth counselling services such as 42nd Street in Manchester and the Brandon Centre, Brent Consultation Centre, Open door and Off Centre in London.

These sort of initiatives are in line with the guidance issued by Action for Sick Children regarding the development of child and young person-centred services (Hogg, 1996). They say commissioners and providers should:

- work within the UN Convention in terms of children and young people's rights to receive information and be consulted on their health care and treatment
- work in partnership with parents and children, respecting the views and skills they have
- seek the views of children and young people and their parents in the development and evaluation of services
- make their services child, young person and family-centred, appropriate and accessible
- make their services integrated and comprehensive, moulded by the multi-faceted and inter-related nature of the needs expressed.

An empowerment model demands that when things do go wrong and children and young people are in distress they can be assured of the availability of services which have been designed and implemented through their involvement. Eakin (1993/94) argues that service design and delivery can be improved when children and young people are given an opportunity to participate. She describes a project of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) where adults and young people came together to work on social policy objectives for youth. The results were dramatically different from the policy goals designed for youth by adults alone. The adults focused on security as a key concern, while the young people identified respect and caring as the essential ingredients. The adults identified independence as a goal while the young people emphasised interdependence. Eakin suggests that involving children in designing mental health services does not have to be compli-

cated. The CMHA (ibid, p 18) has identified some best practices and have observed that:

- young people are more successful in having a meaningful role when they participate with adults in the decision-making process
- stand-alone youth groups report feeling ignored and left out of the process
- successful projects have developed ongoing support structures to develop participation skills in successive groups of young people
- children and young people should not be expected to participate in the same format as adults
- time limited and task specific opportunities seem to be most successful
- children and young people are not able to make, or interested in making, long term commitment, and have difficulty with the slow pace of adult committee processes.

Significantly, Eakin concludes, 'the children can tell us how they experienced our interventions. That's important information'.

With this in mind it is good to see that the Mental Health Foundation has launched a three year initiative on child and adolescent mental health aiming to encourage the development of a 'user voice' amongst children and young people. There is a commitment to developing ways of consulting with them in an age-appropriate way so as to ensure maximum involvement. It is intended that this process will enable children and young people to influence mental health professionals and contribute directly to the development of child and adolescent mental health service provision.

Since no one group of children or young people will be able to reflect the significance of issues such as 'race', ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality and disability, it is to be hoped that recognition is given to the need for a range of views to be canvassed amongst the diverse population of children and young people in contemporary British society. While there will certainly be important areas of commonality, it would be naive in the extreme to assume homogeneity in perspectives on, and experiences of, child and adolescent mental distress.

Conclusion

Child and adolescent mental health service provision in the UK, to date, has failed to respond to the expressed needs of children and young people in distress. It has been dominated by professionally-driven, 'problem solving', approaches which have emphasised individual, familial or communal 'defects' or 'deficits'. Positioned as 'patients', children and young people have had little say in, or control over, their individual 'treatment', let alone the development of services. Now

as 'consumers', they find themselves firmly squeezed between professional power and market forces.

While by no means offering definitive answers to the vexed question of effectiveness of child and adolescent mental health services, the projects highlighted above illustrate the potential for innovation and improvement in service delivery. Their experiences and insights may prove invaluable in addressing some strategic questions related to creating changes that will result in a viable community-based system. Such a transition not only requires innovations in the types of services made available to children, young people and their families, but also fundamental changes in the relationships between funding agencies, service delivery agencies and recipients of services. Without doubt this implies an increased role for children, young people and their families in service planning and delivery and professionals and para-professionals will increasingly find themselves sharing decision-making power with them.

For children and young people to become truly empowered users of child and adolescent mental health services much remains to be done. Their voices not only need to be heard, but their views must become decisive. Paternalistic, patronising rhetoric around 'participation' is not good enough. The components of positive mental health - 'the ability to develop psychologically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually; the ability to initiate, develop and sustain mutually satisfying personal relationships; the ability to become aware of others and to empathise with them; the ability to use psychological distress as a developmental process' (NHS Health Advisory Service, 1995 p 15) - can only be realised in a context where all children and young people are valued and respected, both individually and collectively.

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'REFUGES' FOR YOUNG 'RUNAWAYS':

An Extension of the Care System or a Response to Youth Homelessness

ALASTAIR CHRISTIE

Introduction

In England and Scotland 43,000 young people are involved in over 100,000 incidents of running away each year (Abrahams and Mungall, 1992). A further study suggests that one in every seven young people run away over night before the age of 16 (Rees, 1993). During one year (1987/8) in South Wales alone, it has been estimated that there were 25,300 incidents of young people going missing (Hutson and Liddiard, 1992). Although there is disagreement whether the numbers of young homeless are reducing in some areas (Glasman, 1996), there is general agreement that there are a large number of young people who run away and are homeless. There is also agreement that a high percentage of these young people are in care or being accommodated by local authorities (Payne, 1995). Recent research has also suggested that homeless young people are particularly vulnerable to mental health problems, with 20% of homeless young people in 1995 having attempted suicide (Hirst, 1996).

These findings raise questions about what needs young people have for accommodation and support, how those needs are defined and what services can be provided to meet those needs. In this article I will question the use of the terms 'runaway' and 'refuge' and I argue that the use of these terms may obscure rather than clarify the diverse needs of young people for support and accommodation. My intention, based on empirical research, is to describe some of the social characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, and legal status) of the young people who use a particular refuge and the reasons they give for staying at the refuge. During the period of this research, 63% of the young people staying at the refuge were in the care of or were accommodated by a local authority. This raises questions about the role of refuges in relation to the local care system and whether the refuges can avoid becoming an extension of the care system.

The refuge and the research is funded by the Children's Society which also supports four other children's refuges in England and Wales. The Children's Society was founded in 1881 largely as a response to concern about young people living on the streets - a social phenomenon, which, over a hundred years later, has not disappeared. This organisation continues to be at the forefront of the development and provision of services for young people who live on the street or find themselves temporarily homeless.

In the next section I will outline the legislative framework in which children's refuges in England and Wales¹ operate. I will then highlight the problematic

nature of the terms 'runaway' and 'refuge' and go on to describe research methods and findings on the refuge in South Wales.

The legal basis for children's refuges

Section 51 of the 1989 Children Act introduced legislation which made it possible for organisations in England and Wales to legally provide accommodation for young people who run away from home. This part of the legislation runs counter to a central tenet of the Act, namely that of 'parental responsibility'. This Act therefore, includes contradictory provisions in relation to the welfare of young people, because the refuges, even if only temporarily, take responsibility away from parents (Stein et al., 1994). Prior to the 1989 Children Act, organisations that provided accommodation for young runaways were breaking laws originally established to prevent the abduction and harbouring of children. Despite these laws, the Central London Teenage Project had 'illegally' provided a refuge/safe house for young people under the age of 16 (or 18 if they were in Care) since 1985. The success of this project was influential in persuading the government to develop legislation which legalised children's refuges within the 1989 Children's Act.

Section 51 of the Act makes provisions for 'refuges' in the form of children's homes or foster placements. These refuges are exempt from prosecution for assisting or harbouring young people who have run away. The refuges are certificated and monitored by the Welsh Office (in Wales) and the Home Office (in England) who can withdraw the certification of a refuge. In order to stay in the refuge, the young person must be under the age of 17 or in the care of a local authority and assessed by the refuge staff as being at risk of harm. The young person cannot stay at a refuge for longer than 14 days or for more than 21 days over a three month period. Within 24 hours of the young person entering the refuge the police must be notified. The young person's parents, guardians or the appropriate care authorities will also be informed that the young person is in a refuge. They will be given a contact telephone number but not the address of the refuge. The central aim of the refuge as provided for in the Children Act is to seek a relatively fast resolution to the young person's problems and negotiate a return to the young person's previous accommodation or to arrange alternative accommodation. These regulations highlight the provisional and transitional nature of the refuge service. The refuges provide a service in time of acute need when young persons are homeless and at risk of harm because they have left their legal place of accommodation (whatever the reason for leaving). In the following section of this article I explore the assumptions that the terms 'runaway' and 'refuge' imply.

'Runaway' and 'refuge' - problematic terms

The term 'runaway' is used in the Act to describe young people who decide to leave their legal home: either their parent's/guardian's home or residential/foster care. It is a problematic term because it creates assumptions about young people

in a wide variety of different social circumstances. Young people described as 'runaways' may neither be *'running'* away nor running *'away'*, both of which suggest either impetuosity or a wish to get away from a particular place. The description *'going to'* may be a more appropriate construction which reflects the motivation/actions of some young people who are described as runaways. The term runaway tends to imply that young people are irrational and impulsive, responding to personal crises rather than making positive and well planned choices, considered over a period of time, to leave their legal home to seek a better life for themselves. The term runaway also suggests that the young person wants to leave the legal home. This may disguise the situation where a young person directly or indirectly may feel *'pushed out'* of their legal home for any number of reasons. Finally, the term runaway focuses on the individual young person suggesting that they are *'unusual'* rather than looking to the particular support and housing needs of young people in general. The research cited earlier suggests that young people leaving their legal home is a relatively common phenomenon, therefore it may be unhelpful to single out *'runaways'* and burden them with such a dramatic label.

Payne (1995) identifies five categories that are used to describe young and adult *'missing persons'*: *'runaways (missing people)...throwaways (rejected missing people)...pushaways (people forced to go missing)...fallaways (people who have lost contact)...takeaways (people forced out of contact)'* (p.337). All of these terms can be used to describe the situation of some young homeless people and all of these terms are likely to produce different types of service response. Liddiard and Hutson (1991) found that agencies were actively involved in the construction of categories of young people and that these definitions were as much a product of an agency's structure, purpose and funding as the needs of the young people who were using the agency.

The terms used by agencies to describe young people are often derived from legal definitions. In the UK a young person must be in the care of parents, a guardian or the local authority until the age of 16. Between 16 and 18 young people in England and Wales can only leave their home with the agreement of those legally responsible for them. (In Scotland young people may leave home at 16 or over without the consent of their parents.) However, the police will usually use their power to detain young people under the age of 17 only if they judge that they are in physical or moral danger. In practice, therefore, 17 is often the age at which young people can leave home without being returned home without their consent. The distinction between being homeless or a runaway for people 16 or older depends on whether they leave home legally (i.e. with the agreement of those responsible for them) and the judgements of police officers if they become involved. It may be more helpful to develop descriptive terms that highlight the needs and rights of young people for accommodation rather than their legal status thus constructing the issue in a way which allows for a more appropriate response.

The term 'refuge' implies another set of potentially false assumptions. It suggests that the young people have to seek protection from hostile parents/guardians or local social service departments. While this may be the case for some young people, there are other young people who just need a bed for the night rather than 'fortified accommodation'. Refuge also implies vulnerability, danger and extreme need, while often the need is to resolve ongoing practical and emotional issues.

The term 'children's refuge' has a particular meaning with the Children Act 1989, however it may not be the most appropriate term for use in everyday practice. Rather than using the terms 'runaway' and 'refuge', the terms 'homeless young people' and 'hostel accommodation' may have less negative labelling effects. In this article I refer to the refuge in South Wales as 'the project' and 'runaways' as 'young people who stayed at the project' or 'young people who have left their legal home'.

Outline of the research and research methods

The overall aim of the three year research project (1.11.92 - 31.10.95) was to evaluate the work of a particular 'children's refuge' in South Wales². In this article I do not describe the evaluation of the project's work but rather draw on the evaluation data to describe young people who stayed there and discuss differences and similarities in the ways different groups of young people used the service.

The basic method used in this research was the development of a systems model of the project's work (Thorpe and Thorpe, 1992). The project staff and the author developed a systems model of the project which identified 'inputs' to the system (e.g. information about service users, age, gender, ethnicity, nature of referral) processes (e.g. types of service provided, contact with other agencies) and outcomes (e.g. where the service user went after leaving the project, whether they left in a planned or unplanned way). This model was replicated as a computer database. As well as building databases the staff were trained to input data and analyse the database. They were encouraged to become their own researchers by using the database to reflect on their own professional judgements. From the basic training on the computer databases the staff were able to develop two databases as follows:

- i) Young Persons' Database (YPD) - information concerning individual young people who stayed at the project. A total of 24 young people stayed at the project between 1 April, 1993 and 31 July, 1995 (28 months).
- ii) Admissions Database (AD) - information about each admission to the project. A total of 60 admissions were made to the project between 1 April, 1993 and 31 July, 1995 (28 months), 11 young people re-admitted themselves to the project. To help identify changes in the pattern of admissions this database has been divided into two 14 month periods: first period - 1 April, 1993 to 31 May 1994 and second period - 1 June, 1994 to 31 July, 1995.

The data were collected and entered on computer databases by staff at the project each time a young person stayed. This information sometimes varied as some young

people provided different information on subsequent admissions to the project. For example, information on young people's ages and the number of times they had left their home without the agreement of their parent(s), guardian or the local authority was not always consistent.

During the first 28 months in which the project was operational, project places were provided on 60 occasions to a total of 24 different young people. The relatively small number of young people who have used the project limits the generalisability of the findings. However, the findings provide rich data on the specific young people who used the project.

A further potential limitation of the research was the need to develop a systems model prior to the project's certification from the Welsh Office and its operation as a project. The systems model was developed therefore on the basis of the professional judgements of the staff and the author and on information available from other similar projects and without the day to day experience of running it. Although this was a potential disadvantage, the database has subsequently required only minor alterations in the light of operational experience. An advantage of developing the systems model before the project became operational was that it provided opportunities for detailed discussion of type of services to be offered by the project.

Findings of the research

From the analysis of the databases distinct patterns emerged in the use of the project by different groups. The most significant groupings were based on: gender, young women and men's use of the project; the legal status of the young person, whether they were on a Care Order, accommodated by the local authority or had not specific legal status; and the *ethnicity* of the young person. While not wishing to reinforce gender and racial stereotypes or stereotypes based on legal status of young people, patterns emerge from the databases that suggest that these factors strongly influence the ways in which young people use the project.

Young women and men who stayed at the project

Table 1 provides information on the total number and gender of young persons staying at the project and the admissions in the two periods. The figures for the young persons' database (YPD) are smaller than in the admissions database (AD) as 11 young people re-admitted themselves to the project.

Table 1 - Gender of young people who stayed at the project

	YPD		AD (full)	AD	(1st Period)	AD	(2nd Period)
Female	18 (75%)	50 (83%)	25 (81%)	25 (86%)			
Male	6 (25%)	10 (17%)	6 (19%)	4 (14%)			
Total	24	60	31	29			

The YPD shows that 18 (75%) of the young people who stayed at the refuge were female while only 6 (25%) were male. The AD identifies that 50 (83%) admissions were made by young women and 10 (17%) by men³. This indicates that young women were more likely than young men both to stay at the project and to re-admit themselves. The ratio between young women to men using the service remained relatively constant over the 28 months, with a slight reduction in the number of young men - from 6 (19%) to 4 (14%) - staying at the refuge in the second period.

Other research also suggests that young women are more likely to run away than young men (Rees, 1993). Newman (1994) found in her research with young people using the Central London Teenage Project, that 53% were female and 47% male. However, Abrahams and Mungall's (1992) survey in four police constabularies found that 55% of young people who 'ran away' were male and 45% female. Statistics on the young homeless tend to under-estimate the number of young homeless women. This may be because sleeping rough in public spaces is particularly dangerous for young women and young women have a greater ability to find accommodation with friends and relations (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994).

Table 2 - Main reason for staying at the project

		AD (full)	female	male
Accommodation	5	(8%)	4	1
Family dispute	12	(20%)	10	2
Care dispute	26	(43%)	23	3
Physical abuse	2	(3%)	1	1
Emotional abuse	1	(2%)	0	1
Sexual abuse	4	(7%)	4	0
Thrown out	2	(3%)	0	2
Other	7	(12%)	7	0
Breathing space	1	(2%)	1	0
Total	60		50	10

Table 2 indicates the wide variety of reasons why young people wanted to stay at the project. Disputes involving local authority care, the largest single category, amounted to 43% of the total. Disputes young people had with their families formed the second largest category, 20% of the total. Although the majority of both young women and men stayed at the project as a result of disputes with local authority care or families, there were particular differences in the reasons given by young women and men for staying at the project. On four occasions young women stayed at the project as the result of sexual abuse and once as the result of physical abuse. On another four occasions young women defined their reasons for staying at the project as the need for appropriate accommodation. This was accommodation away from either their family or local authority care. The category 'other' - 7 (14%) of young women admissions - represents the complex reasons

given by young women which could not be grouped under one heading. On one occasion a young woman entered the project because she needed 'some breathing space' away from her family.

As well as young women providing *different* reasons than young men for staying at the project, young women also identified a *greater variety* of reasons for wanting to stay at the project. Young women worked on a wide variety of issues with project workers while they stayed at the project. These included disputes with schools, relationship difficulties with friends, wanting to gain more independence, and drug/alcohol misuse. Young men, however, tended to work only on the issue they had identified when they came into the project, that is, the need for appropriate accommodation, care and family disputes. Exceptions to this were the young man who said that he was suffering from emotional abuse and the two young men who said they had been 'thrown out' by their families. The young men also identified few issues to be worked on while they were at the project.

The data suggests differences in the ways that young women and men use the project. More young women (50%) than young men (20%) had planned to come to the project when they left their home. This may suggest that young men find different ways of living on the street and/or that young men do not find the services of the project as attractive/appropriate as young women do.

Approximately 75% of young women left the project in a planned way, that is, they had decided with a project worker either to return to their legal home or had arranged alternative accommodation. 44% of the young women said that the reason for coming to the refuge had improved, another 44% said the issues had remained the same and 8% said the issue had become worse (4% did not respond to this question). For young men only 50% left the project in a planned way, with 50% saying the issue that brought them to the project had improved and 50% saying it had stayed the same or become worse.

To summarise the differences in the uses of the project by young women and men, young men came less often to the project and worked on a limited number of issues with project workers. The situation for young women was more complex, identifying a wide variety of reasons for staying at the project. They more often planned to come to the project and planned their departure to either their legal home or alternative accommodation.

The question of why young women and men use the project differently still remains. Do young women and men have different needs or are their needs differently met by existing services? This research points to the need for more gendered analysis of the needs of young people for appropriate accommodation and social support.

Legal status of the young people who stayed at the project

The research identified the legal status of young people as being in care, accommodated by a local authority⁴ or with no particular legal status (none).

Table 3 - Legal status of young people who stayed at the project

	YPD		AD (full)	AD	(1st Period)	AD	(2nd Period)
None	9 (37%)	18 (30%)	16 (52%)	2 (7%)			
Care Order	4 (17%)	20 (33%)	6 (19%)	14 (48%)			
Accommodated	11 (46%)	22 (37%)	9 (29%)	13 (45%)			
Total	24	60	31	29			

Table 3 shows that the legal status of all admissions split into approximately three equal groups, none (18), in care (20) and accommodated by a local authority (22). However, young people in care were far more likely to re-admit themselves to the project than either of the other two groups: one young woman in the care of a local authority stayed at the project on twelve separate occasions. There was a marked increase in the number of young people in care staying at the project in the second period (from 6 to 14). This increase can be explained partly by the re-admission of a number of these young people during the second period. There was an even more marked decrease in the number of young people with no specific legal status staying at the project in the second period. As yet there is no explanation for decreased use of the project by this group of young people.

Newman (1994) found that at the Central London Teenage Project 65% of the young people were running away from home and 35% running away from care/boarded school. Abrahams and Mungall (1992) found that young people running away from residential care are hugely over-represented amongst run-aways. These studies suggest contradictory trends which are difficult to account for. What is perhaps unexpected from the data on the project in South Wales is the high number of young people who stayed at the project that were accommodated by a local authority. When a young person is accommodated by a local authority there is usually a high degree of agreement on living arrangements between the young person and the local authority. This agreement is usually maintained by regular reviews and consensual decision making. This process appears to have broken down for these young people, accommodated by the local authority, who stayed at the project.

While it may be unhelpful to categorise young people simply on the basis of their legal status, there appears to be a number of trends that are linked to the legal status of the young people. Young people in care tended to stay for shorter periods at the refuge and to be re-admitted more often. They most often identified care dispute or the need for accommodation as the only issues they wanted to work on at the refuge. The outcomes of this issue tended to be worse or the same more often

than for other issues when young people were leaving the refuge. Just over half of the young people in care left the project in a planned way. For these young people, therefore, satisfactory accommodation arrangements appear to be ongoing and difficult to resolve. It seems a matter of priority that resources and skills are developed which produce a more satisfactory outcome in relation to care disputes. This may require considerable time and interagency work which might include preventive advocacy work with young people in care or accommodated. Young people who left residential care to come to the project were the most likely not to return to the placement where they had come from. This suggests that preventive work with young people in residential care might help them make transitions to alternative accommodation without having to become homeless.

Young people with no specific legal status came to the project with, and worked on, a wider range of issues. They had greater success in achieving their desired outcomes than the other two groups. Nearly all of the young people with no specific legal status left the project in a planned way and the majority returned to live with their families. Accommodation problems, therefore, for the young people in care or accommodated by the local authority proved to be the most intractable of problems that the project had to deal with.

Given the relatively large number of admissions from young people in care and accommodated by the local authority, the project could be seen as an extension of the care/accommodation system often providing a point of transition between different forms care/accommodation. The project workers were successful in smoothing this transition with over half of the young people leaving the project in a planned way. However, they had less success in working with young people to find more appropriate accommodation: 36% of the young people in accommodation, and 20% of young people in care moved to, or returned to, the accommodation they requested.

Ethnicity of young people who stayed at the project.

