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The Journal of Critical Analysis

— Youth —
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YOUNG HOMELESS PEOPLE AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

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Editorial Introduction

This special issue of Youth and Policy focuses on youth homelessness and social exclusion. Here, homelessness is defined as not being in or having immediate or easy access to secure accommodation, this broad definition includes young people sleeping in hostels, staying with relatives or on the floor of friends. There are no official statistics that reliably indicate the full extent of homelessness amongst young people: thus the scale of the problem is difficult to assess accurately.

The Report of the *National Inquiry into Preventing Youth Homelessness,* estimated that in 1995 there were approximately 246,000 young people (16-25 year olds) who were homeless. The NCH Action For Children report (1996) estimated the numbers of young single homeless as 33,000 (16-21 year olds). The homeless charity Centerpoint has estimated that amongst the people using their shelters in London, nearly four in ten are 17 years of age or younger. Skellington (1994) argues that 'The appearance of youngsters begging on the streets in growing numbers can be dated to late 1988 when conditions for benefit entitlement were fundamentally altered' (p. 24). Many voluntary agencies dealing with socially excluded young people assert that there is a serious underestimation in counting the numbers who are homeless. (See Fitzpatrick in this issue on the hidden homeless). Allard (1998) states 'Young people are only regarded as a priority if they are considered vulnerable. Most local authorities do not regard young people (even those aged only 16-17) as vulnerable just because they are living on the street. Even proven risk of violence, abuse or exploitation does not guarantee the granting of priority needs status' (p. 2). In this sense, because young people are rarely accepted as vulnerable they tend not to formally register as homeless and therefore their housing need is under-represented (see Crisis 1996).

The YMCA report *Bright Lights and Homelessness* (1996) estimated that in inner London nearly 10,000 young people are accepted as homeless by local authority departments each year. The report suggests that the total number of homeless young people living in London is 25,900. The report also documented that 1 in 20 young people aged 18-25 years old will present themselves to agencies as homeless in any one year. This figure rises to 1 in 10 if those in overcrowded or insecure accommodation are included. Of the one fifth of young homeless people who were aged under 18 years old, the majority were women (as Smith's evidence in this volume suggests). A similar discrepancy was found with respect to ethnic groups; Davies and Lyle with Deacon, Julienne and Kay (1996) found that people from black and minority ethnic communities are disproportionately represented amongst homeless people. One of the most vulnerable sets of young people are

those leaving local authority care. They tend to possess poor family networks, have few marketable qualifications and are more likely to have experienced difficult social problems as a result of unstable housing (Burrows, R. Pleace, N. and Quilgars, D. 1997; Van der Ploeg and Scholte 1997).

Currently, Piachaud (1998) argues that there are 9 million people in households receiving income support. He states, 'There are 13.3 million people - around a quarter of the population - living in families whose income, after housing costs have been met is less than half the national average'. One recent factor which may well have an impact in terms of increasing youth homelessness is the new restrictions on housing benefit which came into effect on 7th October 1996: the single room rent legislation. The payment for single people aged 16-24 years old is restricted to the average cost of shared accommodation in the local area. Centerpoint cite that in Brent, London, the proposed limit is £40 a week, but the average rent for a bedsit or room in the borough last year was £60.89.

The Policy Dimension

Throughout the 1980s there was widespread media coverage of the plight of growing numbers of homeless young people living in cardboard boxes and begging on the street. This built on modern coverage of youth homelessness made prominent by the drama documentary 'Cathy Come Home' by Ken Loach (1966). The image put forward was meant to evoke sympathy and force change. By the late 1980s and the early 1990s this image gave way to a governmental and tabloid media accusation of an emerging 'underclass' (Morris 1994). Also during this period the Conservative Government brought in the Criminal Justice Act, whereby young homeless people became identified with traveller and rave culture.

For government and media this non-traditional alternative lifestyle was portrayed as deliberately upholding values which were in opposition to those of mainstream society (See Collins 1997). Importantly, the link with travellers as a youth cultural style gave the appearance that homelessness was intentional, and an identifiable international youth subculture. In the case of young people, negative attitudes towards homeless people as 'scroungers' were often compounded by society's tendency to demonise youth (MacDonald 1997).

Changes in the media coverage of youth homelessness from description of a social problem, to branding homeless young people as a deviant 'underclass' reflected both Conservative policy and ideology. One of the central principles of Conservative ideology during the 1980s and 1990s was the celebration and promotion of individualism and the individual. In contrast, the appearance of young homeless individuals on the streets was often understood and reported without humane concern for the individual. Here the media, principally the tabloid press, and Conservative ministers' voices became fused. Skellington (1994, p 238) cites Sir George Young (1991), Housing Minster, quoted in 'The Mail on Sunday', You Magazine; 'Homeless people are the sort you tread on when you come out of the opera'. Both media coverage

and Government statements encouraged attitudes of increased insensitivity towards individual people. Sir Bernard Ingham (1991), former press secretary to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher described the homeless as a 'blot on the .... tourist landscape'; they were 'moral blackmailers'; they were 'incapable'; or they 'chose homelessness as a deliberate way of life' (Skellington (1994, p 256). The housing policies of both the Thatcher and Major Governments were primarily focused on the visible problem, that is removing the homeless from the streets. At the same time new forms of casualised, temporary, insecure and contractual employment created the potential for further homelessness (Hutton 1995).

Structural changes in the economy combined with Conservative policies aiming to break the power of organised labour resulted in substantial regional differences in employment opportunities (Gleeson 1989, Mizen 1995). High levels of unemployment and a lack of relevant training opportunities severely limited many young people's ability to gain entry to the labour market. Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) differentiation between two opportunity structures is relevant to this context: the legitimate and the illegitimate. In certain localities chances of employment are buoyant, whereas in other areas legitimate jobs are scarce. In this situation there may be more employment options in the illegitimate opportunity structure than in the legitimate labour market. Certain qualitative studies have shown that for some young people this has increased their chances of family instability and of becoming homeless (Williamson 1997). In the absence of legitimate training and employment, Craine (1997) shows that some young people apply their skills and imagination within the field of entrepreneurial illegality, although Blackman's study (1997b) indicates that the majority of these young people would be prepared to 'become legal' given the opportunity.

During the 1980s and 1990s Charles Murray, Sir Keith Joseph and David Willetts established a right-wing academic populism which set the pace for tabloids journalists to rail against Murray's 'new rabble'. Bagguley and Mann (1992) critique these 'principal ideologues' for their promotion of the idea that there exists a separate and dangerous youth 'underclass', defined socially by the notion of a dependency culture, and medically understood as presenting a form of 'cultural contamination'. Joseph and Murray in particular, exploit stereotypical and popular prejudice against young people, single mothers, youth subcultures and the unemployed, as a means to support their arguments, rather than presenting substantial evidence (Smith 1992). Theoretically the aim of the right has been to touch people's feelings and experiences through the generation of 'respectable fears' claiming that the young poor are not like ourselves. The political centre under the new Labour Government too, have followed this model of fear promotion based on a nostalgia for punishment. Although Labour have been less concerned to pillory young people, their exclusion of young people from the minimum wage and the withdrawal of benefit for single parents suggest a continuity, rather than a reversal, of punitive social policy.

The 'New Deal' and Youth Homelessness

Findings from all contributors in this edition demonstrate that youth homelessness cannot be solved solely by administrative actions such as increased allocation of accommodation (Blackman 1997). Downing-Orr (1996) demonstrates that it is necessary to understand the real human and emotional side of young people's experience of homelessness. She maintains that without acknowledging young people's responses it is unlikely that policy will have any substantive impact. Similarly the issue extends beyond housing provision to overall welfare policy.