Table 4 - Ethnicity of young people who stayed at the project

	YPD	AD	(full)	AD	(1st Period)	AD	(2nd Period)
White	16 (67%)	41 (68%)		27 (87%)	14 (48%)		
Black Caribbean	1 (4%)	1 (2%)		1 (3%)	0 (0%)		
Black African	1 (4%)	2 (3%)		0 (0%)	2 (7%)		
Pakistani	1 (4%)	1 (2%)		1 (3%)	0 (0%)		
Mixed parentage	5 (21%)	15 (25%)		2 (7%)	13 (45%)		
Total	24	60		31	29		

Table 4 indicates that 16 (67%) of young people who stayed at the project, and the majority of admissions to the project 41 (68%) described themselves as white. The number of admissions from this group was almost halved in the second period (from 27 to 14). At this point it is unclear from the data what may have caused this reduction.

Three (12%) of the young people of who stayed in the refuge described themselves as Black Caribbean, Black African, or Pakistani. This group returned to stay at the refuge less often than other groups of young people. Young people who defined themselves as Black Caribbean, Black African, Pakistani were over represented in their use of the project compared to the ethnicity of the local population⁵.

Five (21%) of the young people staying at the refuge described themselves as having mixed parentage. This Group returned to stay at the refuge more frequently than others - 15 young people (25%). There was a considerable increase in the number of admissions from the first to second period (from 2 to 13) of young people who described themselves as having mixed parentage. All of these young people were in care or accommodated by a local authority. The 1991 census does not include a category for people who define themselves as of mixed parentage, however the census data would suggest that this group is also over - represented in their use of the project.

Gosling et al. (1989) and CHAR (1987) indicate that young people from Black/ethnic minority communities are over-represented in the number of people who use services for the homeless. However other research (Davies et al., 1996) suggests that this may still be an under-representation of the true number of homeless Black and ethnic minority young people, as many in this group prefer to live with friends and relatives rather than leave their local communities. If they do leave their local community, Black and ethnic minority young people often seek short term hostel accommodation rather living on the streets and making themselves vulnerable to racist attacks (Davies et al., 1996).

While the young people from Black and ethnic minority groups are over - represented in their use of the project when compared with the rest of the local community, it is not clear whether they are under-representative of young people from the black and ethnic minority communities who are locally in care and accommodated. Unfortunately the project is based in a Social Services Department area that does not monitor the ethnicity of young people who are in care or accommodated. In this particular geographical area there are variable levels of race/cultural awareness in agencies and there is a general failure to undertake the ethnic monitoring of service users (Patel, 1994).

On a more positive note, the project has been accessible to young people from black and ethnic minority groups. Young people who described themselves as Black Caribbean, Black African, Pakistani had a low re-admission rate. Whereas young people who described themselves as of mixed parentage had the highest re-

admission rate. For 50% of both groups the main issue worked on in the refuge had improved. It is not clear however, how ethnicity, re-admission and the outcome of the main issue worked on at the refuge are related.

Conclusion

In the first half of this article I have argued that the terms 'runaway' and 'refuge' are unhelpful as they construct and reinforce assumptions about the characteristics and motivation of people under the age of 18 who leave their legal home without the permission of their parents, guardians or a local authority. Young people do not always 'run away' and young people who leave their home without legal permission do not always need a 'refuge'. The use of the terms obscures the wider needs of young people for accommodation and support demonstrated in this research. The use of these terms may say more about the way that legislation and service provision has developed rather the lives of young people. It may be more appropriate to describe 'runaways' as homeless young people and then to re-define them in relation to their specific needs and social characteristics, if definition in relation to needs must take place.

In the second half of the article I discussed the research on one 'children's refuge'. The findings from the research clearly demonstrate the problems with the category 'young people' as a homogenous group, as individuals and groups of young people have very different needs. The research also suggests that young people use the services of the 'children's refuge' very differently in relation to their gender, legal status and ethnicity.

The research findings suggested that there is a pressing need for new initiatives in work with young people in care and accommodated by local authorities. The majority of young people left residential care when they believed they could not resolve disagreements about their living conditions. An independent advocacy system might help to ensure that the voices of young people in care and accommodated are more clearly heard in decisions about their living arrangements.

If local authority accommodation is only provided after careful negotiations with the young person and their parent/guardian, it is disappointing to see these young people resorting to leaving that accommodation and becoming homeless. This suggests that short cuts may have been taken in the assessment; that monitoring and re-negotiation around the conditions of accommodation are not systematic and effective; and that local authorities do not have appropriate accommodation to meet the needs of all young people.

The picture of homelessness for Black and ethnic minority young people is complex; however, in this research and elsewhere, Black and ethnic minority young people are over-represented in their use of hostels. There is an urgent need to develop appropriate services for homeless Black and ethnic minority young people as well as improving existing services. The monitoring of the ethnic origins of

young people in care or accommodated by social service departments is a necessary prerequisite for the provision of appropriate services.

Although this research was based on the experience of one project, it suggests that at least in the project's immediate catchment area, the local authorities are not providing the kinds of accommodation that some young people, especially young women and young people from Black and ethnic minority communities, find helpful. The research points to the need for more widely integrated policy and service delivery relating to the accommodation of young people, which involves the co-ordinated efforts of social services, projects for young people, and a broad range of housing services.

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Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank all the members of the Park Project, in particular Chris Curry (Project Leader) and Alison Jeremy (Project Administrator) for their help in undertaking the research. The research was funded by the Children's Society/Cymdelthas Plant.

Notes

- 1 Scotland does not yet have legislation which covers the provision of refuges for young people.
- 2 For a description of work of the 'children's refuge' see Dobson (1995)
- 3 The 1991 Census recorded 43,794 people aged between 10 and 17 years, 21,264 (48.6%) young women and 22,530 (51.4%) young men living in the county in which the project is based.
- 4 Under the 1989 Children Act, Section 20 local authorities have a duty to provide accommodation for young people aged 16 and 17 who are 'in need' and whose welfare would otherwise be 'seriously prejudiced'. Local authorities can also provide accommodation for young people aged between 16 and 21 if it is required to 'safeguard and promote' their welfare.
- 5 The 1991 Census recorded 612,219 people aged between 5 and 15 years in the County in which the project is based: 59,523 (97.2%) were defined as white, 75 (0.012%) as Black Caribbean, 46 (0.0075%) as Black African and 522 (0.85%) as Pakistani. In the town in which the project is based there are 18,674 people aged between 5 and 15 years; 17,452 (93.5%) were defined as white, 53 (0.28%) as Black Caribbean, 138 (0.74%) Black African and 485 (2.6%) as Pakistani. The 1991 Census does not record figures for people who define themselves of mixed parentage.

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STREET KIDS IN GERMANY - MYTH OR REALITY

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This article is based on a research project performed in three German cities (Dresden, Karlsruhe, Hamburg) and the Ruhr area. Initiated by the German Ministry of Family, Women, Seniors and Youth in October 1995 it aims to describe and analyse the situation of children and adolescents living on the street, and to initiate professional support systems for this group where needed. The first part of this project has been concluded recently. All together we conducted about 50 interviews with experts involved with 'street kids' in different ways, such as social workers, child care workers and police to find out what the living conditions of 'street kids' are (Institut für soziale Arbeit 1996).

We start with a definition of what is meant by the term 'street kids' by offering a typology of children and adolescents living in the street. In a second step we will try to give a quantitative survey of the problem. Then we explain the difficulties of changing the young peoples' situation. Finally we explore a practical approach of handling the problem, taking place in Hamburg (which is one of the participating cities in the project).

What do we mean by 'street kids'?

Beginning in 1992/1993 a new phenomenon emerged in the German mass media: minors labelled as 'street kids'. In the mass media they had been depicted as loitering in the streets around train stations or other public places, dealing drugs, prostituting themselves and committing crimes (e.g. BRIGITTE 1992, Publik-Forum 1993). However, it has not always been clear what is meant by that label; there has never been a proper definition of who could be regarded as 'street kids'.

According to our own research and the research literature by other authors so far (e.g. Jordan/Hard 1994, Deutsches Jugendinstitut 1995, Bodenmüller 1996, Pfennig 1996), we can distinguish between four (ideal) types of adolescents - mainly they are adolescents, not children who stay entirely or for longer periods during daytime at public places or other areas characterized by a low amount of social control:

The marginalized: For them 'the street' is the final stage - the last link in a long chain of failing attempts to get integrated in society. Very often they were kicked out by their families or have run away from their foster families or different settings of child care. Some of them also came as refugees to Germany, without their parents. It is especially the latter type which is characterized by highly traumatic experiences in their former socialisation contexts.

The conspicuous: Like the 'marginalized' this type is usually characterised by

traumatic experiences endured in their past. But compared to the first type, they actively utilise the street as a means for creating identity by self-staging. Sometimes they use the mass media as a tool, to turn from a nobody into a V.I.P. In general they are the ones who do things like 'car-crashing' or 'subway-surfing', widely publicised in the German mass media.

The endangered: For this type 'the street' is a place for 'little breakouts' from parental control or simply a place for adventure. They still have a loosely coupled relationship with their parents and either go back every day or at irregular intervals. However, they have a high risk of getting involved in criminal offences or drug abuse.

The refusers: For them living on 'the street' is a form of protest to show their discomfort with the society they live in. One of the most prominent groups of this type are the so-called 'punks', but especially in the east of Germany there are also other groups whose protest is more politically motivated. Not all, but some of them come from a middle-class background.

All these types of minors are found in the inner-city 'scenes', which are usually located around the main stations. In general, as mentioned before, these scenes are also places where you can get all types of drugs, where prostitution is flourishing and where you can observe different types of delinquent behavior.

The quantitative dimension

When the first articles about 'street kids' were published in the early 1990s, journalists estimated that about 40,000 - 50,000 children and adolescents would be living in the street in Germany (e.g. Der SPIEGEL 1993). We believe that these figures are a gross overestimation of the problem, maybe due to the need of the mass media to sell their products. Although these figures were highly arbitrary, they have nevertheless overshadowed the debate about 'street kids' from the beginning. Later on these figures were corrected by the Ministry of Family, Women, Seniors and Youth down to 5,000 - 7,000 persons in Germany altogether.

Nonetheless, we think it is almost impossible to state the quantitative extent of the problem. Due to the heterogenous nature of the phenomenon, it is in fact next to impossible to define precisely who is a 'street kid' and who is not. The methodological questions relate to the question: who has to be registered? Should it be all children loitering around train stations, even if they still live with their families; just the drug addicts; how should young male or female prostitutes living with their 'friends' be considered? Furthermore, according to the definition of the law, homeless children do not exist in Germany, since they are all supposed to be registered either in their family contexts or in child care systems.

Official police statistics concerning missing children cannot be relied on for exact data either, because more than 90 percent of all reported missing children return back within a couple of days. Moreover, we do not know whether all parents report their children missing at all. In summary, there is a high degree of uncertainty regarding the quantitative dimension of the problem.

There is one aspect, however, that is emphasised in all recent studies and is also pointed out by the experts interviewed in the course of the project. In general, it is adolescents, not children (that is, minors under 14 years old) who stay around train stations. Therefore, the debate about 'street kids' is misleading in so far as the overwhelming majority of young persons living on the street are adolescents and young adults.

At the main station in Hamburg, counts done by social workers and employees of a private security service speak of roughly 300 'conspicuous' people around this place every day. Three quarters of these people are male. Considering the high fluctuation and the fact that a lot of these people do not visit the central station every day, but stay at other places, the actual number of people staying periodically at the main station might be considerably higher. As these figures do not distinguish between minors and adults, it appears to be difficult to quantify the percentage of 'street kids'. Estimations range between 50 and 200 youngsters who frequently visit the main station. Obviously, the assertion of thousands of children loitering in the streets around main stations turns out to be a myth created by the mass media. Yet there are still adolescents and young adults who require intervention by the youth welfare system.

The phenomenon in a historical perspective

A search of the German literature in social work related to the phenomenon 'street kids' leads to the conclusion that the phenomenon of non-adapted adolescents is an old one. The first books about what are nowadays called 'street kids' date from the time before the First World War (e.g. Polligkeit 1910, Müller 1914). Since then books have been published at irregular intervals recommending solutions to what is considered a social problem. Therefore, looking at the phenomenon of 'street kids' from a more distant point of view, it may be concluded that this phenomenon is real, but not at all a new one.

The long lasting presence of the topic in the literature may prove that the question of how to integrate adolescents who dissent from middle-class oriented expectations of normality in various ways turns out to be an important question in social work. It also shows that during this century, there have always been adolescents who resisted the attempts of 'normalization' in one way or another, either because they were not willing to lead a 'normal' life or because the kind of help that had been offered to them did not suit their needs.

Because of that one should be cautious about considering 'street kids' simply as an outcome of social disintegration - in particular of family disintegration - or as a byproduct of individualisation. We not only think that this view is wrong in a historical perspective, we also think it simplifies the phenomenon in a misleading manner by implying that this group of young people is simply a victim of the modernisation process. Although we agree that some stabilising elements in the social environment of the family (neighbourhood, school, church, for example.) may have lost their significance and may no longer be able to compensate severe physical and psychological damage during childhood, we think the 'victim approach' ignores the relevance of individual decision-making. Some of the 'street kids' live on the street because they want to live there and because they do not accept the kind of help that has been offered to them.

It is not very important whether this is a conscious or unconscious decision as long as they accept this way of living for themselves. Although this way of living is rather different from our ideas of a 'good life', it may be regarded as an attempt to live one's own life, using one's own individual resources. In this respect, the situation is not unlike what some people did during the late 1960s and early 1970s, but then we had fewer problems in general to accept.

Why are 'street kids' a problem for social work?

We think the existence of 'street kids' is a problem for social work in so far as it shows what we call the 'integration dilemma' of social work. What is meant by that? It is reasonable to claim that young people should not be homeless, should not prostitute themselves, should not beg for money, should not commit other delinquencies. However - and this is the dilemma - if we try to achieve the aim of 'normalization' without respecting the needs and wishes of the 'street kids' the result will be socially ineffective.

Whether we like it or not, goal-orientated socialisation or resocialisation is always a 'bilateral act': on one side there are people or institutions who want to socialise and on the other side there are people who have to accept being socialised. If the ones who should be socialised in a specific way refuse to be socialised, there is a high risk that the outcome of this kind of social work will be exactly the opposite of what was initially intended. Here social work is often 'walking on a thin line' between the attempt to integrate and the effect of disintegration. If social work tries to enforce integration, as it did until recently with 'closed placements' in foster homes, there is an enormous risk of producing unwanted results. To get straight to the point: the more social work tries to eliminate subculture scenes of 'street kids' the more the 'street kids' will abstain from social work.

For this reason we argue for a strict distinction between the claim of normative integration and the need for basic care. Even if some scenes may look strange to pedestrian zone - the enforcement of social integration in this case would mean to

ignore the young people's motives for choosing this way of life. This is also true for the group of 'street-kids' around main stations, where most of them take drugs. Here, sooner or later, social work is about to reach a limit where the idea of social integration will not work any more. Beyond this limit social work is required to accompany the adolescents, provide basic care and by these means it can only try to 'keep the gate open' for a life without drugs, without prostitution and delinquent behavior. Social work has to be present, but it may not be forced upon 'street kids'.

The situation in Hamburg

As mentioned earlier, the last part of this article will focus on how youth welfare organisations in the city of Hamburg developed an approach of professional support for children and adolescents in the streets. Hamburg with 1.7 million inhabitants is the second largest city in Germany and one of the three 'citystates' in the country. Most of the big German journals and newspapers are published here and several TV and radio stations are located in the city, which may be one of the reasons why interest in the politics of the Ministry of Youth of Hamburg and also in basic social work is extremely high. Therefore it often happens that local problems of youth welfare are discussed throughout the whole country.

Traditionally in Hamburg the politics in the field of social work with adolescents are reform-oriented and liberal. Several reforms in this field were realized early in Hamburg, like the reform of the foster homes beginning in the 1970s known under the slogan 'people instead of walls'. During the last five years the subcultural scenes around the main station in the centre of the city have become a focus of public and scientific interest, not only in Hamburg but also all over the country. While the media tried to scandalise the politics of the Ministry of Youth intensifying the discussion about the reorganisation of the 'closed placement' professionals in the field of youth care tried to look for new approaches under the philosophy of 'life world orientation' (*Lebensweltorientierung*), which tries to focus on the actual living conditions of the child or adolescent. This means that social work should be organized in the environment of the adolescents and should first of all try to contact and stabilise the adolescents in their 'life world', accepting their rules and habits.

Like a lot of cities in western Germany and in several other European countries the main station is the gathering place for adolescents who are 'in trouble'. Using the typology which was introduced at the beginning of the article, the main station is the place where first of all the 'marginalized' and 'conspicuous' come together, while the 'endangered' gather in their neighbourhoods in different districts of the city. The 'refusers' (like the 'endangered') meet in the streets of specific parts of the city as a part of the subculture of the quarter, often not interested in changing their living situation and perceiving themselves as people with an alternative lifestyle apart from the society.

Usually, the 'marginalized' and 'conspicuous' who meet at the central station are using and dealing with drugs like heroin and ecstasy. A lot of them are engaged in prostitution with young men prostituting themselves directly at the station and the women in the nearby streets. They also are involved in delinquent activities, selling stolen goods at the station in order to buy drugs. An estimated 30% of the kids are in group care or other settings like so called flexible care, but no longer accept the placements in which they are living, and therefore do not frequent them any more. They prefer to stay in the streets, sleep in cheap hotels or with friends or stay with a trick overnight. Although they are placed in a shelter officially, they perceive themselves as 'homeless'. Most of them no longer go to school or are in a vocational training program.

A rising number of kids are refugees from Eastern European, North African and Asian countries, who came on their own to Germany. One group of them is involved in drug business, sent to Germany by their networks to sell the 'stuff', being too young to be arrested when found with drugs by the police. The main station is also the traditional place where pederasts meet and try to contact the very young boys who hang around there.

The 'Hamburg-approach'

In the beginning of the 1990s a group of kids who specialized in stealing cars with the added attraction of a police chase were the focus of public interest. As a result of the media pressure and of the social workers who were responsible for the kids, the Ministry of Youth asked several organizations to develop a 'life world oriented' support structure for the children and adolescents from the main station. The organisations developed three different types of supporting institutions: the drop-in centre for street kids directly at the main station (*BASISProjekt/KIDS*) and two different forms of shelters, one (*Rauhes Haus/StattHaus*) with a minimal amount of care, the other (*Landesbetrieb Erziehungs und Berufsbildundseinrichtungen - LEB, Wohnstützpunkt*) with an integrative approach, where so called guests of the house are offered care if they wish. Both shelters are located in the suburbs from the main station.

The heart of this programme is the drop-in centre, which offers an outreach programme (street work) as well as social contact and care for adolescents under 18 years of age. The social workers of the drop-in centre offer their help in the streets, but they do not intervene. The adolescents can visit the centre anonymously if they wish. They can talk with a social worker or just stay in the rooms, play games, take a shower, relax and eat. The centre is open every day in the afternoon and evening hours. There are hardly any rules except the prohibition of theft, consuming or dealing drugs in the drop in centre and using violence.

The idea of the centre is to provide adolescents with a place where they can stabilise their physical and psychological conditions and where they can build up

contacts with the youth care system again. If they want, the social workers look for placements if they are still with their parents, or if they no longer accept the group homes where they are staying. The placements can be structured on a long term basis in flexible care or group homes or on a short term basis in the above mentioned shelters. Since a high percentage of the kids are addicted to drugs, they are also looking for withdrawal treatment facilities and further therapeutic institutions.

Therefore the conceptual and pedagogical principles of the centre can be summarised the following way: *voluntariness*, the adolescents decide for themselves the time and intensity of contact; *acceptance*, their way of living (drug consumption, prostitution etc.) is accepted by social workers in the centre and 'good behaviour' is no precondition for getting into the centre; *commitment*, frequent visitors to the centre can choose one 'reference person' who is responsible for them; *confidentiality*, all personal data on and information about visitors are treated confidentially and will be passed on only with the permission of visitors.

From the moment it opened in 1993 the drop-in centre has been heavily used, with about 340 clients a year. The main age group was in the range of 16 to 18 years. The option for overnight facilities has not been sufficiently developed until now, a situation caused on one hand by the general cuts in financial support in the city and on the other hand by the conceptual and administrative disagreements between the organisations who run the shelters and the Ministry of Youth in Hamburg.

All in all, the introduction of such a support programme for kids from the main station has proved to be successful. The main aim, the (re)construction of the lost or not existing contacts with the kids from the main station, has been reached, although several problems in social work with adolescents and children 'on the streets' have not been solved yet.

Open questions and unsolved problems

The programme mentioned in the beginning of the paper financed by the National Ministry of Family, Women, Seniors and Youth, will focus on the following problems and try to develop answers to the questions which arise out of these problems:

1. There is still the 'integration dilemma', which was described in the first part of the paper. Social workers have to deal with the fact that they see how the kids live an unhealthy life, even become drug addicts, HIV positive or get in trouble with the police and the justice system, while they show up in the centre every day. The prospects for a life as a 'normal citizen' are poor for these kids, since their educational and vocational skills are low and the chances to find a job are therefore miserable. Social workers who see these developments cannot intervene except by offering their support again and again, or just by 'being there'.

Looking at the professional skills that social workers learn during their university training, it becomes obvious that most of them are trained to establish a relationship focused on care and the initiation of personal development instead of accompaniment and just 'being there'. These conditions make the job of a social worker for a lot of them unsatisfying and frustrating. This may be the reason that in the field of street work and drop in centres, professionals invest a high amount of their time in creating caring relationships, although it is not their basic task. These relationships enforce the impression of helplessness and frustration on the part of the social worker since they are emotionally more engaged.