Throughout the previous decade the gradual withdrawal of benefits from young people has led them into low pay or work 'off the cards' resulting in temporary or less secure forms of employment and education, whilst being pressurised within the parental home. As yet the current Labour Government has done little to alter the Thatcher-Major programme of tightening up on benefit claims, which itself has been shown to be more likely to result in young people being forced to stay with their families or become homeless (Jones 1995, Wilkinson 1995). Labour has not indicated any intention to reverse benefit changes effected by the previous government which are linked with youth homelessness. This includes firstly, single room rent restrictions on under 25s, secondly, the imposition of the Job Seeker Allowance which can restrict access to severe hardship funds or even result in non-entitlement to income support if a person is in education, and finally the restricted availability of Community Care Grant, or Crisis Loans to gain independent accommodation (see Coalition on Young People and Social Security; Allard, Dunn, and Haine 1996; Nimmo 1997).

The Labour Government's 'New Deal' welfare to work programme for all its presentational idealism, is in a direct line of continuity with the narrowness of previous policies. While it is too early to assess the overall contribution the New Deal may make in terms of youth unemployment, it is apparent that the policy context in which it is set may undermine the potential benefits fore those at risk of, or experiencing homelessness. The provision of low paid work or a temporary stay at a voluntary agency does not meet the needs of homeless or badly housed young people, many of whom require their prior needs to be recognized and resolved before employment can be sustained. Shelter, Centrepoint and others have questioned whether Single Room Rent is a suitable bedfellow for the New Deal. Where rents are high young people in paid work may be forced to make a difficult choice between housing and employment. This raises the spectre of an alternative fifth 'Gateway' of the New Deal for homeless young people: the foyers. The foyer's rules can be seen as complimentary to the compulsory aspect of the New Deal. On this basis routine surveillance of disaffected youth would be easy to administer because access to accommodation is determined by employment. As Gilchrist and Jeffs (1995) state 'Foyers adopt the workhouse model, without the cruelty, but like their forerunners they have all the potential for inflicting repressive sanctions on those unable or unwilling to conform' (p. 7). The appearance of television sets and microwave

ovens chained to the wall, not only runs counter to contemporary youth work practice, but also evokes images of the 'undeserving' and 'feckless' poor, as constructed by Victorian bourgeois morality (Simmons 1997). Foyers have been criticised as representing an anachronism in terms of replacing an outmoded system of Children's Homes with new residential institutions.

Brody (1997) also sees the New Deal as having a potentially negative influence. He argues that 'compulsion can have a detrimental impact on long term job prospects, removing claimants from their network where they might find work' (p. 4). This point is further elaborated by Perri 6 (1998) who argues that for many young people there is more chance of finding a job via the pub than the job centre. This will be highly familiar to those who read the popular Community Studies texts of the 1950s such as *Family and Kinship in East London* or *Coal is Our Life*. The element of compulsion in the New Deal provides a strong image that it is a last resort and therefore has a potentially stigmatising effect.

It is against this political policy context that the writers in this edition seek in a diversity of ways to address the personal, social and policy issues of young people's experience of being homeless. Suzanne Fitzpatrick presents some findings from her qualitative study on homeless youth in Glasgow. She gives special attention to the forgotten and often neglected young people who make-up the 'hidden' homeless in both city centres and regional suburban estates where individuals' actions are attuned to the complexities of understanding local territory.

Louis Julienne initially outlines the historical and social policy context relating to the formation of different organisations providing housing services for young homeless people from ethnic minority backgrounds. He examines youth homelessness in both the African Caribbean and Asian communities. Julienne then goes on to critically consider the way young homeless black people are defined and discriminated against through particular ideological and prescriptive categories, such as care leaver, refugee, ex-prisoner and asylum seeker while their social conditions, such as poor quality housing, low income, and structural racism which contribute to homelessness, tend to be neglected or overlooked.