2. There are still adolescents, maybe even children, in the streets who cannot be reached, because they do not fit into the programme or do not want the contact with street workers and the youth welfare system. The hope of reaching everybody in the target group when starting a programme cannot be fulfilled. There will always be kids in the street without support as long as the support system is created in this 'offer oriented' way. The professionals think about concepts in which the clients have to fit and some of them never fit, since their profile of problems is not the right one for the programme. A model of a differently designed support system, focusing on the individual needs of clients and not on the realisation of offers for them, is being developed in other contexts (see Klatetzki 1995), but has not been established until now in Hamburg.
3. The youth welfare system has always assumed that the goal of street work at the main station is to pull the kids out of the social environment in which they find themselves, and bring them to a 'safe place' away from these scenes. But it often happens that kids do not accept the options developed by the welfare system and go back to the streets. There exists little knowledge about the importance of the specific social environment the adolescent has chosen regarding the impact on their psychosocial development. The youth welfare system will not be successful with these kids until it gains sufficient knowledge about the importance of their social environment and can develop acceptable alternatives for them.

The youth welfare system must learn to accept the idea that it is possible for an adolescent to use the support of this system and stay in the street, using the offers which are made there by professionals and by the members of the scene, and go home to the group home as long as he/she needs both environments. Up to now this behaviour of switching between two systems has not been understood or even recognized as a step towards self development and part of a selfdiscovery process. The longer professionals work in the scene, the more they understand that youth welfare is not an alternative in itself but must be modified so that it fits the client.

4. While the welfare system for the kids from the main station in Hamburg has been extended, the support system for the 'endangered' in the earlier mentioned neighbourhoods has not changed since the beginning of the 1980s. At this time several outreach programmes were established in different parts of the city. These centres still exist, taking care of their clients, but they also complain about kids in the streets they know about, but cannot reach.

Lately, a discussion about the existence of children between 10 and 14 years in the neighbourhood districts, who could be in danger of becoming 'street kids', has come up. For schools in Germany finish often around noon and the offers of the youth welfare system are mostly orientated towards adolescents. These children in this age group are often left alone, since their parents cannot take care of them. When these children grow up in so called poor districts with a high percentage of unemployment, dependency on social welfare, familiar problems, drug abuse and bad housing, they are at high risk of becoming part of the above mentioned groups. They are in danger of losing the stabilising ties of the neighbourhood, starting to consume drugs and getting involved in delinquency, and drifting into the scenes around the main station. Therefore it seems important to develop ideas about how to keep contact with these kids in the districts and to avoid the process of dropping out. Child care institutions, schools and youth welfare institutions must react and look together for approaches which prevent the process of dropping out of the support structures.

To develop the appropriate answers, it is necessary as a first step to get precise knowledge about the children and their needs and living conditions in the districts. The second step is to develop models to strengthen and improve the existing support structures in the institutions that are in contact with the children. Engagement in the neighbourhoods of the city can therefore also mean avoiding the development of 'street kid careers' at the main station. Both social environments, the neighbourhood and the main station must be focused on if the idea of avoiding 'street - careers' is to work successfully.

As all these different aspects show, 'street kids' appear in the public not only in Latin America or Eastern Europe, but also in Western European countries like Germany. However, while in Latin America social work has to find ways to support the kids in their struggle for food and survival, in Germany the youth welfare system tries to find ways to reintegrate children and adolescents in a society in which they do not fit any more. Although German 'street kids' are not threatened by starvation, they are a signal for a development in German society, letting more and more people fall through the social net. Therefore 'street kids' in Germany are not only a problem of youth welfare, but also the result of a general failure of the welfare system and the labour market.

The example of Hamburg shows that the youth welfare system seeks answers to the problem. However, these answers cannot conceal that perspectives for young people are hard to develop - especially for those who are at the 'edge of the system'. In which society should 'street kids' be integrated while 4.5 million people are unemployed? The youth welfare system can administrate the problem and try to handle it as well as possible, but it is overburdened by solving the problem. Here politics is required to change the conditions of growing up in society.

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RELATING WITH MARGINAL YOUTH IN HONG KONG

A Process Reflection

DEBBIE LAM

Introduction

'Children are the future of our motherland. Every effort should be exerted to promote their welfare and enhance their opportunities for a useful and happy life.' While these comments are made by Balanon (1989, p.159) in discussing the welfare of street children in the Philippines, they apply equally well to all societies. Each generation rests its hope and investment in the next generation. The form of expression may vary, but the concern is common. However, despite their concern for the younger generation, adults sometimes find the latter beyond reach. Parents and teachers find that their children are not willing to share their world and the youngsters feel that there is a generation gap. What they see and experience are just so different from those of the adults. They strive for their independence and sometimes find adult advice intrusive. They have their need for support and guidance, yet they find it hard to articulate in the midst of their exploration.

It is a challenge for service providers to work with adolescents. In his experiences in working with adolescent groups, Bilides (1992) finds that it is hard even to attract clinicians, let alone children, to group programmes. Many social workers are uncomfortable with groups of teenagers. Adolescents are not the easiest population to work with. They are rebellious, they are fluid and they are ready to move forward or stay as they like. As Bilides (1992) remarked, 'Few of them come up to you and say, "Thanks, that was a really great group, I got a lot out of it."' (p.143) Malekoff and Kolodny (1991) also commented that groupwork with children and adolescents can be a lonely experience.

Adolescence is a stage characterized by attachment to peers and rebelliousness towards authority. Research has shown that seeking help from adults is not a popular mode of problem solving behaviour.¹ Adolescents' preference is to handle problems by themselves or by consulting their peers. This is generally the case with young people. Peer attachment would be even stronger for deviant groups. They stay further away from adults whose style of life seems different. As Fox (1985) describes, the alienation, distrust and defensiveness common among gang members make the establishment of rapport more difficult than in more traditional helping relationships in the profession. Not all people are comfortable in working with adolescents, especially the marginal ones. But some are.

Hong Kong, like the United States and other countries, has workers who work specially with 'street kids'. Their work is called outreaching social work for young people, and was formally introduced in 1979. The main targets are children who

do not seem to have close ties with established social systems and who spend a lot of time on the streets. They may be students or school dropouts. They may be in gangs or be isolates, but mostly they are not armed like the street gangs of America. Hard core gang members are not the target of the service. Rather, the marginal groups - the so-called 'at risk' youngsters - are. Outreaching workers would initiate contact with them and identify those who might be in need of a service.

But how can outreaching workers break through the expected defensiveness of these youngsters and build up their trust so that they can really help them? Systematic research in the area is not available. Most of the writings on work with street gangs in the U.S. are from the sixties.² Writing in the area in recent years is sparse. In the area of relationships, the significance of worker-client relationship in influencing outcome is well recognized in the helping professions. Yet research on the interaction process to explore how relationships could be developed or impeded is limited (Coady, 1993). As Coady (1993) suggested, we actually need to know how relationship effect could be enhanced, operationalized in specific context, with different client types.

In 1994, an evaluative study on the outreaching social work service was commissioned by the Hong Kong Government (Vagg, Bacon-Shone, Gray, and Lam, 1995). This was a qualitative study to explore the experience of the service recipients. Such a process evaluation based on the clients' feedback aimed to shed light on the significant relationship-building factors. Not only would the findings be useful for social workers, but they would show how adults could build up rapport with the younger generation in general. In this paper, the author wishes to share the findings and highlight some of the implications for adults interested in getting closer to the youth. But before that, it might be of help for readers to know more about the background of the service.

Marginal Youth in the Hong Kong Context

Hong Kong is a metropolitan city with a population of over six million in a land of 1,078 square kilometres. The built up area is only 20% of that. It is a very densely populated city with a very crowded home environment. There is little open space for young people to play and use their energy in the home vicinity. The first major concern about youth from the government was shown after the 1966 and 1967 riots in which a lot of young people were involved. It led to the provision of summer programmes and support of youth developmental activities. The second major response was a reaction to the rise of juvenile delinquency in the 70s. The Fight Crime Committee was formed by the Government in 1973 to launch 'fight crime' campaigns. This committee commissioned research on the social causes of violent crimes among young offenders (Ng, 1975). The report suggested that preconditions of delinquency were unfavourable family conditions, and the immediate factors were gang involvement and dropping out of school. The findings of the research also indicated that few young people liked to use existing youth services such as

youth centres and organized youth activities. So the traditional service approach was found to be inadequate. A number of preventive measures to reduce crime were proposed. They were generally adopted by the Government and in 1977, the Programme Plan on Personal Social Work for Young People was completed. But service implementation did not start until 1979 (Ng and Man, 1985).

The Programme Plan introduced three new services: family life education, school social work and outreaching social work. They were meant to serve 'young people whose individual needs and problems cannot, for one reason or another, be fully met by the basic services' (Hong Kong Government, 1977, p.2). It was hoped that, given early direct personal guidance and help, these young people would have a better chance of developing into well adjusted, responsible members of society.

To achieve this objective, family life education is meant to help improve the quality of family life in general, the family being considered a key social unit for the upbringing of an individual. As stated in the programme plan, 'The service is both preventive and educational in nature and aims to improve the quality of family life, promote interpersonal relationships and social consciousness and to prevent family problems which may lead to wider social problems' (Hong Kong Government, 1982, p 87). While the target groups of family life education cover all members of the family, priorities are put on serving the young people and married couples, with or without children. It intends to offer programmes to help the young people to understand themselves and other members of their families, to see their own roles and responsibilities in the family and society and to prepare themselves for the adult world. In the last decade, actually a lot of programmes for parents to improve their parenting skills have been organized. A wide range of devices are used, including: television programmes, promotional pamphlets, talks, exhibitions, camps, competitions, and small groups. The family life education worker would cooperate with different organizations and service units to reach a wide population.

Besides family, the school is another system that is very important for the development of a child. School social work is the service to help pupils with their different development problems so that they can make fuller use of their education opportunities. School social workers are put in secondary schools at the ratio of 1 to 2,000 students. Through contact with school personnel and students, social workers attempt to identify students with learning or social and emotional problems. Both individual counselling and developmental groups are offered.

While both family life education and school social work services target a larger population, outreaching social work targets specifically youth at risk. The term 'at risk' is actually used rather loosely, implying at risk of getting into trouble, or becoming criminals. The risk factors can be traced back to Ng's (1975) research on the social causes of crime. The three variables identified to be associated with

crime were: poor family relationships, dropping out of school, and gang association. While family life education and school social work could help with the first two factors, the last one would be better dealt with through outreaching social work. In the report on the evaluation of outreaching social work, Ng and Man (1985) defined youth at risk as youths, male or female, whose ages ranged between 6-24 and who had problems such as follows: associating with undesirable peers/companions; 'hanging out' in the streets; creating public nuisance/vandalism; defying authority figures (police, teachers and others); habitual gambling, assaulting others; shoplifting, stealing; robbing; carrying concealed weapons; blackmailing; bullying; sexual activities in public and having poor family relationship etc. (1985, p 33) These clients, different from those served by the family life education programme or school social work, are largely unmotivated. These youth do not go to the ordinary children and youth centres. They are usually poor in academic achievement and do not identify with their schools. Truancy is common. Outreaching workers have to go out of their offices to look for such youths at risk, assess their needs and meet the needs as far as practicable to integrate them into normal social group activities. The overall objective is to reduce or prevent anti-social or delinquent behaviour in young people.

Fourteen districts were selected as priority areas in 1979. Some characteristics of the high priority areas include: a) high population density; b) low family income; c) large domestic household size; d) overcrowded living quarters; e) large youth population; and f) high youth crime rate (Hong Kong Government, 1982). By now there are already 32 teams covering different parts of the city. Each outreaching social work team is composed of ten trained social workers and has its own centre.

The government has always been keen to examine the effectiveness of the service. The first evaluative research was completed in 1985. It was a summative evaluation using multiple time series design with a non-equivalent control group. The experimental group consisted of youths served by the 18 outreaching social work teams and the control group was made up of youths of similar characteristics (for example, aged 6 to 24, loitering in the street, anti-social behaviours) but without the benefit of the outreaching social work service. They were recruited by the investigators' 'informants', mostly in areas not yet served by outreaching social work teams. The improvement of the problems of the experimental group was measured every six months and compared against the problem situations of the control group. It was found that outreaching service had some effects in reducing youths' behavioural problems such as 'gambling', 'anti-social behaviour', 'association with undesirable peers' and 'poor family relationship'. Outreaching social workers were able to help clients develop their social skills, choose their career and constructively use their leisure time. Insufficient evidence, though, was found on the effectiveness of the service in handling drug, sex and truancy problems. The overall results of outreaching social work, in comparison with the non-treatment for youths in the control group, was significantly effective as suggested by the

regression analysis (Ng and Man, 1985, p.219). The limitation of the research is that it had a high loss of clients, and the study did not collect data directly from the outreaching clients. We could not tell what helped most in their eyes and what really motivated them to change.

At the time when the research for this paper was done, there were already 24 teams. The expansion of the service was partly due to the redistribution of population, with new housing estates being constructed, and partly due to the positive evaluation of the service.

There has been much consolidation of practice strategies throughout the years, but also high staff turnover. Project reports and working manuals have been produced by individual agencies. But the delinquency problem could not be removed. The social environment is just getting more complicated and street kids continue to appear. It has been 10 years since the last evaluative study was launched, so the Government called for a second evaluation to be done on the service. With the cooperation of the non-government agencies running the service, it was finally completed. This time, it was a process evaluation. We are now provided with more information on how clients really perceive and respond to the service.

Methodology

Method of Data Collection

This study on outreaching social work is a qualitative study. Data were mainly collected through unstructured interviews. There are basically two main reasons for the choice of method. The first one is related to the inherent properties of the structured or unstructured method. The second is related to the intended area of knowledge-building.

Using the method of unstructured interview, we allow optimum freedom for clients to articulate their service experience, in ways and words that make good sense to them. It is only through such means that we could really get to know the inner feelings of these youths. As Creswell (1994) suggests, it is a good method for exploratory work. While it is limited by the fact that not all people are equally articulate and perceptive, it is the most direct way to get the clients' perceptions of outreaching social work.

As to its intended contribution, the study is basically an evaluation study of outreaching social work. A quantitative study has already been done and it has confirmed the positive effect of the service (Ng and Man, 1985). However, for improvement of practice, it is highly significant that we should know what exactly is being done in the process and what are the core elements to be strengthened to improve the service effectiveness. While statistical compilation of measurable change being induced in the clients would show the accountability of the service, a study of the service process is more important in revealing what works and does

not work in our effort to relate with the youngsters. Clients' reports help towards a better understanding of feelings of those on the receiving end.

Basically a history-taking approach was used to facilitate clients to report their experience with the worker. While the initial explanation of the study and some guiding questions were standardized, respondents were allowed a lot of freedom in their responses. Interviewers would follow up on related areas during the course of the interview. Such a method of data collection demands high skill of interviewers. They have to be comfortable in talking with these clients who might appear rough in outlook and manners, and who might like to use some of their special language. So the study employed interviewers who were social work graduates with some outreaching work experience, and special training on doing unstructured interviews was provided. While they were familiar with the ways the clients would behave, they had a more neutral position than the directly serving worker. We also promised that individual data would be kept confidential and not disclosed to the worker involved. This helped the clients to share more openly. Some clients even told the interviewers he/she had disclosed to him/her something that even their workers did not know.

The whole interview was tape recorded and transcribed by the interviewers, and checked by the researcher. This ensured that the transcription was properly done. The data was coded and the computer programme of stenograph was used to facilitate analysis.

Sampling Process

As the study aimed at revealing the process element and not the success rate of the work, large representative sampling was not necessary. But it was intended to draw a representative sample of the overall client profile. The statistics of the client pool were examined and three criteria were considered most significant for the selection of the sample. They were: client age, presenting problem, and sex. The clients were divided into three groups, namely: aged 14 or under, 15 to 17, 18 or over. The reason was that there is compulsory education for all up to the age of 15. These children should all be in schools. Eighteen is the age of enfranchisement and the general norm is that young people at this age would start working if they are no longer studying. The sex criterion is obvious as male responses may be very different from female responses. The criterion of the presenting problem would help to obtain respondents with different assumed needs. There are six categories of the presenting problem, according to the categorization of the standard face sheet used in the service; namely, peer problem, school problem, vocation problem, family problem, self functioning problem and social norm problem. So taking these three variables together, there should be 36 groupings in combination. Excluding those with less than 1% population, 24 groupings remained. It happened to fit well with the number of teams with more than one year's service experience at the time of research. So 24 clients served as the sample. The sample

profile was close to the profile of the actual population. At the same time, their workers would also be interviewed separately by a different interviewer for cross-checking of data. Because of the small size of the sample, it would not help to generalize particular response patterns according to age or problem type. But it would ensure a wider range of data.

Sampling was basically purposeful. Each team was randomly assigned to provide a case with prescribed characteristics of age, sex and problem types. Swapping was done with four teams as two teams declared that they could not provide the prescribed cases. Cases with a duration of service closest to the average period of that client group were selected so that cases most typical of the service were included. The first case on the client list that fitted the criteria would be approached for the interview. The next one would be used if the client turned down the invitation. Participation was voluntary. The purpose of the study was explained through the help of clients' own social workers.

Findings

Respondents were asked to recall their experience with the outreaching social worker right from the beginning. Their reactions towards the worker at each stage would be explored accordingly, so the dynamics of the relationship-building process between the youthful client and the adult social worker could be portrayed in the account obtained. The whole process could be divided into three stages: the contact stage, relationship-building stage, and the helping stage.

Contact Stage

To start off the contact, outreaching workers reached out to the respondents. Their first meeting places were often spots where the respondents usually gathered. They included fast food shops, video game centres, soccer pitches, parks, open resting places in the housing estates or outside school, shopping arcades etc. The worker might directly introduce himself/herself to the respondent and start the social conversation. Invitations to join programmes or to respond to a survey on youth opinions were excuses commonly used to initiate contact. Respondents might also get to know the workers through introduction by their friends.

To the respondents, these were all acceptable ways as they were simply informal contacts that they could accept or refuse as they wished. Those who had heard about the service before might also approach the worker themselves for the service they were interested in. These requests would be mainly for programme activities. To initiate contact without a middle person, some skills would be involved. One respondent reported the feeling of being 'questioned like a suspect' and felt very uneasy. Another recalled that she felt 'shocked and also suspicious' when approached by the worker. Some cautious clients said that they would make the choice 'to observe and listen to what he said first'. Other less cautious ones considered the filling in of a questionnaire fairly 'interesting', and conversation then

started naturally. Overall, more natural and casual contacts showing workers' acceptance of and interest in the youth helped to start off the contact. Patience is required and the freedom of the client must not be threatened.

Relationship-Building Stage

After the initial contact, respondents reported frequent contact with the worker. Outreaching workers would go out to the field and chat with the clients casually. They could meet as often as a few times per week, or even every day. Two characteristics of the process would be identified. Firstly, programme activities and chatting predominated. This was in line with the youths' interests. Activities included visits to Ocean Park, camps, barbecues, picnics, tennis games, roller skating, swimming...etc. Clients might initiate requests for such activities. Young boys in particular, favoured activities. Whatever the medium of contact, chatting was most commonly reported. This reflects the building up of a social relationship and the respondent's feeling of comfort in communicating with the worker. Secondly, workers retained the initiating role and also showed responsiveness to client needs. Respondents could recall workers' help with bringing them for medical consultation when they had an accident, or offers of tuition classes upon their expression of study problem. Exchange was on the whole more spontaneous and mildly personal.

Respondents could generally appreciate the worker's effort and good will. Some of their remarks are: 'the worker just wants to show concern', and 'we like it', 'the programmes were interesting'. Some appreciated 'cheap' or free programmes. As a respondent said, 'It was free and I could kill my time'. So it helped to draw the clients closer to the worker. However, young people still absented themselves occasionally. That was probably due to their habit of unplanned activities and workers had to learn not to get upset by it.

While they accepted the worker and the service, they might not accept the idea of receiving help. As a respondent said, 'What's the meaning of help? He may be showing concern rather than help.' Some would appreciate having 'someone to talk to' and would 'feel relieved'. More responsive ones would 'hasten forward to her and chat with her (the worker)'. A respondent commented that 'it is quite enjoyable to play with her (the worker)'. Another said, 'I feel that he was full of "reasoning" (dou li) that made you listen to him.' All these give a tone of assuming a rather informal, friendly relationship with the worker, one that does not entail serious discussion or reflection on one's life situation.

Helping Stage

As the relationship developed, respondents reported more communication with the workers which was more personal. Respondents explicitly reported 'advice' or 'teaching' being given in different aspects of their lives, such as rejection by their schools, dating and courtship, peer relationships, gang connection, court hearings,

drinking, fighting, staying out and going home, health problems, etc. Respondents also reported workers helping them to 'analyze' their problems. They got support and concern, as well as disapproval from the worker. There was also help to mediate between the respondents and their significant others, information provision and resource mobilization, as well as activities for them to kill time.

At this stage, respondents had less resistance to the workers' help. Of course the help had to be relevant. The respondents had their own judgement. The usefulness of the advice affected the client's responsiveness. If the advice offered by the worker did not seem to work, they would not follow it again. Some of the remarks are:

I felt relieved and my burden shared by others.

What she said was quite true.

He could give me a lot of support and advice and I felt much better after talking to him.

Those (worker's suggestions) were fallacy, only theory, no practical steps. I tried but failed.

Some respondents refused to take the workers' advice for other reasons. These included their immaturity and their ignorance of the significance of the issue, or they were just not ready to handle a particular problem or to get help. Here are their remarks:

Because we were so young at that time, we didn't really listen to her (the worker's) advice and opinion.

But I didn't consider his words since I didn't want to face this problem again. I feel my father's concern for me, but he is very troublesome.

I agreed to what she said but took no action, because I could escape into a fantasy world whenever I took drugs.

Others might want to assert their independence and resisted any meddling in their affairs.

Relying on worker's help is too dependent. You earn for your own use. So I think you should find your own job.

I am old enough to think, it is needless for her to talk about that.

Still others might regard the social worker as an outsider, or part of the adult world that they were fighting against.

Frankly speaking, I was disgusted with that as I could not accept the fact that an outsider cared more about me than my own family.

What she said was the same as everybody else. I won't tell next time when I fight with others again.

However, most respondents accepted the worker very positively. Their impressions of the worker illustrate the variables they could appreciate. Personal qualities of the worker such as friendliness, trustworthiness, concern and understanding are certainly important. They gained remarks like:

She's like a friend, not so fierce, and helped me to think out solutions. (friendly)

She is frank and really treats you like a friend. (friendly)

One more person is willing to listen to me. (caring)

Like a mother. Care for us, always talk with us. (caring)

The outreaching worker can understand me. (understanding)

She usually would not disclose what I have told her... If something has happened, she is ready to help and is anxious about it. (trustworthy and concerned)

She is a good listener... She gives you a feeling that she is so true that she would never cheat you. (trustworthy)

But the outreaching social worker cannot just be a peer. To be of help, he/she must also be able to offer an adult perspective, and bring professional knowledge to bear on the problem situation.

He is more mature than my friends and he would try to let me understand my family members' behaviours. (mature)

My friends said that what she said was very logical and comforting. (logical and comforting)

She is my elder sister. She can help me to analyze the situation. She is older than me and knows more things. (knowledgeable)

Further, these marginal youths, who have faced much censure from the adult world, need uncritical acceptance and respect from the worker.

We usually would explain to her why we kept those group members away. More than not, Miss accepted our reasons. (accepting)

I didn't feel any barriers between us (worker and respondent) and I felt he understood me. He didn't criticise me too much. (accepting)

Worker is very happy, likes to help people, not too strict and won't treat you bad... She won't mind what crimes I committed in the past and what my family background is. (accepting)

Such descriptions are fairly consistent with the answers respondents gave when asked what they appreciated most in the worker. Only those clients who did not have a long relationship with the worker at the time of the interview expressed some uncertainty as to what they appreciated most. Of all the responses, the worker's genuine concern for the clients' welfare was the characteristic most appreciated.

What Touches Their Hearts - Guides in Reaching the Youth

Relationship has been a well recognized element in service delivery. The three facilitative conditions of empathy, unconditional positive regard and genuineness proposed by Carl Rogers (1957) may be considered as necessary but not sufficient for the achievement of therapeutic change. But the quality of the relationship has undeniable significance for the therapeutic outcome. Even behaviourists who are keen on technical aspects of treatment recognize the place of a positive relationship in the treatment outcome (Bennun, Hahlweg, Schindler and Langlotz, 1986). However, research in relationship-building is limited.

From this study, we are able to identify more clearly what really helps in building up relationships with adolescents and youths, in particular, marginal youths. While these relationship features could not be the sole variable influencing the changes in the youths' behaviour, they help to open up communication. Mastering the variables helps to create a more supportive environment conducive to professional helping and reduces the possibility of frustration of concerned adults in reaching out to the youngsters. Some of the guides identified are:

1. Reach out to where they are

As discussed at the beginning of the paper, adolescents and youths are generally not ready to approach adults for help, as they are at the stage of struggling for independence. They may not be aware of the significance of some of their life issues and they may not be informed of the resources available to help. Approaching professionals for help may feel too formal and alienating. So reaching out to them is necessary. Friendly workers, approaching them in a non-intrusive manner, help to establish the connection. A potential safety net is provided.

2. Respect, equal footing and caring image throughout

Adolescents and youths are sensitive about the generation gap and about not being understood. They resist authority and have no wish to have more authority figures in their life. So the worker's image of care and concern is significant. Only when they feel they are respected and can talk with the worker on an equal footing will they accept the worker and lower their defence. It means that we need to reflect whether we really accept and respect these youths, of whose behaviours we may not always approve.

3. *Regular contact to facilitate relationship-building*

Even if the workers are ready to respect the youths and intend to build up an equal relationship with them, time and frequent contact are still required. The youths need time to be assured that the workers really accept them and to see whether the workers are trustworthy or understanding. Regular contacts allow more opportunities for observation. Programme activities are useful to facilitate interaction, as they fit with youth needs, and they are a common way for them to make friends. Casual chatting paves the way for deeper understanding. General concern for their well-being would also be conveyed to the youths through such contacts.

4. *Sensitivity and timeliness in offering help*

As reflected in the studies on youth help-seeking behaviour in Hong Kong, handling problems 'by themselves' was favoured by the largest group of adolescent respondents among the different modes of problem solving behaviours (Boys and Girls Clubs Association, 1992). Even when they wanted to get help, more young people would choose to consult their own age group than consult adults (Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, 1993). So, while frequent contact is made to establish a relationship with the youths, sensitivity is needed to note their problem. When young people with problems are approached in a natural and concerned manner, they might be more ready to open up. Workers can then offer help as appropriate. Help has to be timely. For the marginal youth, crises like being prosecuted, being kicked out by their schools, running away from home, and unplanned pregnancy are fairly common issues. Such problems cannot wait. When the worker is in frequent contact, he/she is in a better position to note the problem and offer help as needed.

5. *Flexible use of different methods*

The study has reflected that the problems of youth could be quite varied. They could be related to peers, boyfriend/girlfriend, family or school; and clients might be in need of study skills, school placement, job placement, relationship improvement, help with unwanted pregnancy, drugs or criminal offences. Solutions to problems may lie with intrapersonal work, interpersonal work or even working with the environment. They may involve information giving, advice giving, help with analysis, resource mobilization, mediation, or direct service provision. Adolescents and youths have varied needs in their course of development. While social workers in different work settings might show concern for the youths as 'prescribed' by their roles, they have to be alert to the fact that the youths' needs are wide and varied. At times, they might have to move out of the presumed role boundary to give appropriate and timely help, especially if an obvious gap in services exists. Help to delinquents is not just the job of probation officers. Working with family relationship is not restricted to family service workers only. Counsellors can move out of their clinical boundary and help with other tangible problems. Youth workers can also be involved in advocacy roles.

General Guides to Concerned Adults

Relationship building with adolescents is a big challenge to local parents, in particular. Hong Kong is a city subject to both Eastern and Western influences at the same time. Despite the fact that Hong Kong has been subject to British rule for 150 years, the parent generation has a lot of cultural values brought down through family socialization. The idea of filial piety is still dominant. Parents assume great responsibility for the future wellbeing of their children, so there is great concern about how the children are behaving and studying. This has been clearly reflected in my other current research on parents' concern for their children. The tendency is to expect children to listen to the parents, as the parents mean well; to study hard, as this helps with their future career choice; to relate with the right peers, so that they will not be subject to unfavourable peer influence. Their own childhood experience was subject to much stricter control from their own parents. Yet our society is changing. Adolescents are brought up at a time when the media flood them with ideas and values from the west revolving around the cult of the individual. There has been much more discussion on democracy, human rights and children's rights for the past few years. The young generation tend not to respect adult authority so much, and they do not have as strong a sense of responsibility as their parents, as they grow up in a much more affluent environment. Many would not expect to support their family when they start working, as the parents seem to be coping. This is very different from the mentality of their parents' generation. Working hard is replaced by an easy life. Over-exposure to all kinds of stimulation down the street or through the media has complicated their decision making process.

The difference between teachers and students is similar. Confucius' philosophy places great value on respect for the teacher. The authority of the teacher and compliance from students were clearly expected before. But students nowadays no longer respect teachers because of their teacher status. With the distraction from all the mass media and recreational activities, students do not concentrate on their study as much as their teachers did in their day. Teachers in schools where there are low achievers sometimes even encounter threats from the students when they try to assert their authority in keeping discipline. With such a cultural background combined with rapid change, the difference between the adults and children is probably more disturbing than in the West where change from traditional to modern values has been less marked and more gradual. Especially at the stage of adolescence when young people want to assert their independence, adults might find it difficult to establish a close relationship with them.

The relationship building guides described earlier are developed from clients' feedback on their experience with outreaching social workers. They provide insight on what may work in getting close to these young people. While basic relationship principles such as genuineness are relevant and further confirmed, extra

effort is needed to engage the youth because of their resistance to adult help at this stage of development. The guides are not just suitable for outreaching social workers, but probably for other concerned adults like teachers and parents. Teachers actually have plenty of opportunities to relate with students in a less formal way through projects or other interest activities. Probably, the constraint is their heavy work load, and their lack of readiness to put away their authority, to show interest in the students aside from their school performance and discipline.

Parents may find more difficulties as children will have preconceived notions of their parents. Parents are always parents. They do not even have the difference between class time and non-class time like the teachers. Older children anyway wish to have a break from the supervision of the parents. More space for autonomy is necessary as the children grow up. Just like the outreaching workers, parents have to be psychologically prepared for the their children's refusal for help, assertion for independence. However, parents' presence and availability are still highly significant so that they can notice the needs of the children and offer timely help when necessary. Extra effort to understand the children's views with an open mind is a challenge, as most parents are eager to instruct and give the best advice, without first hearing their children's views and perceptions. If parents could just be 'friends', on an equal footing with their children at times, the latter would be much more receptive to their advice, or even more accepting of limits set. While the adolescents and youths are struggling for their freedom and individuality, our challenge is to balance guidance and supervision with the freedom to venture, relating to them in a way acceptable to them without foregoing our need to assert limits and authority when necessary. This is not easy for many parents. Parenting skills training that merges Eastern and Western culture is needed.

Discussion

Research Through Clients' Report

Relationship building takes two parties. In service evaluation, the clients' report is the best reflection of what makes sense to them. Their feedback is valuable for our improvement of service. However, not many studies on relationship building have involved the clients. Most studies that involved clients only asked what helped in their experience of the service, not on detailed review of the process. In Hong Kong, actually, no study on service evaluation has been done with such systematic process investigation involving the clients. Some workers might think that clients could not be fully aware of the 'professional' intent of the workers' actions. Clients might not be able to articulate their experience clearly. Thus the findings of the research might not be favourable to reflect their work. When this research was initially proposed, some anxiety was aroused in the field. In reality, the results finally obtained are very encouraging. This study collected data from both the clients and the workers. The workers' part was for supplementation and validation of the clients' feedback. There was actually a strong and unexpected congruence

between the reports of the workers and clients. No professional jargon was expressed by the clients. But they could nevertheless reflect on how the worker approached them and what the worker had done with them like: 'chatting with us (them)', 'organizing activities', 'helping to analyze', 'advising', 'talking to Mother', 'staying with us (them) when the gang stopped us (them) from leaving', 'staying with me (him) because I had taken drug', 'going to court'... They did not use words like counselling, mediation, advocacy, confrontation, or even support. They actually explicitly denied being 'helped' by the workers. It reflected their attitude in 'help seeking'. It reminds us that direct asking about 'help received' might be a bad mode of getting data about services received. Such mistakes could be easily committed in structured questionnaires. But respondents were able to report the activities of the workers. They were not aware of all the different strategies applied by the workers. However, what they reported largely matched with the reports of the workers. And they told much more explicitly what they rejected and why they refused advice. It was a successful process evaluation through client report. Workers can feel more confident of such an evaluative approach in future.

An Integrative Approach

Many outreaching social workers feel that the service is demanding as they have to be active in engaging unmotivated clients. While they slowly get more used to the unstructured work approach, they sometimes feel uncertain about the informal nature of the service in comparison to the more neat professional application of practice models in the traditional counselling service settings. At the same time, there has been constant pressure to show the effectiveness of the service as juvenile crime is a problem of community concern. Their adjustment to the work approach is not without uncertainty. Consolidation of experience gives better assurance of the intervention method. This study is able to show the unique requirements of the service, not easily identifiable with a single theoretical model or practice method. It shows that concern and help are much needed by these young people. The Rogerian suggestion of relationship factors is extremely relevant. However, this relationship requires something more. It requires responsiveness to service needs. It may be strengthened through security provided by the worker's physical company in time of crisis like being questioned by the police, bullied by other gangs, or being interviewed by the school. It may be established through the worker's involvement expressed in reproach to the client's irresponsible behaviour. For deprived clients, sometimes it works as a very significant energizing force.

Besides the use of the worker-client relationship, workers also have to be case managers linking the clients to the resources of the community. A lot of mediation work is done with related systems including the family, school, legal aid departments, police or probation officers. An outreaching worker also has to be an educator and a recreation leader. The clients have expressed a strong need for recreation programmes. A lot of informal education could be done through healthy recreational

training like rock climbing, orienteering, volunteer service, anti-drug camps... The worker cannot limit his/her work to Rogerian counselling. The worker cannot be just a case manager handling service arrangements. The worker cannot be just an educator providing information, or a recreation leader offering programme activities. The worker has to blend all these into one, and flexibly use the different strategies. At different stages of the worker-client relationship, different strategies will be required. The findings give a cognitive map of what works. It sheds light on some of the training focuses that might be of help to workers and lead to the improvement of the service.

Client Factors

Outreaching social work has a high client drop out rate. According to the Summary Report on *Clientele Information System for Outreaching Social Work Service 1993/4-1994/5*, in only 40% of the cases were the objectives reached. The loss of clients because they left the district could be more easily accepted as these youths are highly mobile. Public transportation in Hong Kong is extremely convenient. Yet statistics show that about 27% of the clients had 'refused help', or 'workers had lost contact with them'. Such loss is sometimes frustrating to the workers. Cognitively, workers can understand that clients have their right to decide on whether or not to work on their problems or to accept service. But workers may still have a sense of rejection. They also tend to assume greater responsibility in working with young people at risk, as they want them to have a better future. In this study, some of the client factors are brought into the open. Even if the clients could accept the workers, they might refuse to work on their problems because they were just not ready, because they wanted to take care of their own matters, because they felt awkward about their social workers caring about their problems more than their own family members did, or because they were too young to appreciate the worker. This feedback shows the complications in a helping process. Success is not just determined by the worker's good will or genuineness, sensible advice or concern, or by the availability of resources. The maturity of the clients and their psychological state are also determining factors. Coady's (1993) review of studies on therapeutic alliance points out that client characteristics could also be a critical variable. Elements such as being positive-toned and active involvement in the therapeutic process were considered critical. This study adds further possible client factors affecting active involvement. Social work literature often says we have to work with the client, not for the client. But the client has to be ready to work with us, to work on his/her problem himself/herself. More studies related to the client variables would be worthwhile to give a more comprehensive picture of the therapeutic alliance formation.

Conclusion

Relating with young people is a challenge. Having had a different socialization experience themselves, many Chinese parents feel their adolescent children are unreasonable and ungrateful. Many teachers find their students disrespectful and

unmanageable. Expectations sometimes lead only to frustration. Relating with marginal youth is even more difficult, in the eyes of most people. Their deviant outlook and behaviour reflect different moral standards from the majority. Difference leads to distance, and worry. With concern for their well-being, we try to reach out to them. The outreaching social work service in Hong Kong has a history of almost twenty years. It experienced two major evaluation exercises. These exercises caused much anxiety to outreaching workers. But they also brought assurance and recognition of their efforts. The process evaluation helped to demonstrate the work approach, helped to identify what worked and should be consolidated. We heard direct from the youngsters how they perceived the experience. We got feedback on what made sense to them and how we could move on. The blending of multiple skills and a positive attitude are the characteristics of the service. Purposeful application requires good professional understanding. Guidelines are provided for workers interested to reach out to unmotivated youths. To concerned adults like teachers and parents, our experience also gives some signposts. The communication and relationship-building concepts might sound fairly familiar in a Western culture. But, for an adult generation brought up in a culture which emphasizes paternalistic guidance and compliance from the young, the adjustment requires much conscious effort. Even social workers trained with Western social work values might unconsciously adopt a paternalistic role. That is well indicated by some unwise questioning of the respondents done by some of our trained social workers. In a society which very much emphasizes efficiency, this is a trap for all adults. Speedy response or compliance from clients will not be achieved through anxious questioning and advice giving. It takes time, patience, care, action, and more - an acceptance that our young generation is not the same as we were in our own day.

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Notes:

- 1 According to the research report *Youth and Problem Solving* by Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (1993), 117 (30.7%) of respondents chose to solve problems by themselves. 353 (57.6%) of youth indicated they would consult others if they had problems. Of the 353 respondents, most respondents indicated that they would discuss their problems with parents (33.4%), or friends (30.5%). 18.7% would discuss with classmates. However all the adult choices (parents, teachers, social workers) added together come to only 40.2% and the choice of friends, classmates and siblings together would add up to 58%. So a larger proportion preferred to seek help from their age group. If we look at the figures for respondents who really experienced problems and exclude those who answered the questions hypothetically, peer consultation actually ranked highest (31.6%), and consultation with parents drops to second position (22.1%).
- 2 For example, Thrasher, F.M., *Gang: A Study of One Thousand Three Hundred Thirteen Gangs in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963); Shaw, C.R., *Jack-Roller: A Delinquent Boy's Own Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966); Bernstein, S. *Youth on the Streets: Work with Alienated Youth Groups* (New York: Association Press, 1964); Yablonsky, L., *The Violent Gang* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1962).

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IS EMPOWERMENT POSSIBLE?

A Critical Examination of YCS in Hong Kong

SAMMY CHIU AND YEE MAY CHAN

Introduction

Youth service is one of the most important components of social welfare in Hong Kong. More social workers are engaged in youth work than in any other specialisation (Joint Committee on Social Welfare Manpower Planning System, 1996). Youth Centre Service (YCS), a cornerstone of youth service in Hong Kong, has also expanded remarkably since its early development in the 1960s (Hong Kong Government, 1973; Chor, Liao, Wu & Wu, 1991). However, in spite of its size and rate of expansion, some significant changes have been taking place in YCS during the transitional period in which the sovereignty of Hong Kong is being returned to China. These changes seem to be developing from two different directions. On the one hand, the Hong Kong Government suggested that YCS should focus more on remedial work in the future (Working Party on the Review of Children and Youth Centre Service, 1994). On the other hand, the Hong Kong Council of Social Services (the co-ordinating body of non-governmental welfare agencies) suggested that empowerment practice should be introduced into YCS, especially in view of the coming socio-political changes (Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 1996).

This paper reviews critically the philosophy and the role of YCS in Hong Kong. It examines the social position of young people in the social policy contexts of Hong Kong, and critically discusses the extent to which YCS contributes to the empowerment of young people.

YCS in Hong Kong: A Critical Review

Historical development

Services for young people in Hong Kong can be traced back to the turn of this century. The main concern then was to provide assistance for orphans and children of poor families. Services, which were small in scale, were primarily provided by voluntary agencies without support from the colonial government. Alongside the influx of immigrants and the rapid expansion of the population in the 1950s, youth service in Hong Kong became an auxiliary of formal education. Children's centres were established by voluntary organisations where educational classes were provided to children and young people who could not afford private schools. In addition, a small number of voluntary organisations, such as the Y.M.C.A., provided recreational activities for well-to-do children and young people (Chow, 1984). By and large, youth service provision before the 1960s was primarily charitable in nature, and involved very minimal government intervention.

YCS, however, was developed in the mid 1960s in parallel with the improvement of social and economic conditions and the massive expansion of primary school places. Gray (1996) recorded that youth crime became a public concern, and

there was a fear that the problem of the Ah Fei (teddy boys) would upset social stability which was so needed for capital accumulation and the preservation of vested interests in the territory. Voluntary agencies were encouraged by the government to expand YCS for young people so as to prevent them from engaging in disruptive behaviour. In the first social welfare white paper in Hong Kong history, the then Colonial Secretary proposed that:

youth services...[must be] ensuring that children and young people are provided with healthy and character-forming outlets for energy, while at the same time protecting and rescuing them from immoral influences and so forestalling the growth of delinquency and anti-social forces (Hong Kong Government, 1965, p.9).

The fear that young people posed a potential threat to social order was confirmed when a colony-wide riot broke out in 1966 and 1967 in which the majority of participants were young people (Gray, 1996). In the subsequent enquiry conducted in 1967, it was concluded that a growing sense of frustration among young people and the lack of proper outlets for their excessive energy were the two main causes of the social unrest (Commission of Inquiry, 1967). Summer youth programmes were widely held by the government in 1968 with a clear purpose of occupying young people and channelling their 'excessive energy'. Youth centres also mushroomed in the early 1970s with the same objective. By 1973, more than 300 youth and children centres were established, and more than 800,000 young people had attended the colony-wide summer programmes (Hong Kong Government, 1973). More youth centres were founded in the 1980s and were widely accepted, alongside School Social Work and Outreach Social Work which focus on unattached youth, as three components of personal social work among young people in Hong Kong (Hong Kong Government, 1979). Without further elaborating the historical background, the following diagram captures the major events in the development of YCS in Hong Kong:

Diagram 1. *The Historical Development of YCS*

post-war stage	Keep poor children <i>meaningfully occupied</i> by providing material assistance, basic and informal education and recreational activities.
late 1960s	Serving as <i>healthy outlet</i> for young people by providing numerous recreational activities after two riots.
1973-1979	Rapid growth in number of centres. Planning ratio of 1:20,000 population. Various group work models attempted.
late 1970s	Government stress on outreach, school social work and family life education. Centre service remained <i>recreational</i> and <i>residual</i> . Debate on the future role of centre service became more heated.
1982 onwards	Report on social work element and manpower allocation of centre service recommended a community based centre service for young people. Various models among centres adopted in exploring centre's role on <i>political</i> and <i>civil education</i> in the decade.
mid 1980s-90s	Planning ratio of centre to population reduced due to the declining youth population.
1992-1994	Working Party on Review of Children & Youth Centre Services set up and proposed an <i>Integrative Service Delivery Model</i> which would combine centre service, school social work and outreaching social work together to tackle the specific needs of young people who were perceived as destructive and aimless in face of political uncertainty.
1996	Discussion Paper entitled <i>Future Directions for Children and Youth Services</i> published by the Hong Kong Council of Social Services in which empowerment was suggested as one form of intervention in youth services.

Youth centres and young people

Throughout the development of YCS in Hong Kong from its inception in the 1950s, young people have not been regarded as active participants who have power to control issues concerning their own interests, either at the policy planning or service delivery level. At the policy level, young people in Hong Kong were only regarded as recipients of charitable services in the 1950s and 1960s. Material deprivations among service users marked a significant power difference between the service providers and charity recipients. Legitimate expectations of most beneficiaries at that time were simply the continuation of service provisions. As recipients of charity in an economically poor country, there were few pressures to change the nature of this relationship.