Shane Blackman's study in north Kent on homeless young people offers a critical picture of young people who experience severely restricted structures of opportunity. He offers an alternative understanding of disturbing actions and hostile behaviour. Here ethnography is presented to show young people's diversity of experience, in a way which challenges those whose aim is to construct new moral panics.

Mark Liddiard and Susan Hutson examine the role played by the press in shaping public attitudes towards social issues such as youth homelessness. They critically consider that agencies who are at the 'cutting edge' of dealing with homelessness may also contribute towards stereotypical portrayals in their pursuit of financial survival and stability. It is possible to suggest that under these market conditions

the 'homelessness industry' becomes institutionalised and in some senses acceptable. This paradoxical situation has been consistently criticised by the founder of 'The Big Issue', John Bird, throughout the 1990s.

Joan Smith and Sheila Gilford provide a quantitative assessment of youth homelessness focusing particularly on the issues of gender and ethnicity. This paper asserts that the Governmental policy of the Rough Sleepers Initiative reinforced gender stereotypical images of youth homelessness as a single, white, male problem. They conclude that many studies of youth homelessness have implicitly reproduced masculinist understandings of young women's strategies when faced with homelessness.

The concluding paper to this volume by Simeon Brody from the National Homeless Alliance outlines a series of policy recommendations to both prevent and alleviate homelessness and also to develop and promote sustainable housing options. Collectively these papers make a contribution to extend the current debate on youth homelessness and social exclusion, at a number of different levels of practice and policy.

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HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS AMONGST YOUNG PEOPLE

SUZANNE FITZPATRICK

Introduction

Youth homelessness is a distressing phenomenon which has attracted consider-able, albeit intermittent, attention from politicians, researchers and the media in the past few years. Most of the debate has focused on visible groups within the young homeless population, such as those sleeping rough in city centre streets or staying in homeless hostels. This article highlights another dimension to youth homelessness which has received far less attention: the 'hidden' homelessness of young people who move around between friends' and relatives' houses and sleep rough in local communities. It is based upon evidence from a qualitative study of young homeless people from a peripheral housing scheme in Glasgow. The principal aim of this research was to explore the processes underlying youth homelessness by investigating the existence of distinct 'pathways' through homelessness. There was a particular emphasis on exploring young people's motivations for the decisions they took in dealing with their homelessness. This paper focuses on the experiences of young homeless people who remain concealed in their local area rather than seeking the help of public services or migrating to the city centre. The concept of 'territoriality' is found to have great significance for these young people (Robins and Cohen, 1978), that is attachment to their local area, and is the principal motivating factor which influences their route through homelessness.

The article begins by outlining the broad framework and research questions which underpinned the Glasgow study, including the concepts of 'visible' and 'hidden' homelessness, and then summarises the research process. The principal research findings on pathways through homelessness are presented to provide the context for a more detailed discussion of hidden homelessness amongst young people. An account is given of young people's experience of hidden homelessness; the characteristics of these young people; the events which precipitated their homelessness; and their motivations for dealing with their homelessness in this way. The article concludes by considering the policy implications of these research findings.

Background to the Research

Studying the processes involved in youth homelessness has been identified by a number of commentators as a priority for research (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994; Jones, 1995). This type of work is considered essential because snapshot surveys of homelessness, whilst providing a range of useful data, have only limited usefulness in aiding our understanding of the phenomenon because they shed little light on how people came to be homeless, or on what is likely to happen to them in the future. However investigating the dynamics of homelessness is acknowledged to be a difficult and complex task. In consequence, few studies have attempted to identify any kind of process in relation to youth homelessness.

Researchers who have considered these dynamics have generally implied that there is one main, progressively problematic career through youth homelessness. Various studies have suggested that the housing situation of young homeless people deteriorates over time, with episodes of rooflessness, residence in traditional hostels and migration between cities occurring more often in the later stages of a homelessness career (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994; Jones, 1993). It is also argued that the additional problems these young people face, such as unemployment and involvement in crime and drug abuse, worsen the longer they are homeless (for example, Chamberlain and MacKenzie, 1994).