In addition to their construction as passive receivers of charitable services, young people in Hong Kong were portrayed in government policy as potentially dangerous and destructive to social order. It was believed that their excessive energy must be properly directed, or else it would disturb or disrupt social order. This negative representation of youth was first confirmed by the riots of 1967. Chiu (1991) argued that the colonial rule in Hong Kong was strongly assisted by the fear of potential crisis among its population. It was the threat of social instability which gave the colonial government the required legitimation to maintain the status quo. The threat of youth destruction, together with the economic and political uncertainties, were important weapons that the government used whenever necessary to instigate public fear and to win popular support. The negative representation of youth as being dangerous and destructive appeared not only in the early social welfare white papers in the colony (Hong Kong Government, 1965; 1973), but also prevails in Hong Kong at present. In a survey which explored the perceptions of professional helpers (i.e. teachers and social workers) towards 'marginal youth' in Hong Kong, it was found that the vast majority of teachers and social workers agreed that this group of young people were violent, and almost two thirds agreed that they were destructive (Chiu, Wong and Chiu, 1995). Since young people are considered to be potentially dangerous and destructive, it is therefore necessary for youth centres to help regain control. Where youth centres accept this need for control through social work and recreational programmes, there is limited scope for young people to re-negotiate this negative identity.

As well as being considered to be dangerous and destructive, young people were also seen as being in a developmental stage of 'storm and stress' (Coleman & Hendry, 1990). This view of young people as unstable and immature led to proposals to enhance their normal development. This professional discourse has underpinned the theme of youth policy in the 1980s and beyond, and has also governed the operation of youth centres in Hong Kong. In the social welfare white paper published in 1991, the government stressed once again that:

...youth centres are established to engage young people in worthwhile activities...with a view to assist them with their personal development... Through

guidance and support, family and other personal relationships should be enhanced... (Hong Kong Government, 1991, p.27).

This policy statement was translated clearly into practice in the Social Welfare Five Year Plan Review 1991, where it suggested that the aim and objective of youth centres were:

...to provide opportunities for and to assist young people to become mature, responsible and contributing members of society... (Hong Kong Government, 1991a, p.45).

The dilemma for young people involved in YCS is more obvious than the policy infers. On the one hand, because of the assumption that young people are immature, they are not entrusted with responsibilities which independent adults are expected to handle. On the other hand, they are being blamed for not shouldering responsibilities, such as making appropriate plans and decisions with regard to their own future, which they should have been allowed. As a consequence, the vicious cycle has created the classical situation of 'blaming the victims', whereby the immaturity and irresponsibility of young people are once again being confirmed. The recent review of children and youth services further strengthens the problematic image of young people in facing developmental crisis, and thus legitimises the remedial and counselling role of youth centres (Working Party on Review of Children and Youth Centre Services, 1994):

...to help children and youth to develop a sense of responsibility, positive values, social consciousness and readiness to take part in community affairs, and healthy relationships with their families, peers and the general community; to enhance the ability of children and youth in achieving their life tasks and in overcoming developmental crises; and to help children and youth to develop analytical and reflective thinking ability and equip them with the coping methods/skills in adapting to environmental demands and changes. (paragraph 7.2 (a)-(c))

As a result, young people are placed in an even more powerless and passive position while interacting with the social work professionals in the youth centres.

Notwithstanding the moral and professional discourses of social welfare which constructed the problematic representation of youth in Hong Kong, young people are also considered to be 'valuable assets' for the future workforce of the society (Lee, 1986; The Commission on Youth, 1995). The Education Commission Report prepared for the colonial government in the 1980s stated unequivocally that the purpose of investing in young people through education was to ensure the continuation of a quality workforce so as to protect the economic competitiveness of Hong Kong (Hong Kong Education Commission, 1984). This crude economic view of young people not only reveals the hidden intention of the adults-in-power to treat young people as merely a tool of capital accumulation, but also reflects a

deep disrespect for young people's ability to determine their own interests. As suggested by Wong (1996), the sense of responsibility promoted by adults may mean very little other than a requirement for young people to comply with the moral and economic values of the capitalism of Hong Kong.

Empowerment Practice

Power and social work practice

Issues of power are treated subtly or are sometimes neglected in social work relationships both among social workers and service users in Hong Kong. This is especially true among social workers who work with young people in youth centres. Emphasis is often placed on relationship building (Hasenfeld, 1987) and developing strategies of intervention. However, behind harmonious relationships, very few workers are aware that power disparity by virtue of their professional status, organisational resources, age and gender, may intrinsically oppress youth members. Yet, lack of awareness among social workers would not conceal the existing power discrepancies and struggles within social work relationships. As suggested by Gomm (1993), power can be manifested in several dimensions in social work relationships. They are:

- (1) *Oppressive relationships* in which social workers may play an oppressive role in enabling the powerful and the well-to-do of the society to go on exploiting the powerless and the poor by maintaining a minimum level of efficiency;
- (2) *Helping relationships* in which workers with expertise help clients to identify and satisfy their needs in ways which they could not do alone;
- (3) *Disabling relationships* when workers and agencies are seen as exploiting the clients for their own benefit;
- (4) *Brokerage relationships* when workers are seen as brokers between users and services or between different social groups. In other words, social workers in youth centres may well be unwittingly exercising their power over their youth members through different aspects of their relationships.

The worker-client relationship is transactional and will shift through interaction (Germain & Gitterman, 1980, quoted by Hasenfeld, 1987). Power can be displayed during interactions throughout different stages of the intervention process. As far as YCS in Hong Kong is concerned, power can be exercised by social workers in the definition of young people's developmental needs, in assessing their personal problems, as well as in controlling the knowledge and resources used in tackling these problems. Youth centre members often find themselves in a position where the best solution is to rely on the analysis and resources of the social workers in dealing with needs and problems, but with which they themselves do not agree. As suggested by Parsons (1991), people may perceive themselves to be powerless when they face economic insecurity, absence of experience in the political arena, lack of accessibility to information, lack of fiscal support, lack of training

in abstract and critical thinking, and when under physical and emotional stress. Young people in Hong Kong certainly face the same kind of powerlessness in their transaction with social workers in the youth centres. Their powerlessness also reinforces their vulnerable status and immature representation and may further strengthen the powerful status of the workers who control the resources on which youth members depend. Put in a clinical perspective, it can be argued that such a power differential is one important factor which enables social workers to engage their members in the social work intervention process, though this professional engagement may not be a voluntary one (Hasenfeld, 1987).

Power is also often exercised through manipulation and the distortion of communication (Habermas, 1977 quoted in Hugman, 1991). Youth centre workers in Hong Kong are usually in professional positions where they have power to use language both implicitly and explicitly in communication to construct problems and to achieve the intended professional goal. Since language is a form of power (Rojek, Peacock and Collins, 1988) and it is not neutral (Beresford & Croft, 1988, 1993), by using particular words, tone of voice, non-verbal expressions, social workers can construct the relationship, reframe members' needs and dominate the agenda of communication. The claim of professional knowledge and skill confers a class position on social workers and at the same time adds to the legitimacy of professional power. As argued by Hugman (1991):

...power is exercised in the structuring of the social framework within which interests, ideas and issues are formed and known. Professional knowledge, skills and ways of talking may form a discourse in this sense, expressing the interests of a profession. (p 35-36)

Social workers use their power to influence the behaviour of their clients, and thus power becomes the tool to shape the helping process (Hasenfeld, 1987). In this sense, for empowerment to be more than rhetoric it is essential that social workers critically consider the discourse which structures their power relationships with their youth members.

Empowering and the process of becoming empowered

The word empowerment is fashionable in social work practice nowadays. Contemporary literature on social work practice has recently grown to include this concept in overall philosophical perspectives, goals of practice, guidance for practice strategies and purpose of interventions (Cox, 1991). However, to put it in a fashionable postmodernist way, empowerment itself can also be a fluid concept which encompasses meanings which may swing from the political right to the far left. Parsloe (1996) appropriately warns that empowerment could easily become a new postmodernist language of the New Right and could be detached from the problem of oppression of the powerless. Vivid examples can be seen in Hong Kong where empowerment is paralleled with the instigation of shame among

young people (Wong, 1996), and the empowering process is one which helps develop the psychological stamina of youth (Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 1996). These examples reflect how the notion of power and the oppression of young people is bypassed in the process of empowerment practice in social work with young people. Thus it is important to examine the concept of empowerment along with the relationship between the professionals and the service users so as to avoid it becoming merely a 'buzz' word.

Staples (1990) defines empowerment as the process of gaining power, developing power, taking or seizing power, or facilitating or enabling power. The Social Work Dictionary (Braker, 1991, p.74, quoted by Zippay, 1995) defines empowerment as the process of helping a group or community to achieve political influence or relevant legal authority. Similarly in social work practice, empowerment is defined as the process through which an individual or a group, with relative powerlessness, may gain power for themselves and then attain greater control over their lives (Hasenfeld, 1987; Staples, 1990; Cox, 1991; DuBois & Miley, 1992). Parsons (1991) summarises empowerment, by quoting Torre's (1985) synthesis, as:

a process through which people become strong enough to participate within, share in the control of, and influence, events and institutions affecting their lives, and that in part, empowerment necessitates that people gain particular skills, knowledge, and sufficient power to influence their lives and the lives of those they care about. (p 18)

Empowerment is both a process and a goal (Parsons, 1991; DuBois and Miley, 1992; Parsloe and Stevenson, 1993). As a goal, it relates to an end state - power achieved; as a process, empowering implies facilitating, enabling, fostering, or promoting the capacity for competence (DuBois and Miley, 1992, p 209). Empowerment can also be referred to as a state of mind, such as feeling worthy and competent or perceiving power and control. More importantly, it also refers to the reallocation of power through a modification of the social structure (Swift and Levin, 1987, quoted in DuBois and Miley, 1992). In the context of working with young people, Barry (1996) suggests that the empowerment process should be viewed alongside a redistribution of power in the existing social structure whereby young people participate in gaining control over issues that concern and affect them.

But how can people be empowered, and how does the process take place? Hasenfeld (1987) suggested that there must be a change in the worker-client relationship, in the agency orientation as well as in the level of social policy. Strategies such as those to provide clients with greater information about resources; to enable them assert and claim their legitimate rights; to increase clients' knowledge, skills and expertise in handling their needs; to increase clients' resources through coalitions with significant others; to link them to a supportive network; and reduce their dependency or help to negotiate a better environment are but a few important measures for practising empowerment (Hasenfeld, 1987).

To summarise, Parsons (1991) gives a precise description of the empowering process:

...the process of empowerment involves the development of attitudes and beliefs about one's efficacy to take action; the development of critical thinking about one's world; the acquisition of knowledge and skills needed to take action; the support and mutual aid of one's peers in any given situation; and the taking of action to make change in the face of impinging problems. It is a process in which individuals become critically aware of their relation to the environment as well as interactive with it. (p 13)

Partnership and Participation

It is important to stress that the practice of empowerment in youth work cannot be separated from the participation of youth members and the recognition of their partnership roles. Strategies of empowering young people should always lay emphasis on their involvement in different stages of work in the youth centre, for example in defining their needs, in setting the rules and regulations of the centre, and in planning programmes. In the process of involving young people, the aim is to facilitate their participation at all levels. The ultimate goal is to empower youngsters and thereby redress the balance of power with service providers (Braye and Preston-Shoot, 1993).

Several concepts have been suggested to support the concept of partnership. For example, self-protection which sees partnership as a means of protection from undue interference from others (Webb, 1994, p 5); consumerism which suggests that user involvement may lead to greater managerial efficiency, greater accountability and hence improvement of service quality to meet real needs (Webb, 1994, p 5; Croft and Beresford, 1992, p 23; Biehal, 1993, p 444); self-development whereby people are helped to make well-informed decisions and undertake responsibilities (Webb, 1994, p.5); and finally, the concept of citizenship which stresses equal rights and dignity to participate (Biehal, 1993; Webb, 1994; Croft and Beresford, 1988; 1989).

In the context of youth centre work in Hong Kong, several guidelines are important for promoting partnership and participation of young people. First, is information about the centre easily accessible? Second, is the assessment of needs and problems shared with youth members? Third, do youth members enjoy legitimate but not discretionary positions in participating in the planning and decision making of centre service? Fourth, are members involved in handling complaints? Finally, do channels exist where members and workers can negotiate work on a free and voluntary basis and exchange views in order to counter the negative effects of power disparity? It is in this light that empowerment in youth centres in Hong Kong is critically examined in the following discussion.

Empowerment: Myth or Reality in Youth Centre?

The incompatibility of youth policy

Empowerment is an attractive but controversial concept within social service provision in Hong Kong. It can easily be romanticised for its seemingly proactive input, but at the same time can be criticised for being idealistic and elusive. The examples given above have already shown how this concept may be differentially utilised in the youth work context of Hong Kong. However, youth centres in Hong Kong have been seen as venues which promote youth development. Empowerment, therefore, seems to have been assumed to be included as one of the major responsibilities of the youth centres (Chan, 1993). It is common for youth centre workers in Hong Kong to regard non-participatory problem-based counselling services with young people as empowerment practice. The notion of empowerment practice is used so generally and uncritically that it almost becomes just a synonym of counselling. Thus, it is necessary to examine empowerment against the policy context and philosophical underpinnings which structure the power relationships and professional activities in Hong Kong.

As analysed in an earlier section of this paper, young people in Hong Kong have been construed respectively as dependent on charity services, unstable and immature beings who need help in the stormy period of development, as well as problematic and potentially dangerous people who need to be controlled at different stages of their development. These constructions of youth seem to have directed youth centres to become agents of social control. Young people, on the other hand, are rarely encouraged to participate in deciding matters concerning their own interests. The image of youth, as well as their needs, are shaped and defined in the first place according to the government's social control aim. Even in the circumstances where investment in youth is in focus, it merely means to invest in those who will likely become mature, responsible and contributing citizens (Commission on Youth, 1993). In other words, the central role of youth centres in Hong Kong is primarily to reward those who succeed, but to rectify, if not punish, those who fail. Ironically though, the assessment of success is based on young people's willingness and ability to contribute to the economic success of Hong Kong. This may be an inherent tension in the YCS which cannot easily be resolved.

There are, however, a few examples in Hong Kong where efforts have been made to arouse the social and political consciousness of young people and to promote their participation in the centres as well as in political affairs in the colony (Chan, 1992; Chow, 1993; Tam, 1986). These examples have been prevalent since the mid 1980s after the Sino-British Declaration was signed and the reforms of the political structure in Hong Kong had just begun to gather momentum. Inspired by the slogan of 'Hong Kong people rule Hong Kong', some youth centres seemed to become aware of the depoliticised role that they had been playing for many years, and the serious lack of political consciousness among young people as a result.

These experiences have undeniably brought about some refreshing emphasis on empowering young people, and may have reflected the resistance of some social workers to being agents of social control (Ma, 1986; Hong Kong Christian Service, 1986). However, as revealed by Wong and Chiu (1996), social workers in Hong Kong have changed to become more conservative in the 1990s during the transfer of sovereignty. Social workers in Hong Kong now believe, more than did their counterparts in the 1980s, that their most important role is to help adapt to the existing status quo rather than to change it (Wong and Chiu, 1996). Whether empowerment of young people is still possible in a climate of social and political disillusion is in question.

The myth of harmonious relationships

Youth centres are seen as venues for building good relationships between workers and members. It is often assumed that the warm and homely neighbourhood settings of the centres, added to the friendly attitudes of social workers, can help reduce the resistance of youth. Besides, the open atmosphere of the centres and friendly relationships between workers and members could easily be referred to as a good basis for empowerment. However, the development of empowerment through friendly relationships has overlooked entirely the power difference between social workers and youth members.

It is well argued by Hasenfeld (1987) that social workers understate the importance of power in shaping worker-client relations, because they assume that the interests of the client and the worker are compatible. Yet, power can be exercised in many ways and forms, both directly and indirectly. The indirect use of power can be more penetrative, although it is often not acknowledged (Hugman, 1991). In the context of youth centres in Hong Kong, very limited information with regard to the organisational structure, planning rationale, and resources are made available and accessible to members. In some circumstances, where a centre council formed by members' representatives is established, the agenda and resources are controlled by the workers, and members are only given very limited scope in decision making. Participation seems a token rather than a reality in such circumstances. In some youth centres where counselling is provided, indirect power is exercised through the use of professional language and the manipulation of specialised knowledge and skill. The professional image of social workers is thus constructed and their superior status produced, reinforced and maintained in daily practice. The submission of young people in playing the dependent and problematic roles, on the other hand, has been taken for granted as self-determined and voluntary.

The myth of partnership and participation in youth centres

The aim of partnership and participation is to empower people (Croft and Beresford, 1994). To explore whether YCS is adopting these approaches, three levels of service delivery are examined below:

Programme planning and need assessment

Young people are rarely involved in the programme planning process. Normally, it is the workers whose assessment and interpretation of members' needs are adopted. Youths are often blamed for being unmotivated to participate in centre programmes when the attendance is low. Yet very little bottom-up planning is being implemented to improve the situation. There seems to be a lack of trust on the part of the social workers towards the youth members with regard to their ability and competence in programme planning. In some more extreme cases, social workers may even doubt members' judgement of their own needs if they go against professional assessment. Members' opinions are sometimes sought, but the interpretation of them is subject to professional filtering. One obvious example is the rejection of members' opinions with regard to programme and service planning because of the alleged immaturity of youth members. As a result, members become disillusioned and apathetic about consultation, because their participation is little more than an ineffective routine exercise. Members' disillusion is again taken to indicate their immaturity and irresponsibility, thus confirming the judgement of social workers. In this regard, this type of involvement of youth members in programme planning is by no means conducive to their empowerment.

Programme implementation

Full participation of youth in the process of programme implementation or during group processes is rare. Participation of members is always encouraged in the group process and in social and recreational programmes, but only in topics which social workers suggest. Expression of views about topics not within the allowed scope will be tolerated, but will very likely be regarded as irrelevant. In some extreme cases where youth members insist on alternative topics, direct or indirect power of the workers will likely be exercised so as to guide the group towards a more 'relevant' and 'constructive' direction. Resistance of youth members, if it happens, will sometimes be explained as resulting from personal problems of the members who are unmotivated or maladjusted, and some counselling outside the group is thus called forth. Almost as a result, decision making of members, though encouraged, is always within a pre-set range, and only up to a level acceptable by the workers. The hypocrisy of 'sharing power' is well characterised by the concept of benevolent paternalism. Participation of volunteers in youth centres is a classic example. In this instance, volunteers are often allowed to participate in the decision making concerning practical arrangements of the service tasks, but are rarely encouraged to be involved in defining the service needs, nor allowed access to full information about the negotiation process between organisations. In arranging volunteer services, administrative convenience is often a higher priority than members' participation. Apparently there is a contradiction between empowering young people through YCS and the practice of controlled involvement. It is hardly convincing to argue that empowerment can be achieved when young people are co-opted selectively rather than democratically.

Programme evaluation

Programme evaluation has been commonly adopted and is regarded as an important part of centre service due to the increasing recognition of the need for service accountability. However, it is far too common for workers and administrators to be held accountable solely to the funding source, which in the case of youth centres in Hong Kong, is the government. Some others may claim that they should be accountable for their work primarily to the social work profession. Yet, very few social workers accept that they should also be accountable to the service users. The problem with this view is that programme evaluation has often been regarded as a 'scientific' and highly technical exercise which has to be handled by professionals and research experts. In many youth centres, youth members are often excluded from the design phase of the evaluation. Rather, they are only included as research targets whose opinions and feedback are to be tapped. In some situations where members are invited to express their views about the services they use, opinions seem to have been recorded selectively and alternative views overridden. This is likely to happen when workers consider their pre-set goal of intervention and justify their service outcomes. Inevitably, the unfriendly evaluative machinery results in both exclusion and selective participation, and produces feelings of powerlessness and alienation. The failure to include young people as fully as possible in evaluating services which affect their interests is disempowering rather than empowering.

In short, service delivery in youth centres seems to serve the interests and administrative convenience of the youth centres rather than their youth members. Services seem provider-led rather than user-led. Participation and partnership become very much like empty promises.

Organisational and administrative constraints

Insight, commitment and courage to identify and challenge the existing oppressive and discriminatory practices and policies are crucial to empowerment practice. To pledge empowerment without actual implementation is pure rhetoric. However, some social workers who work in youth centres may find themselves helpless due to organisational and administrative constraints. Some workers may find that empowerment practice is incompatible with the aims and objectives of the agencies which fundamentally disregard the oppression and discrimination that young people in Hong Kong are facing. Agency culture offers limited support for the practice of empowerment. Workers who are committed to empowerment practice often find themselves lacking the legitimacy in, and substantial knowledge and skill of, empowerment practice. Staff development programmes tend to be concerned primarily with sharpening practice skills which aim at handling immature youth, controlling destructive behaviour and counselling maladjusted clients. Empowerment is still a rare topic for staff development and training.

Lack of support within the agency is another detrimental factor in relation to empowerment practice in youth centres in Hong Kong. Staff are more likely to

empower users if they themselves are empowered (Parsloe and Stevenson, 1993). The importance of having a teamwork approach in creating and maintaining the empowering atmosphere can help to convey an encouraging message both to workers and members. However, the kind of team work that youth centres in Hong Kong adopt seems to focus on maximisation and efficiency of output in a team. Managerial concerns therefore tend to emphasise the discrete division of labour which maximises professional expertise and emphasises the power differential with service users. The problem with this kind of administrative arrangement is that it is antithetical to empowerment, because it could easily lead to competition rather than mutual support, non-communication rather than communication, and segregation rather than participation.

The centralisation of administrative power within youth centres also obstructs the development of empowering practice. Democratic administration both at agency level and in the daily operation of youth centres is crucial. The rights of social workers in accessing agency information and resources should be respected without differentiation according to their professional rank. Similarly, participation in decision making, both in matters relating to agency administration and daily practice should also be encouraged without discrimination. Likewise, youth members must be allowed to negotiate their rights on an equal par with youth centre social workers. Only if genuine participation takes place can empowerment practice be actualised.

Empowerment Practice in Youth Centres: Prospect for the Future

Throughout the past many years YCS in Hong Kong has not been developed to be a venue where young people are empowered. There seems to be no intention for the colonial government to change this situation during the change of sovereignty. In a review of the future development of CYS conducted by a government appointed working group in 1994, it was recommended that CYS should focus more on helping young people 'at risk', and this should be done by integrated social work teams formed in the local districts (Working Party on Review of Children and Youth Centre Services, 1994). Nothing had been mentioned in the review report about the possibility for young people to participate in handling issues of their own concerns, and very little had been discussed about the possibility of redistributing power within the existing status quo. The intention of the government seemed to be to bring the role of YCS back to the 1970s when young people were viewed as problematic and dangerous, though the problems which young people face today may be different. The recommendations of the Working Party which emphasized remedial work would give youth centres even less room for empowerment practice in the future. It must be noted as a matter of interest that the recommendations made to reorganise YCS on an already highly remedial basis were made almost at the same time when the colonial government proposed to scrap neighbourhood level community work. Whether the proposals of the govern-

ment are related to its fear of the social work service becoming 'too much politicised' remains to be seen. But obviously, the move of the government would serve to pacify the future sovereign state, whose Chief Executive Designate has asserted a kind of Confucian rule which stresses the importance of social order and social control (Tung Chee Hwa, 1996).

Conclusion

Throughout the paper we have argued that YCS in Hong Kong has a tradition of disempowering young people, and empowerment is not embodied in either service philosophy or its delivery. Social workers in youth centres are often found to be insensitive to the power imbalance arising from their own material and social status, professional language and mystique, and are discriminatory. Youth centres in Hong Kong have been assigned a role of being a socialisation agent, through which young people are regarded as becoming industrious economic beings. Young people have not been seen by adults as a powerless minority group who need to be empowered, and youth centres have not espoused empowerment as a legitimate aspect of their work.

Youth development, as the central aim of youth service in Hong Kong, should not just aim at socialising for conformity. There is an urgent need to reconceptualise young people as positive members of society rather than as destructive forces or passive recipients of social services. Equal regard for young people's potential and citizen status are important for the development of youth empowerment work in Hong Kong, if it is to be taken seriously. Commitment to empowerment practice involves changes of values both by the service agencies and social workers, and it also requires changes of administrative structure and approach. Without these changes, empowerment of young people in social work in Hong Kong will remain empty rhetoric.

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Notes

The authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments, and would also like to thank Professor David Teather of Hong Kong Baptist University for his critical suggestions and his comments on the use of English.

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WORKING SPACE

CHILDLINE

One Young Person's Experience

JO HANCOCK

Can I ever be a nice person?

Can I...?

How on earth do I access support like

Face to face counselling?

Imagine a 15 year old,

Living a secret life.

Desperate,

Lonely,

Isolated,

Suicidal.

'No one knows, I've only told you and you mustn't tell Mum and Dad'.

Every day she used

to write to them.

On a good day -

a paragraph.

On a bad day,

On a very bad day,

Three thousand words.

'No one knows, not even my school friends'.

'They call me "alien" and "spastic"'.
'

Even the psychiatric system couldn't help,

Drugging her up to the eyeballs when all she wanted was to be

Normal,

Accepted,

A success instead of

A failure.

Her only connection with sanity and love was

'The folks at Nottingham and London'

When she did start to hear voices they

Were the people who said 'We believe you'.

It helped,
Her sole comfort in the midst of
Paralyzing paranoia.

So what can she say?
She's supposed to be one of their secret success stories.

She doesn't feel like it.
At 20 they still ram depixol needles into her
('cos she fed her pills to the ducks)

It's hard learning to be
Independent.

One day,
thanks to ChildLine and their successors.
She'll get there.

Jo Hancock 1997

WORKING SPACE

CHILDREN IN CRISIS

CHILDLINE

Paula (14) had already taken an overdose when she called ChildLine. She told a counsellor: 'I can't cope anymore. My dad has been sexually abusing me for over a year and my whole family has rejected me'. Her father was in prison and she was finding it difficult to get through each day. Paula sobbed as she explained that she was regularly cutting her arms and legs with razors and knives.

Many children who call ChildLine talk about problems with family relationships. John was feeling suicidal when he called ChildLine. His parents had separated and he now lived with his father and step-mother. 'They don't care about me', he told a counsellor. 'I'm fat and no one likes me'.

These are just an example of the kinds of calls received by ChildLine, the only free national helpline in the UK for children in trouble or danger. A registered charity, ChildLine provides confidential comfort, help and protection to children with any problem, 24 hours a day, every day.

It was the brainchild of television personality Esther Rantzen. Esther invited viewers of her programme, *That's Life*, to tell her what they knew about cruelty to children. The response was overwhelming and many of the calls were from children themselves, describing the abuse they suffered. Following a conference on the subject, and an approach to British Telecom, ChildLine was launched in October 1986. Under the terms of its licence, BT was unable to offer ChildLine free calls. However it gave an easily remembered freephone number - 0800 1111 - and rent-free offices, originally near St Paul's and later in Islington.

Meeting the Demand

On ChildLine's first night, over 50,000 calls were attempted. Since then more than 600,000 young people have been counselled and over 70,000 adults have received help and advice. However, demand constantly outstrips supply. Up to 10,000 children call ChildLine every day, but lack of funds means that only around 3,300 of their calls can be answered.

Children call with many different worries ranging from physical and sexual abuse, bullying, family problems and pregnancy to concerns about alcohol and drugs. Last year (1995/6) almost one in five children contacting the charity for the first time did so because they had been sexually or physically abused or both. Thousands more mentioned having been abused when they called about another problem.

Boys and young men suffer very serious distress. Yet fewer boys than girls ring ChildLine. Boys find it hard to seek help, often only doing this when their problems have reached crisis point. Talking represents 'not coping'; and boys, as they see it themselves, are not allowed to 'not cope'. The problems they ring about are

at the severe end of the calls ChildLine receives. ChildLine refers proportionately more boys than girls to social services or the police. 16,505 boys in the year up to March 1995 were counselled by ChildLine. This figure represents a ratio of one boy calling for every four girls who do. A study conducted during this period highlights the range of problems that boys and young men ring about: the impact of abuse, loss and family conflict on their lives, and their difficulties in being open about problems they have, and in asking for and using help.¹

A 24 Hour Service

Currently ChildLine has over 800 trained volunteer counsellors, mostly working one shift a week at one of seven centres. Its UK headquarters in London provides a national 24-hour service for children in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. But in order to answer more calls, ChildLine has established other counselling centres based around the UK, allowing children to speak to a counsellor from their area with a familiar accent and an understanding of their cultural background. It also means ChildLine can tap a larger reserve of potential counsellors and fundraisers.

ChildLine Midlands, ChildLine Scotland, ChildLine Cymru/Wales (North and South) and ChildLine North West are now firmly established in their own right. Calls from children in these areas go through to these offices during the peak hours of afternoon and evening. Outside these hours the calls are diverted automatically to the national 24-hour service. ChildLine Yorkshire and North East took its first calls in June 1997 and is open for two six hour sessions per week: this will increase as more volunteers are recruited and trained.

Confidentiality

Some children take months before plucking up the courage to call ChildLine. Often they have not told anybody else about their problem, especially if they are being physically or sexually abused. When children are put through to a counsellor, they may speak for as long as they need to - calls can last from a few minutes to over an hour. For some children one call will be enough, but others may need to telephone regularly and can speak to the same counsellor if they prefer. Children need not give their real name or say where they are calling from. All calls are confidential.

Records of each child's call are entered onto a computer so that if that child calls again and speaks to a different counsellor, the information can be accessed quickly and harrowing details do not have to be repeated. ChildLine counsellors know they are helping children who may be reluctant to approach other child protection agencies, but who will seek help from a confidential telephone helpline. The counsellors' task is to help children work through their pain, to re-build shattered confidence and self-esteem, and encourage them to believe they have a right to be safe.

Making a Referral

When necessary ChildLine acts directly to ensure a child's protection by making a referral to a local social services department (or social work department in Scotland) or the police. But intervention is not always possible, and much of ChildLine's work involves helping children to identify an adult they already know in whom they feel they can confide, and who can provide the support and protection they need. With the child's permission, their records can be used as evidence in court cases where they can play a vital role in protecting children.

ChildLine may, with children's agreement, mediate between them and their parents or carers. However, in some particular crisis cases the child may wish and need ChildLine to intervene on their behalf by contacting external agencies, usually social services or the police. This is done only when the child gives permission. We do not stop talking to the child until the emergency services have arrived.

Referrals of children increased in 1995-6 to an all time high of 732 (23 percent higher than 1993-4 and 45 percent higher than 1994-5). The increase over the past year involved a 44 percent increase in referrals of runaway and homeless children, a 62 percent increase in referrals of suicidal children. For 30 percent of the referred children in the review year² the main problem was abuse, with physical abuse dominating. But for the majority of the others, particularly those who had run away or who were suicidal, past or present abuse was the precipitating issue. The main distinction between callers who wished to be referred and those who did not seems to be whether the child saw the intervention of the authorities as a viable option and that appeared to depend on alternatives open to them. For those children who had run away or who had been thrown out, getting a roof over their heads was the main reason they consented to a referral.

Children in Distress

Last year 956 children contacted ChildLine with a mental health concern, the majority describing symptoms of emotional disorders such as depression, anxiety states or phobias. A further 600 presented with serious self-harming behaviour such as suicide. For most callers, the mental health concern is secondary to their presenting problem. Their main concern is what has happened to them; they then go on to describe their feelings and behaviour. In other words, they may talk about abuse or bullying rather than the effect it has had on their mental health.

ChildLine has an important part to play in supporting children with mental health problems. We offer a service to which they can turn on their own terms, in their own time, without adult intervention. Our role is to listen to children and to guide them to identify solutions, so increasing their resilience and empowering them. This approach underpins all our counselling. With a counsellor, children can describe their situation, explore how they are feeling and coping, and discuss what possibilities there are for action. ChildLine uses a 'child-centred or person centred approach' with all callers. Children and young people may just want one conversa-

tion, call a few times or a period of extended work may be negotiated with the caller. In these circumstances the child will have a fixed time to call and talk with the same counsellor for an agreed period of time. There is a strong emphasis on counselling supervision within ChildLine. A counselling supervisor is on duty at all times. After each shift of three hours there is a group debrief session with a supervisor and individual counsellors receive intensive personal supervision on a regular basis.

For children who are already seeing other health care professionals, our role complements theirs. Professionals may well encourage children to make regular calls to ChildLine because we can provide a service which they do not. For the child, an open access service specifically geared to children is extremely valuable. Children who are alarmed by how they are behaving may well find it easier to call ChildLine than to tell a doctor.

ChildLine counsellors know at the end of each shift that the time and commitment they have given will have helped to change the lives of children to whom they have spoken. It may have given them new hope or the courage to speak to somebody in their lives about their unhappiness and pain. While we cannot know the outcome of every case, we do know that for thousands of children ChildLine is a lifeline - a vital source of help and protection. For some it is the difference between hope and despair, for others the difference between life and death.

ChildLine

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2. MacLeod, M. (1996) *Talking with Children About Child Abuse: ChildLine's First Ten Years*, London, ChildLine.

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ISBN 0 85315 845 2

£9.99

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PATRICK AINLEY

'Now is the Winter of our Disco Tent'

If you haven't come across 'Soundings', it is the much more readable result of a split in the ranks of 'New Left Review'. Edited by Doreen Massey, Stuart Hall and Mike Rustin, it aims to contribute to the generation of a counter-culture of debate in line with the project of Democratic Left (the non-hardline survivors of the old Communist Party) with which it and its publishers are associated.

All well and good, though it often reads rather like a Guardian magazine, though sometimes by sub-Guardian writers. The opening section deals with issues of the day - in this case, a cautiously optimistic assessment of the general election result by one of the editors. Other articles follow on health, Europe and elsewhere, including photo-journalism. Reviews and poems - by Phil Cohen (in mem. Ralph Samuel), Peter Porter and others - bridge to the special issue which this time is on 'Young Britain'.

For a change, Jonathon Rutherford, the guest editor of this section, has assembled some young writers to contribute. His comprehensive introduction focusses upon the gap that has widened during the 18 terrible Tory years between young people and mainstream party politics - nearly one in five under 25s are not even on the electoral register. But he doubts that, despite its appealing youthfulness, what Gerry Adams calls 'the Blur regime' can do much to bridge the gap. The reasons for this are made clear by his contributors.

Jonathon Keane wittily and perceptively prescribes E as 'The chemical correlative to an inhuman way of life' with 'Prozac as ecstasy for the more conventionally minded'. Like Rutherford, Keane reflects on gender and generational changes that have achieved something like a 'queering up' of many young men. Nevertheless, despite the miraculous claims that are made for the drug - see 'the guru of the Drug Culture', Irvine Welsh, especially in his most powerful novel 'Marabou Stork Nightmares' - Keane considers 'Politicians owe it to us to replace drugs with a talking cure'.

Education might have a role to play here with roughly two thirds of 16-18s and one third of 18-21s now in some form of post-compulsory learning, but this officially sanctioned occupation plays little part in the reflections of the other contributors and nor does that other staple of mainstream sociological concern - 'transition' to the labour market. In fact, the

word 'transition' does not occur even once, though academic youth experts structure entire research programmes around it. Although Ian Brinkley, John Healey and Frances O'Grady detail the flexploitation of the casualised youth labour market and look to a new unionism to combat it, other contributors are not centrally concerned with economic issues.

Bilkis Malek, writing on young South Asians, notes how 'issues of race and racism have largely remained absent from the exploration and appropriation of notions such as hybridity and diaspora which have become central to current academic debates about Black British identities'. While Elaine Pennicott, reading identity in the work of new, male, African-Caribbean writers, sees them 'constantly challenging.... the idea that there is a knowable "black" youth'. For her part, Rupa Haq looks beyond the death of pop in its move from street to high street to celebrate both Britpop and rave as 'on the same side: original '90s pop music by the young for the young'.

Lastly, Michael Kenny and Peter Gartside draw the issue together with the former's reflection that youth disaffection is now just a part of a wider picture of social fragmentation, so that 'the word "youth"' is becoming 'an increasingly inappropriate label'. The latter looks to the pros and cons of the reaction to this in what he calls 'The contradictions of "DIY culture"', an apparently new style of protest politics that has not received the critical scrutiny it deserves, particularly the differentiation of various strands within the movement, if it can be conceived as such. Gartside argues that 'to assume this is just another new social movement... necessarily complementary to left politics... is to risk missing much of its contradictory richness... in its alliance of voluntary and involuntary rebels... and its sense of fun that demands to be taken seriously'.

'The purpose of this issue of "Soundings"', writes Rutherford, 'is to encourage dialogue across the generations and to create an opportunity to explore the nature of generational differences, similarities and connections'. 'Young Britain' certainly does this in a lively manner that makes much more stimulating reading than many academic publications purporting to cover the same ground. Yet issues of class that the old New Left Review keeps plugging away at are elided in this as in other editions of 'Soundings'. Just as they are by mainstream academicism, whether of the postmodern cultural studies side of youth studies or in orthodox sociological concern with defining class in conventional 'middle' and 'working' terms (with a variant in a new rough 'underclass') by the proxy of educational attainment. This too misses the point of the class recomposition that is marked by the period of Conservative government and which is manifested in the social formation of young people today.

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Anne Dennehy, Lee Smith and Paul Harker

Not to be Ignored: Young People, Poverty and Health

Child Poverty Action Group

ISBN 0 946744 90 4

£8.95 (pbk)

pp 181

LINDA WRIGHT

This book's title is spot-on - it should certainly not be ignored by anyone concerned with health care or youth policy. Jointly commissioned by the Kings Fund and the Child Poverty Action Group, it is the outcome of a research project by a team from Bristol University's Department of Social Medicine. The research had two aims. The first was to pull together a range of disparate material about the health and socio-economic circumstances of young people. The second was to identify evidence about health care interventions and social policy initiatives that could improve the health and life chances of young people living in poverty.

While there is substantial evidence that poverty is a major cause of ill health, the authors point out that research has almost entirely focused on infants, young children or adults. Far less attention has been paid to young people. Conventional wisdom supposes that adolescence is the healthiest time of life. While much of the literature on physical health supports this view, this book presents a wealth of evidence relating to young people's mental health, substance misuse and sexual health which describes a population group increasingly risking ill health. This combined with the unprecedented rise in inequality and poverty and the changing nature of young people's socio-economic circumstances, reveals a problem which is certainly not to be ignored.

The book is organised into five substantial chapters, which manage to combine breadth and authority through careful argument supported by extensive references. How poverty affects the lives of young people is briefly summarised, although the authors consciously avoid entering into lengthy or detailed debate about the existence, nature and measures of either poverty or health. Drawing together a wide range of evidence, the book documents health and sometimes death associated with poverty and young people. Despite my familiarity with this field, I was still shocked by some of the statistics presented, for example:

- Young people living in poverty are five times more likely than those from more affluent backgrounds to be diagnosed as schizophrenic;
- Suicide rates in young men have doubled since 1975 and are almost three times higher for young people living in poverty than those from wealthier backgrounds;

- Sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS are associated with poverty in young people.

Having graphically and comprehensively described the problem, the authors bravely attempt to enter the minefield of health related interventions for young people by reviewing the evidence available. I was delighted that a broad view of evidence was taken, including descriptive evaluation as well as the controlled studies much loved by clinicians (yet rarely done for ethical and resource reasons!). Another welcome inclusion was a discussion of the ethical principles and values that inform interventions for young people. The recent fashion for evidence-based practice in health and social care has tended to ignore the fact that what is regarded as valid evidence depends upon the paradigms adopted by those involved. Similarly, interventions themselves are informed by ethical principles and disparate value systems, which are rarely made explicit by any of the stakeholders.

The last two chapters of the book use the evidence on poverty and ill health to make (yet another) case for investing in young people. The main planks of social policy proposed are:

- *laying the foundations for opportunity*, by investment in pre-school provision, improving education services and coherent school funding policy and a co-ordinated and resourced service for young people with educational special needs;
- *a guaranteed minimum income for families with young people*, including child benefit increases and tax reform;
- *aiding transition to independence* through education and financial support to young people;
- *action to improve youth employment opportunities*;
- *Government action to tackle homelessness*.

Regular readers of Youth & Policy will not find much that is new or innovative in the authors' social policy proposals, although it is encouraging to find new arguments to support youth policy development, based on their carefully gathered evidence. The final chapter, *A plan to improve young people's health* applies the framework of the Ottawa Charter on Health Promotion to young people in poverty. These fine words were for me, too general, too global and ultimately, too easy to ignore. In preserving a degree of academic detachment, the book succeeds in shocking and shaming the reader, but I am not sure that this is enough to encourage and inspire Britain's policy makers to take action. However, if rational, evidence-based argument has any role in influencing social change, then

this book deserves to be read by all concerned with addressing the issue of young people, poverty and health. Buy it, read it and send it to your MP. Alternatively, send the book's key message:

Improvements to young people's health will only be made if the underlying problem of poverty is addressed.

Linda Wright is a freelance Health Promotion Consultant in North Yorkshire.

Phil Cohen

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ISBN 0 333 63147 1 (hbk)

ISBN 0 333 63148 X (pbk)

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PATRICK AINLEY

Postively Antediluvian

For Phil Cohen, youth is simultaneously powerless and powerful. Young people are disqualified by inflationary educational certification from full participation in society. At the same time they possess a unique potential promising as labour power a whole cornucopia of desirable properties. This 'singular nexus of contradictions' traps young people in a system of double binds. Until recently, Phil writes, this pattern of contradiction was largely conjunctural for boys, part of a transition phase between childhood and adulthood. For girls it was and still is structural; patriarchy 'traps them for life' as desirable objects who must remain forever young. 'The youth question', Cohen insists, 'is never not an issue of class, gender and ethnicity, but it poses these issues in a quite specific form'.

Today 'the 64,000-dollar question' is 'how has the decline in the political cultures of the manual working class, and the rise of structural youth unemployment affected the formation and outlook of youth?'

This collection of writings over nearly 30 years is the record of repeated forays into answering that question. It is not an abstract and academic answer - although 'Dr John', as the media dubbed him as the supposed

brains behind the London Street Commune in 1969, endearingly records in one of the autobiographical introductions that frame each of the pieces collected together here (several published for the first time, others long unavailable), how at the height of the battle for the squat at 144 Piccadilly 'I used to escape to the reading room of the British Museum... to try to get my bearings'. Here he encountered Lacan and Freud as often as Althusser and Marx and we see how much of the seminal work presented in this book, for instance in a 1972 talk at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, owes as much to what Phil calls 'the revolutionary character of psychoanalysis' as to dialectical and historical materialism.

This combination is in Cohen's case the endeavour of an engaged intellectual and not an academic. Even the research projects based in the London Institute of Education that are detailed here - into 'Growing Up in the Working-Class City' which resulted in the book 'Knuckle Sandwich', or the historical research informing another chapter concerned with policing London streets - have a practical intent dedicated to the struggles of the oppressed. They do not succumb to what the last chapter of the book 'On Pedagogy and Post-Modernity' calls 'the final incorporation of educational research into the governmental structure'. Nor to the games of free association and intertextuality with which post modernism dismantles the hierarchy of knowledge to represent 'its final fetishism as commodity form'. For the 'techniques of "deconstruction"' that are the meagre staple fare placed before so many students nowadays 'do not offer an epistemology which could inform everyday classroom practice, let alone curriculum development'. Phil sees this latest academic fashion, which passes for theory in the new higher education sociological orthodoxy, complemented by empirical number-crunching research. This latter is 'still the most successful in terms of its measurable impact on official thinking', as if 'putting numbers to instances somehow magically turns conjectures into facts.'

But even though most of his own work has been small-scale and local - for instance 'The Cultural Geography of Adolescent Racism' detailed here on one London estate - Phil has not leant himself to the obsessively voyeuristic literalisation of so many ethnographic youth studies, nor to the short-term dedication to immediate outcomes of action research, which together offer themselves as 'low-cost alternatives to number crunching'. Instead, he exemplifies 'a method of investigation which is both ancient and modern, popular and scientific, and in fact takes many forms'. This involves, as the poet Williams Carlos Williams said, 'taking a line of thought for a walk'. This is the method of artistic creation and scholarly investigation, scientific discovery and technical invention. It is also the art of teaching: 'that excess of reach for meaning which educa-

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tion should exert over schooling and training... a negotiation of meaning... to show, or make manifest... to allow the story to unfold at its own pace'. As a result, as Gestalt psychology has it, the pattern emerges from the ground. This process cannot be contrived or forced, for if it comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had better not come at all.

To allow the imagination such free play requires not only will and daring but also security as well as confidence. For security, Phil perforce worked for many years on the edge of academe, finding it 'a strange and not always pleasant experience'. Confidence, he writes movingly, he has at last found amongst colleagues who stood by him in time of crisis in the more congenial institutional environment for him of the Department of Cultural Studies at the University of East London. While it is instructive to speculate how different things might have been had he been able to find a home elsewhere in the mainstream of higher education, it is no accident that he has found himself at UEL. For he is a self-confessed Maverick, actively embracing this perennial term of condescending and dismissive academic abuse. (Samuel T. Maverick was, as Phil tells us in one of his many fascinatingly informative asides, a mid-Victorian Texan cattle rancher who refused to brand his cattle with his name). And UEL is a gathering ground of Mavericks. It is the home also of Tyrrell Burgess's School for Independent Study, of Mike Rustin's idiosyncratic combination of Marxism with Kleinian psychology and of Derek Robbin's faithful translations of Pierre Bourdieu into English contexts.

Long may it remain so, building on this strength rather than sacrificing it in the hopeless attempt to become like an ordinary university. For, in the orthodox academic world of Official Knowledge, youth studies in particular have become cramped into an economism well criticised by Phil Mizen in a review in the last issue of this journal. This limited research paradigm focuses on 'transition' as a rite of passage between developmental stages of psychological immaturity and maturity, complemented by a sociological transition narrowly restricted to (vocational) maturity and (nuclear) family formation. The 'transition studies' to which this old paradigm has given rise, operate within conventionally understood notions of social class (for which educational qualifications are taken as proxies) and thus take no account of the class recomposition of recent years. 'Social exclusion' is seen in terms of a so-called 'underclass' and taken as a 'dysfunction' to be overcome by individual effort combined with ameliorative reform rather than being seen as integral to and generated by the system of social categories the research paradigm accepts as given. Phil Cohen's rethinking of the youth question is antithetical to this mainstream sociological approach, which ignores most of the contributions that cultural studies have made to youth studies.

Instead of taking account of such contributions, the same old economic approach is trotted out once again, for instance, in its latest unimaginative rewriting for an ESRC research programme already being carved up by the usual suspects in their university research departments, this orthodoxy is spiced with flavour-of-the-month risk sociology borrowed from the German Ulrich Beck. That transition has become 'risky' merely adds to the succession of qualifying adjectives in this series of repetitive and redundant 'long', 'extended', 'fragmented', 'fractured', 'disrupted', etc., etc., 'transition studies'. Instead of this impoverished and unoriginal research paradigm, a sociology of learning needs to be created that recognises the activity of its subjects in making use of such affordances as they discover to their self-realisation in the environments within which they find themselves. This will be something other than the tired notion of 'structuration' borrowed from Giddens.

It would recognise the reality, as Phil Cohen describes it, of 'multiply divided subjects in a multiply divided society'. This is not to dissolve the subject and its individual identity into the postmodern flux - although there are times when Phil, like his mentor Stuart Hall, seems to veer very close to this edge - but reconstitutes 'a differential analysis of the youth question, and the relative autonomy of its instances'. This method could be applied as much to the old as to the young, to infants as well as to the middle aged; as I remember teachers in China being baffled by our Western notion of adolescence, protesting that 'every stage in human life has particular problems associated with it' and so the socially indeterminate stage following upon the apparently uncontended but equally socially constructed stage of childhood was no different in this respect. Save that, as Phil writes, 'the relative autonomy of youth is founded on a structural principle - the relative autonomy of the political, economic and ideological structures of capitalist society. It is the discontinuities between these structures which poses the youth question as a specific instance of their articulation'.

But to write like this in the New Era of New Labour is to sound positively antediluvian. Phil faced this relegation to the outer darkness with his contribution to the Labour Party's Youth Policy Review, 'Labour Listens to Youth', which he describes as 'a purely cosmetic exercise, designed to produce the image of a rejuvenated Labour Party'. Now that a New Labour government is preparing to introduce compulsory direction for young people and others into training and education - workfare and learningfare, if not (yet) the compulsory community service favoured by President Clinton - such voices as Cohen's need to be heard. He is not always so relentlessly theoretical as perhaps this review has implied. Yet theory now is more than ever required and Phil always seeks to combine it with analysis and description in his method of 'negative capability'. As a result, part of his

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project of being an intellectual rather than an academic involves writing accessibly in a variety of forms for a variety of audiences. Like his heroes Marx, whose 800 page Volume One of 'Das Kapital', Phil tells us, has only 200 bibliographic references, over half of them to works outside the area of political economy, and Freud, whose 'The Interpretation of Dreams' has 671 pages with 310 references (two thirds of them to works of art, literature and philosophy), Phil derides the 'ritual display of scholarship' with which writers of academic papers feel they have 'to authorise almost every sentence' (Mulder, F. and Scully, D., 1996). He instances a 30 page monograph with 214 footnotes and even more references, none of them drawn from outside its immediate research area. This 'citology', as Bourdieu calls it, is leading to its own absurdities. In the New Contracting State where research funding follows measurable output, 'the quantity of literature increases at a rate which would make it more than a full-time job for anyone just to read what was relevant to their own area of interest ...its range of reference narrowing down to the point where most of it is, perhaps fortunately, of little importance to anything except the author's own CV'.

And yet, as another hero of enlightenment, Galileo declared, 'It still moves'. All the hi-tech gloss and waving flags of a New Labour regime cannot disguise the fact that this is still the same old world of capitalism and imperialism, merely intensified and globalised in a new world order. And we cannot allow the horrors and complexities of this new situation 'so to overpower our imaginations', as Phil says, 'that we are incapable of envisaging another kind of world, in which they would not be possible'. 'So the task we face, is to find another way of getting our bearings, of reconstructing a middle ground of discourse which is neither political platitudes or academic pontification, to build some real bridges between theory and practice, the high ground and the profane realpolitik of the staffroom and classroom.'

To do this we need people like the author of this collection. People who are prepared to put themselves on the line by joining with the struggles of the oppressed, especially those young people who resist the relentless vocational pressures upon them for conformity at all levels of contemporary education. Cohen's arguments need to be engaged with, not dismissed. You may not agree with all of them but, as Keats - whose presence, along with those of many other poets and rebels, haunts this collection - wrote, 'there lives not the Man who may not be cut up, aye hashed to pieces on his weakest side.' Even 'The best of men,' Keats continued, 'have but a portion of good in them'. This good is, however, 'a kind of spiritual yeast in their frames which creates the ferment of existence - by which a Man is propelled to act and strive and buffet with Circumstance'. This book presents a cross section from the lifework of such an individual, who has dared to become

what he is by realising his inborn talent in the circumstances, as he reveals them here, in which he found himself.

It is not an easy road to tread. In a world such as ours has become, it is a constant struggle and those who do not struggle for the identity with which to express themselves, can find themselves all too easily alienated into (an)other than what they are. Former-radicals, as Phil notes, become New Realists, 'often fervent converts to the pragmatics of the knowledge/power game, caught up opportunistically in the slipstream of events that they do not control'.

So, this is another and larger specificity of the youth question. As Nietzsche wrote, 'Everyone is born with their own talent but few possess the degree of inborn and acquired toughness, endurance and energy actually to become a talent, that is to say, to become what they are: which means to discharge their talent in works and actions'. Phil Cohen has managed to do this and this book is a unique record of his Maverick progress. Read and rethink, then - Go, and do thou likewise!

Patrick Ainley *University of Greenwich, School of Post-Compulsory Education and Training.*

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Working Party of the General Synod of the Church of England

Youth A Part

Church House Publishing 1996

ISBN 0 7151 4864 8

£7.95

pp 196

RICHARD POWELL

The decision to entitle the report with the rather ambiguous one of *Youth A Part* was to focus on the reality of the situation, that the church could see the danger of being distant from *young people*, and while appreciating that fact, a commitment to the production of a report demonstrates that it is prepared to take issues of youth seriously. As the mission statement at the inception of the working party clearly stated in January 1994:

To decide exactly where the Church is at with young people and where it hopes to go.

One of the primary reasons for the report was undoubtedly the dramatic decline in the numbers of young people attending the Church of England. Sunday attendance among those aged 14-17 had dropped by 35% in the last nine years, and the report says:

The questions this pose for those in the Church are firstly what is happening to ring about this drop in attendance and secondly how can we make our churches and other initiatives more attractive to young people so that they have the opportunity to come to know the gospel.

In his introduction to the report the Archbishop of Canterbury indicates the danger in being sucked into and being overwhelmed by the percentage decline, but what we should concentrate on are the opportunities that constantly face the Church.

It was a pity that the initial launch of the report was overshadowed by the problems associated with Rev Chris Brain, the Anglican priest who had abused his position of power whilst developing successful new forms of worship ...the tabloid press had a field day, and some of the so called 'worthies' seem to have missed the plot. *The Times* appeared to be in some type of ecclesiastical time warp, critical of the style of the report ...referring to it as having the prose of a management manual and being fundamentally obsessed with 'resources', arguing that:

Perhaps the Church should recognise that the young will, like the prodigal son, come back to faith anyway after sowing some wild oats. But that return will be more likely if the Church remains on firm foundations.

The trouble dear Mr Times reporter is the bleak reality. This report might easily be entitled People-A-Part... with the 12-40 age group missing: the prodigal has not returned, a generation has dissappeared. Although it would appear that children's work is still thriving, the age profile in most churches is biased towards the 50+ in the bulk of Anglican communities, with growth being confined to the eclectic congregations whether they are of an evangelical, or catholic tradition. This Report says so much to the whole Church about the relationship of the 'lost generation' who feel that the Church is not where *it is at* for most of them.

The Report is, in general, an easily accessible read even if the chapter on 'A Theology for Youth Work' might prove more troublesome. It provides the heart of the report: after all are we not talking about the Church here, God and all that type of 'stuff'. It is certainly the one I would like to base a tutorial on if the Report were to be on the reading list of any youth and community course. As I once discussed with a student looking for a subject for his dissertation ...what about exploring the difference between Christian and secular youth work: the student, needless to say, concentrated on a particular brand, which for him was that of liberation theology. If a criticism could be levelled at this chapter it is that it does not really reflect the wider theological framework within which Anglican youthwork operates, please remember the Anglican notion of the broad Church. At the centre of this chapter is the notion that the Incarnation is all consuming' ...Jesus Christ acted in human history to restore a creation broken by human sin'. The strength of the Report stands, or falls on this Chapter. If the church is to make any impact in this post-modern (a concept that the Report refers to) world then it will have to come to terms with how it communicates an understanding of God that will inevitably mean exploring themes such as relativism and pluralism.

Spirituality: the difficult one! It is interesting to note that the only chapter not to get a conclusion is the one about Spirituality. Working Spiritually is a delightful romp exploring much that the Church has to offer by way of enhancing all things spiritual, even if its all a bit too esoteric, or just plain confusing at times. I get the general feeling that this chapter was written, either in a rush, or like one of those letters that gets passed around for each to contribute without the other knowing what has gone before. Either way it produces the same result, being 'bitty' and lacking in coherence. One quote was particularly impressive:

...Spiritual development is not about religion... It is about getting in touch with the deeper parts of life - valuing the experiences of awe and wonder, of hurt and sorrow, relationships with other people and the natural world, and coming to an understanding of what is meant by the term 'God'. Francis Cattermole (1990).

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It is important to recognise that the Anglican Church has much to offer, even given the criticism that I have made, to the spiritual life of the nation which we ignore at our peril. There is much to be gained from reading this chapter even if it only raises questions, why not try it out on your local vicar ...bound to generate healthy debate to say the least. Certainly the world outside the Church seems to be interested in all things spiritual, the Church could be on a winner with this topic.

One of the main emphasis of the Report is that young people need to be taken seriously and that the Church must include them in its plans for the future. It is evident from the Report that some young people are already involved in leadership and active in the decision making processes at most levels, this must continue but become the norm rather than the exception.

The Report is certainly thorough in its presentation of Anglican youth work past, present ...and possible future. It is enlivened by interesting anecdotes throughout, which give it a real feel, connecting you with a living organism not a museum. This is not the Church created by the media images but one which engages vigorously, and wishes to continue to engage in all areas of society. So often the Church is marginalised, seen to be anachronistic, a pathetic lone voice. This Report clearly presents a more passionate picture, there is still life and faith perspective on things still has much to offer. If you want radical alternatives you might find it in something that is, by some, presumed to be dead: the Church.

The final chapter provides a springboard by way of clear recommendations and objectives which are as good as any youth organisation might provide. Its vision is certain:

The vision for a Church which takes young people seriously. It is a Church where young people fully and actively participate at every level. It is a Church which is built on good relationships, where young people particularly are concerned, not only with each other, but with those inside and outside the Church. It is a church where there is a good theological understanding of why and how it goes about its work with young people. It is a Church which recognises that work of this quality needs resources and has the faith and courage to commit significant resources to the young people in the Church.

Each of the 16 recommendations are backed up by practical suggestions of how they might be enacted by giving examples from the various dioceses. This is a report which has taken its task seriously. Only time will tell if the church can meet the challenge.

Since the Report has been published it has been used by the Anglican community to raise the profile of the work of young people at all levels.

It is too early to say what impact the Report is having but if the response of diocesan youth officers is anything to go by it has already provided a window of opportunity to enable the Church of England to see where it has come from and what type of future can be expected if the Report is ignored. If the indicators of good practice, which seem to be producing a degree of success, are embraced, and adequate resources provided, then there might be a hope for a brighter tomorrow. One cannot but help ask the question of such an ancient institution, is this all too late? As an organisation it has stood on the edge so many times. It is no stranger to conflict and schism, but given the bad theology Habgood fudged through over the ordination of women and the tricky issue of practising gay priests has the Church enough energy to devote to matters beyond the insular? Or will the people outside the Church continue to be 'People-A-Part'.

To help parishes assess the current state of play, as well as the Report, a précis and a resources pack have been produced. The précis is cheap and thin which means it might actually get read by more members of the local churches who consequently might be prepared to explore some of the issues raised. The resources pack provides a variety of activities to help parishes promote the report and put in place some of its proposals.

Richard Powell is a Youth Advisor to the Bishop of Durham.

Shmuel Shulman and Inge Seiffge-Krenke

Fathers and Adolescents: Developmental and Clinical Perspectives

Routledge 1996

ISBN 0 415 11791 7

£45 (hbk)

£14.99 (pbk)

pp 249

CHRISTINE NUGENT

The authors of this text draw attention to the lack of research on fatherhood and to the fact that much of this research adopts a deficit model where fathers are noteworthy by their absence or by the harm they do in families. In this context they argue it is useful to focus on the positive contributions men bring to this relationship and to emphasise the significant part men play in children's and young people's development.

'Fathers and Adolescents' explores the relationship of fathers and their sons and daughters from a predominantly psychodynamic perspective.

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Although there are passing references to other disciplines such as sociology, history, anthropology and animal studies, it is developmental psychology and its application in clinical practice which forms the core of the text, not surprising since the authors are respectively Associate Professor of Psychology at Bar-Ilan University, Israel and senior Lecturer in Developmental Psychology at the University of Bonn. There is thus very little discussion of the social and economic context in which fathering takes place and much more emphasis on the intra-psychic dynamics of fatherhood and adolescence.

The authors draw on their clinical experience and Freudian and Eriksonian concepts are much in evidence in their analysis. The key developmental tasks for the adolescent are thus assessed to be individuation and separation, with little acknowledgement of the eurocentric nature of such concepts (Robinson 1995). As well as achieving emotional independence from parents they suggest that other adolescent development tasks include 'achieving a masculine or feminine social role' and 'preparing for marriage and family life' (p 36). No room here and no mention anywhere in the text of lesbian or gay male sexuality either in the young people themselves or their fathers. The text is uniformly heterosexual in its assumptions and includes, for example, concerns about the risks of 'effeminacy' in young boys who lack a father figure.

Stereotypical assumptions about appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour, where to be female is to be passive and to need intimacy and to be male is to be active, individualistic and more distant, appear to be reinforced in the text. Thus the authors describe the inherent 'naturalness' in the perceived distance and detachment of fathers relationships with their children when compared to mothers.

In sum, it suggested that by their natural inclination to be distant, fathers are more capable of acceptance and respect for the adolescent's wish to be separate (p 27).

Furthermore young women who seek control are described as denying their femininity and passivity. Two examples will suffice of a sexism which pervades this text. Referring to case studies of young women the authors write:

These case studies illustrate a facet of identification with the father which may occur should the mother not be fully available: namely the development of a very active problem solving personality at the cost of denying femininity and passivity (p 157).

Elsewhere they are concerned about a young woman patient who:

developed rather masculine sexual behaviour, marked by a strong aversion to desires of passive submission (p 158).

As opposed to egalitarian concepts of more androgynous parenting skills and relationships these authors pose the distinctiveness of male and female roles and the centrality of the father's position and authority. They reason that mothers and fathers have not adopted more egalitarian parenting because:

as our book suggests the distinctive role of fathers may serve certain functions in the development and adjustment (or maladjustment) of their children (p 207).

The authors devote a chapter to fathers in step-families and note the positives which may accrue for both step-parents and children if this relationship is handled with care. In addition this chapter on step families is the only one which devotes explicit attention to the issue of power in families.

The authors note that the fathers role is under studied in families where a child is chronically ill and they attempt to address some of these issues, and make important points about fathers' exclusion and marginalisation. However this chapter is marred by the use of a deficit model of disability where there is no exploration of the extent of its social construction and where outmoded terms such as 'physically handicapped' are used. The chapter on incest is discussed within a psychoanalytic framework and although there is one reference to feminist perspectives, this is far outweighed by an analysis permeated with concepts of unresolved Oedipal fantasies. At times daughters may be held responsible for their fathers sexual assaults on them. For example regarding a 13 year old girl and father, whose relationship is described as having 'a clearly incestuous character' and where the mother noted that her daughter slept with her husband in the double bed while she slept in her daughters bedroom, the authors conclude:

father and daughter exploited the daughter's illness and the mother's dysfunctioning as means to fulfil their own needs (p 141).

In this way power relations between parent and child are elided in favour of an analysis of joint collusion and complicity. Furthermore mothers are held to be complicit in families where fathers abuse their children and no reference is made to the literature which offers a critique of such crude mother blaming perspectives (Hooper 1992). In addition the authors offer a rather pessimistic and deterministic analysis of the long-term effects of childhood abuse and take no account of the growing survivor literature which counteracts such a view (Stanford 1991).

In conclusion, the authors assert the centrality of fatherhood in both 'normal' and pathological adolescent development, and the particular importance of the father in helping the adolescent achieve autonomy. However

the book fails to transcend the limitations of psychoanalytic perspectives and as such ultimately serves to reinforce rather than to challenge the status quo on fathering.

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Hilary Pilkington (ed)

Gender, Generation and Identity in Contemporary Russia

Routledge, London 1996

ISBN 0 415 13543 5 (hbk)

ISBN 0 415 13544 3 (pbk)

£45.00 (hbk)

£14.99 (pbk)

pp 306

MIKE PRESDEE

Any academic who attempts to produce a publication about an entire country that is geographically vast; made up of diverse cultures, economies, and interests; is suffering both social and economic degeneration and re-generation at the same time; where law and order means little; where political stability is at very best fragile; where a week is a long time in history; runs the risk of producing an account that is laudable in intent but deemed to be frustratingly inadequate by those with any personal experience of such a country. This, unfortunately, is such a book.

Hilary Pilkington has brought together, in this edited book, respected writers on Russian life, and in this case on young Russian women in particular, in a collection that attempts 'to provide space for young women's experience to be written about...' (p 6). Right from the beginning she attempts to 'cut her cloth', when she asserts 'There is, in the times we live in, no collective social identity birthright; rather identities of gender, generation, sexuality, class, race, ethnicity and religion are constructed in time and space'. From this untheorised beginning we could only expect some isolated yet occasionally rich pickings, from the smorgasbord of Russian life, and that is precisely what follows.

However this collection does communicate the chaos of social and economic life that makes up the everyday experience of contemporary Russian life, however we define Russian. Where old structures of economic life, old ways of making sense of the world, old ways of creating social life, no longer hold true, leaving a legacy of confusion, fear and insecurity that makes way for the re-emergence and strengthening of hidden systems of power that act against and marginalise the powerless groups in society, such as the 'young' and 'women'. In this case 'Patriarchy' once more unashamedly asserts itself exposing its internal dynamics which have become visible and open to critique.

The first 'section' on economic life shows clearly how a western analysis is totally redundant. It is difficult to know even precisely what employment means to the employed. Many State workers, such as teachers, may not get paid for many months and even then it may well be a fabricated salary. Any visitor to Russia will soon hear of factory workers, like the glass workers of Vladimir, who may get paid with the goods they produce themselves, forcing them to set up stalls on the roadside and sell for their supper. Outside textile factories they will see women sitting by piles of pillows they have just made plying their desperate trade, whilst elderly women 'mind' all day, single buckets of potatoes hoping to supplement their precarious State pensions. This state of economic uncertainty has exacerbated and accelerated and the marginalisation of young women, especially those young women with limited formal educational experiences and from rural backgrounds. However it is clear that the household economy has taken on new meanings and practices once again, with the 'market place' being central to existence and the formation of identity.

In this situation anything and everything is marketable. Old medicines appear on makeshift stalls, wine bottles with dubious contents are bought and sold but never consumed, circulating around and around the market place. And as the next section on sexuality shows, so is sex mediated by the market. From an inherently sexually conservative society, the market place now plays its part in the mediation of sexual identity, unrestrained and uncontrolled. But this 'section' of the book never really begins to grasp the enormity of its canvas and its various sub-sections suffer too much from oversimplification. The subject is really too big. But the success lies once more in the chaos. Yes, sexual violence has and does exist. Yes, youth prostitution has and does exist. But, homosexuality and lesbian life is more tolerated by 'educated' young people. But, beliefs about reproductive health seem similar to western beliefs. We get once more a taste, but no more. The debate and the work is just beginning.

The final section on youth culture stands apart from the rest of the book as the most authoritative, (except for the strange inclusion of the final chapter on the 'folklore of pregnancy'). Where Pilkington herself exam-

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ines the interaction between 'texts, cultural products and artefacts and media forms' and 'practices of consumption, leisure activities, style creation, music, and dance, media use, language' (p 190). She places the genderisation of young Russian women within the discourse on young women both in the West and within Russian academic work. From this we can glean much information about the overall formation of youth social groups and how meanings are created from their relationship to the market place and patterns of consumption. In a society where the market place has no 'hidden hand' then the act of consumption takes on a new and essential 'dynamic' in a way that we, from a system of controlled market consumption can not hope to understand. It has a true 'post modern' dynamic in that consumption by itself can create new meanings and identities which at present may not still be understood. Pilkington, however, positions young women in the traditional marginalised category of the 'invisible' even though she describes some quite extraordinary and powerful behaviour.

Overall this is a rather 'patchy' book that should be regarded as part of the beginning of the West's increasing interest in matters to do with Russian youth. It tells us more of what was than what is, as the veil on the Old Soviet Russia is systematically pulled aside. Readers should beware of generalising too much about young people in Russia from this book, as the concept of 'youth' itself, could include people we consider to be grown adults. With a critical approach readers will learn much about the process of the emergence of a new Bourgeoisie in Russia and the practicalities of an everyday life created in chaos and in the end to whose advantage, such chaos lies.

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*Stephen Clarke***Social Work as Community Development: A Management Model for Social Change**

Avebury 1996

ISBN 1 85972 098 6

£35.00 (hbk)

pp 265

KEITH POPPLE**REVIEWS**

The relationship between social work and community development has not been an easy one. Nearly forty years ago the 1959 Youngusband Report, which examined the role of social workers in local authority health and welfare services, identified community work alongside case work and group work as the social work trinity. This concept was further developed with the 1968 Seebohm Report which confirmed the adoption of community work by social work. Except for a flurry of activity in the 1970s there has been little evidence in England and Wales of community development and social work forming alliances. The exception has been in both Scotland and Northern Ireland where community development has a firmer hold within social services departments.

Clarke's substantial book is an examination of how social work could reconnect with the neighbourhoods it serves and employ a 'management model approach' for social change. The book is 'aimed at social workers, as much as it is towards community development workers' (p 4). However, I have grave doubts that Clarke's work will be read widely. There are two main reasons for this. One is that although community development workers and social workers frequently strive for theoretical and knowledge based texts to assist them in their practice this volume is not in the format that they will immediately warm to. Overall, it is a well referenced but dense piece of work that has many elements of a 'Phd into a book' feel about it. Secondly, the book is published by Avebury and only in hardback at £35. This therefore is for library use, and it is extremely unlikely that practitioners will purchase their own copy.

Notwithstanding the above criticisms the book is unique amongst contemporary texts in opening up the debate between community development and social work. There is much for each form of practice to learn from the other, although as someone who has been engaged in the area for some years, I would argue, along with many others, that social workers would be the greatest beneficiaries. This point is made by Clarke who argues that British social work is the only practice of its kind in Europe that fails to employ a community perspective. There have of course been exceptions with the development of community social work in the mid 1980s. However, the focus of social work is limited. A social worker's role

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is constrained by the demands of law and regulation. In the Thatcher/Major era this was primarily about restricting social workers boundaries by defining outcomes through the 'contract culture'. Whether this inflexibility will change with the present Labour Government is uncertain.

The case Clarke makes for community development practices within social work is based on the fact that the most vulnerable in society are 'now dependent on the caprices of accountants for much-needed social support'(p 13). He argues that by developing a management model for social change which places citizens empowerment at the centre there are possibilities for community members to focus on what they can do for instigating change. In other words it is about doing *with*, rather than doing *for* community members.

Returning to the point made earlier. The reader is left with a book of considerable depth and weight. It will be a useful reference book for those that are keen to make social work more reflexive and appropriate to people's needs. The drawback is that it will probably remain on library shelves. I would therefore urge the author to consider producing a more accessible and practitioner and policy maker friendly text. Clarke has something important to say, but fails to reach the target he intends.

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Erica Frydenberg

Adolescent Coping: Theoretical and Research Perspectives

Routledge 1997

ISBN 0 415 12211 7 (hbk)

ISBN 0 415 11212 5 (pbk)

£45.00 (hbk)

£14.99 (pbk)

pp 233

ANNA WHALEN

REVIEWS

Psychological research has, until recently, been focused on how adults cope with stress and applied this knowledge to children and young people without studying this age extensively in its own right. This book looks at how children and young people manage stress. It covers in detail the way coping with stress is defined and measured and the variables which determine approaches to coping, in particular age, gender, the family and social support.

Frydenberg sums up in a coherent and mostly accessible style a huge amount of research, largely from a psychological discipline. This is no mean feat, but what is more impressive is the relevance the material has for anyone working or living with children and young people. Although it is in no way a practitioners manual, there are useful lists and tables that can be adapted for direct work - for example, a list of 18 coping strategies, sub-divided into 3 categories: Solving the Problem, Non-productive Coping and Reference to Others (p 32-34). The book isn't just helpful in thinking about young people - it is applicable to anyone.

Of variables which affect how a young person deals with stress, age is a major factor. Research suggests that as teenagers get older they are more likely to use, for example, tension-reduction strategies (drinking, drugs, eating), invest in close friends, use self-blame and wishful thinking. In early teens young people are more likely to use physical recreation, professional help, working hard and expressing feelings as means to cope with stress.

There is a chapter devoted to gender differences in coping, the main differences being that girls are more likely to see situations as potentially stressful, to say they are experiencing stress, seek emotional support and identify body image as a source of stress. Boys are more likely to deny stress and are thus less likely to say they can't cope, but are more likely to use substance misuse as a means of coping. Surprisingly, one piece of research found that boys are more likely to seek out professional help. Physical recreation is used more by boys, as is social action, such as campaigning. A feminist analysis isn't obvious within the text, Frydenberg assumes the reader has

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some grasp of the nature/nurture debate, not just in terms of gender but other areas of socialisation. A message that she gets across throughout the book is the way an individual's unique life experience will impact on the coping strategy adopted.

Young people vulnerable to not coping are those who aren't optimistic, feel they have little control and have little family or social support. This didn't go far enough - missing was any mention of research on the impact of discrimination on young people as a source of stress and any resulting coping mechanisms adopted to handle this. Different forms of stress arise from specific social status and the values and expectations placed on individuals as a result. There was, for example, no explicit mention of class as a factor influencing the way young people experience and deal with stress. Britain's class system is more pronounced and rigid than that of Australia, where the author lives, but I still found this a significant gap in the book. Frydenberg draws on some Australian research around ethnicity and copying styles to make the point that cultural background influences the way that a young person deals with stresses, but no mention was made about the specific stresses particular groups, such as young black people, might experience and thus need to cope with. There is a chapter on how gifted young people perceive and cope with stress, but for many adults working with young people, a review of research on coping with discrimination would be useful.

Self-esteem and self-concept play a major role in determining how a young person copes with stress. Research shows they cope much better if they believe they can cope. This is influenced by the beliefs others have about an individual's ability to cope. Skills do play a part, but confidence and optimism are crucial to successful, functional coping. Adults use their values and attitudes when judging whether or not a young person is coping with a difficult situation. The author doesn't really address this, but it would be an interesting area for further research. Some young people use mechanisms adults (and other young people) may label as destructive, but they feel they are coping well at the time. If we use Frydenberg's definition of successful coping (the ability to maintain satisfactory role involvement with family, school, peers and wider community) then it is clear many young people are not coping - although they may feel they are.

The final two chapters of the book look at what the research is telling us. Frydenberg advocates the teaching of coping strategies at the beginning of teenage life, if not earlier. One researcher mentioned believes the early teaching of coping skills could be an inoculation against depression. The author emphasises the need to learn by doing, by participating in informal education aimed at enhancing emotional literacy. Whilst there has been a lot of focus on raising self-esteem as a starting point for enhancing coping mechanisms, Frydenberg points to evidence which suggests that develop-

ing skills in coping first could then lead to improved self-concept and thus higher self-esteem. The author gives three core components of developing a functional coping process: optimism, humour and metaphor. Optimism is about confidence, choice and control, humour is a tension reducer and builds trust (although it can be used inappropriately and as a way of avoiding stress) and metaphor is a way of exploring and describing oneself in a new, creative, non-threatening way - through play therapy, psychodrama or drawing.

Frydenberg ends by briefly putting the research into a social context - unemployment, poverty, individualism, sexual freedom, family changes and changes in internalised values in society. Young people depend on a range of influences for a healthy transition into adulthood - the family, school, health and community organisations. The logical next step is to put the messages from research into practice.

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Helen Braid, (ed)

A Stranger at My Table: Women Write About Mothering Adolescents

The Women's Press

ISBN 0 7043 4472 6

£8.99 pbk

JEAN SPENCE

Although Helen Braid admits to a positive relationship with her adolescent younger son, the real origins of this book lie in the difficulties she and her elder son endured as he entered his teenage years. Realising in the context of a support group that other mothers experience similar difficulties in dealing with their young adult children, she has gathered a collection of personal stories apparently with the intention of reassuring other mothers experiencing difficulties that 'they are not alone'. In this context, the book articulates some of the common points of conflict between parents and children of this age which seem perennial - untidy bedrooms, not arriving home at the appointed hour, refusal to take responsibility for the smooth running of the household, difficulties with school, expressions of sexuality; everyone who has cared for a young adult recognises these conflicts and most will also be aware of their temporary nature. However, there are also stories in this book about seriously disturbed adolescents and parents. I did not find many of these stories reassuring at all. Occasionally I wondered why they had been included and felt quite angry at the editor for allowing such personal pain to be publicised without context or analysis, and most of all, without the voice of the young people concerned.

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In this book, young people are the object of the story. The subjects are the mothers who have written about their experiences. In this sense, some of the pieces are reflective and quite moving, demonstrating a mother growing through her child's adolescence and learning about herself in the process. However, others, in describing the behaviour of their children simply reveal themselves to be the source of this behaviour. They do no more than illustrate the difficulties which young people have in dealing with their parents. Frequently it is the mother who is problematic during the child's adolescence. Often it is the parent who is dependent upon the child for emotional support, friendship and affirmation of self. In this situation, it is the parent who cannot cope with the child's growing need for independence and separation. Difficult and hurtful behaviour is often the only avenue open to a young person fighting to escape from a dependent parent and the self-revelatory nature of this book reveals this time and again.

Unfortunately, the majority of the mothers whose pieces are included in this text are the single parents of boys. Because most of the pieces emphasise the problems rather than the joys of the adolescent years, this gives a distorted picture both of single motherhood and of young adults in general. Although the sacrifices and struggles of single mothers to survive and care for their children in a hostile economic and policy environment is sometimes apparent within the text, this is not identified as the location of the problems. Rather, it appears in the majority of the cases that the writers believe that the source of their problems lies in the hormones of the adolescent, in the absence of fathers, or in their own inadequacies as mothers. Thus the problems are pathologised, that is unless drugs are identified as the source of the young person's antisocial behaviour.

Sometimes a parent describes extreme and disturbed behaviour, not only in relation to drug-taking, but also concerning mental illness and experiences of abuse. One parent writing here is clearly herself alcoholic and disturbed. What is particularly striking in these cases is the absence of adequate support services. Mothers are left alone to cope with withdrawn, obsessive and violent young people, children are left to cope alone with emotionally damaged parents and occasionally they do not cope. The consequences of the absence of relevant back up is family breakdown, illness and anti-social behaviour. Yet the editor makes no effort to make this point clear.

Helen Braid is offering a text which is populist in its appeal. I can imagine some parents of adolescents and young people reading the stories and finding solace in recognising some of their own pains and struggles described. Occasionally I found a piece moving and informative. More often, I was frustrated by the absence of editorial work which would have provided a meaningful framework and context for the various pieces. I did not understand why some articles were included. Some were well written and some were not. Ultimately, the absence of any serious analysis which

might provide the reader with a deeper understanding of the issues is a serious flaw in this book which as a consequence suggests a distorted and uneven view of adolescents and their mothers.

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Wesley Shumar

College For Sale, a Critique of the Commodification of Higher Education

Falmer Press 1997

ISBN 0 7507 0410 X

£13.95 (pbk)

pp 208

JOHN HOLMES

This book about the 'commodification' of higher education in the USA shows how:

the university has become a disciplinary system where workers and students alike are managed for maximal efficiency, to minimise the contradictions and legitimacy arises that threaten the whole system with crisis (p 183).

The system referred to is global capitalism. With such an ambitious brief this is a challenging and wide ranging book. 'Commodification', or the process of social activities only having value in terms of the market (referred to as reification by Marx) made major inroads into higher education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Universities were moved from having mainly a religious, moral and philosophical orientation into a science, technology and profit orientation. The decline of the autonomy of 'the community scholars' with corporate interests coming to dominate the governance of colleges and curriculum/research activity occurred many years ago. Shumar is more interested in commodification in the late twentieth century 'post-modern' world in which the process and conceptualisation of higher education has come to reflect market forces.

This has been an interesting book to review given I work at a British college undergoing rapid, radical transformation due to the very forces described by Shumar. It has been valuable to contextualise these changes and compare and contrast the trends described. However it has also been a frustrating read as I was looking for some answers in terms of an action plan to resist the forces of commodification because so far the logic of the market is

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winning against other models of education. The book itself cannot be described as easy to read nor one that produces clear cut answers, although I have to admit that just as I felt I could skip or skim a section (I also had a pile of marking to do) because it did not appear central to the argument I found the discussion to have intrinsic value. The US contextualisation of the 'political correctness' debate was one such area, as was the case-study material in particular of the managerial responses to racial incidents which managed to bypass both academics and students.

The themes of commodification are not new to those working in higher education in Britain - the packaging of the curriculum into modules and units; the increased emphasis on marketing and image; the growth of central administration and business managers; the increased workload as a result of larger numbers of students; the justification of increased work in terms of increasing competition for students and falling income per student; the development of audit and total quality management approaches; the growth of information technology and the pressures towards independent learning packages; the moves to a casualised workforce; and the decline of tenured academics.

Shumar discusses all these to a greater or lesser extent and uses his ethnographic skills as an anthropologist to look inwards at higher education rather than outwards to the usual topics of anthropology. It is in describing and analysing the moves to a casual workforce that Shumar is at his best, maybe because his writing reflects his own and his contemporaries experience as part-time faculty members in the 1980s who found that credential inflation meant that Ph.Ds no longer equated with tenured posts. The development of an academic 'underclass' of casual labour involved in teaching but not having time to undertake high status research activity is a salutary lesson for British academics, if the common pattern of what happens in the US then happens in UK. Shumar notes that 50% of classes are on average taught by part-timers in the US, and some community colleges are moving to 100% part-time tutors. The implications for turning the curriculum into a product with little or no time for taking responsibility for evaluation, curriculum development or involving student groups (other than as consumers) is a frightening one.

The impact of this important book will I fear be limited, and Shumar has partly himself to blame. Although he does stress the political dimension of education and is critical of anthropological colleagues in studying 'others' and avoiding political issues it is easy to get bogged down in some of the more dense parts of his writing. There is another aspect of commodification - the game of proving one's academic credentials by trying to show one has read all significant writers and understood all significant theories in the area. The danger in doing this is that the argument

gets lost in all the theories and methodologies, and the power to educate and politicise is lost. The roots of Shumar's thinking in the writings of Pierre Bourdieu could have been focused down and much else edited out. Despite the impressive bibliography one not mentioned was E.P. Thompson's *Warwick University Ltd*, a short Penguin Education book written as a political tract in the 1960s. Shumar could well have taken a lesson from Thompson's style as well as his ideas for all should try to make their ideas accessible especially if they are trying to politicise.

One area that Shumar does rightly highlight and one which has practical lessons relates to the development of collective bargaining in higher education in the US. The Yeshiva decision in which the Supreme Court decided that academic faculty did not have the right to collective bargaining as they were managerial employees involved in key decision making is discussed in detail. Since then Boston University faculty members successfully appealed against this decision in 1988 and collective bargaining has since grown rapidly in the public universities. Higher education has become divided in the US between institutions and within academic faculties about becoming involved in collective bargaining (so weakening the power of collective bargaining). The divisions between high and low status institutions, between academics primarily involved in research as opposed to teaching, between tenured and casual is one that British higher education must guard against. It seems that the pressure to proletarianise higher education staff in Britain will continue, with the image of the 'Community of Scholars' only existing as a myth employed by senior management to resist collective bargaining.

At the end of the book Shumar suggests, but does not develop the idea, that new forms of collective bargaining need developing to reflect the post-Fordist, post-modern world in which the dualism of management and workers can be seen to be breaking down. It remains to be seen how true this is but the old idea of academics taking ownership of their work and power as educators still seems to have credence. The danger is that academics will become just another form of alienated labour. Whilst this book is powerful as an ethnographic study of US higher education it would seem urgent that academics return to the essence of education as a political, liberating process and so break the 'banking' concept of knowledge (described so well by Paolo Freire, another surprising omission from the bibliography).

John Holmes *Westhill College.*

Andy Furlong and Fred Cartmel

Young People and Social Change: Individualisation and Risk in Late Modernity

Open University Press 1997

ISBN 0 335 19464 8

£13.99

pp 114 + viii

MIKE WAITE

This short book - just 114 pages, plus reference and index - operates on two levels. Some of the succinct, clearly written sections in the central chapters of the book are extremely useful and accessible summaries of recent statistical and analytical research. Issues covered in these sections have a broad range: political participation, use of drugs and solvents, health inequalities in youth, the changing youth labour market, involvement in crime, and sexual behaviour.

But the book is most interesting in its attempt to test currently fashionable theses about the nature of social change in the late twentieth century against evidence about contemporary transitions to adulthood. The authors focus on the ways in which life for young people involves a more intense experience of individualised risk than was the case even a decade or two ago.

They give particular consideration to the work of two sociologists who, whilst rejecting the extremes of post-modernist theorising, have emphasised the distinctive and new features of a contemporary situation which they characterise as 'high modernity'. Anthony Giddens has followed Ulrich Beck in arguing that social life today is characterised by a risk culture. These risks, it is suggested, have become increasingly individualised, so that 'unemployment, for example, may be seen as a consequence of a lack of skills on the part of the individual, rather than as a result of a general decline in demand for labour stemming from a world economic recession'.

Furlong and Cartmel state that 'the study of youth provides an ideal opportunity to examine the relevance' of such theories. 'If the social order has changed and if social structures have weakened, we would expect to find evidence of these changes among young people who are at the cross-roads of the process of social reproduction'. And so they set off into their summaries of empirical research aimed at uncovering 'evidence of the changing impact of social structures through the study of youth'.

Their essential finding is that it *seems* that the social world is unpredictable and filled with risks which can only be negotiated on an individual level, but that this subjective experience belies the fact that 'traditional sources

on inequality continue to ensure the reproduction of advantage and disadvantage among the younger generation'. Social changes there have been, but these have merely obscured such familiar causes of discrimination and powerlessness as class, gender and race.

Some of Furlong and Cartmel's passages pin-point how changes in the organisation of education or the youth labour market, for example, have contributed to the weakening of collective identities and to subjective individualisation. But the insistent repetition of their central point that 'although the collective foundations of social life have become obscure, they continue to provide powerful frameworks which constrain young people's experiences and life chances' comes to be frustrating. However 'true' the reader believes the book's thesis to be at a general level, the gap we are left with, between young people's subjective understanding of their situations and the objective realities which shape them, is one that we fall into rather than find ourselves able to bridge.

There are echoes in the authors' message of the old Marxist complaint about 'the working class' suffering from false consciousness. My sense is that the strategies and interventions suggested by Furlong and Cartmel's concern to reconnect young people with an accurate, scientific understanding of their place in society - to make them see, where now they are 'blind' - would be as much of a dead-end as old left approaches of preaching to their constituencies what they were judged to *need*, whether it was what they *wanted* or not.

What Furlong and Cartmel fail to explore properly is the way in which subjective experiences are part of the real ways in which class and other collective identities are formed and themselves shape social reality as well as being shaped by it. Whilst they are never crudely one-sided, their treatment of some of Giddens' insights into the processes of the reflexive constitution of self-identities and lifestyles illustrate the way the authors continually flee from the sociology of subjectivities, and thus vacate the ground on which uncertain but effective interventions around young people's self-image and perceptions of how they relate to others might be made.

Mike Waite is Community Development Manager for Burnley Borough Council.

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Thus, for a book:

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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, cmdnd 8686, London, HMSO.

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