The key research question underlying the Glasgow study was whether young homeless people did experience a uniform 'downward spiral', or whether a series of distinct processes within youth homelessness could be identified. In other words, if there were subgroups within the young homeless population which followed different 'pathways' through homelessness, and may require distinct policy responses. (See Clapham and Fitzpatrick, 1998 for a discussion of the pathways approach.) One issue of particular interest was the relationship between 'visible' and 'hidden' forms of homelessness.

The concept of hidden homelessness has been much discussed in recent years (for example, Greve, 1991). However the distinction between hidden and visible homelessness is seldom drawn with any precision. Webb's (1994) helpful discussion of these issues forms the basis of the definition now given. A person's homelessness can be considered visible because:

- *it is recorded in official statistics, that is, they have applied to and/or have been accepted by a local housing authority as homeless; or*

- *they are in contact with homelessness agencies and/or staying in the official network of homeless accommodation; or*

- *they are sleeping rough in visible areas or on known sites.*

Conversely, then, the hidden homeless are those whose homelessness is not visible in these respects. The main circumstances which have been argued to constitute hidden homelessness are:

- *staying 'care-of' friends and relatives*

- *sleeping rough in places other than known sites*

- *staying in an institution because there is nowhere else to go*

- *enduring relationships which are violent or otherwise highly unsatisfactory*

- *living in intolerable housing conditions or insecure accommodation*

However, this extension of the definition of homelessness to encompass a broad range of unsatisfactory housing circumstances has been criticised on the basis that

it may devalue the plight of those with no home at all (Pleace, *et al*, 1997). In this article the term hidden homeless refers to young people sleeping rough away from known sites or moving around between friends' and relatives' houses without any secure base. These are situations which I would argue clearly constitute homelessness, and indeed were identified by the young people who participated in the study as key dimensions of their homeless experiences.

As mentioned above, most research into youth homelessness has focused on the more visible aspects of the phenomenon, particularly young people in contact with homelessness agencies (for example, Shelter, Scotland, 1994; Shelter, Scotland, 1995; Strathdee, 1992). This is unsurprising given that, by definition, the plight of those who are visibly homeless attracts most attention and they are relatively easy to contact. However, a few studies have provided a limited amount of evidence on hidden homelessness amongst young people. For example, Hutson and Liddiard (1994) suggested that young people who are hidden homeless normally resolve their problems at an early stage, either by returning to the parental home or by taking up their own tenancy, or move on to visible homelessness.

A key objective of the Glasgow study was to illuminate young people's experience of hidden homelessness. However the intention was to place this data within the context of a broader study of the processes of youth homelessness in order to build up an integrated picture of its hidden and visible dimensions.

The Research

The research was based in a council housing estate in Glasgow called Drumchapel. Drumchapel is situated approximately 7 miles to the north-west of Glasgow city-centre, and is one of four peripheral housing schemes in the city which were built in the 1950s and 60s to cope with the post-war housing shortage. The area has long been characterised by poor housing conditions, high levels of unemployment and poverty, and population decline, as have the other peripheral schemes.

There were three stages of fieldwork. First, eight group interviews were conducted with young people living in Drumchapel aged between 16 and 25. They were contacted through schools, housing, social work and youth agencies in the estate. These focus groups were used to generate hypotheses about pathways through homelessness and to recruit young people for later stages of the research. The principal stage of fieldwork consisted of twenty five biographical interviews with young single homeless people aged 16 to 19 years old who were living in, or originated from, Drumchapel. Young people were contacted both through local agencies in Drumchapel and the city-wide homeless network in Glasgow (see below) in order to reflect as broad a range of homelessness experiences as possible. The final stage of fieldwork was a follow-up study of these twenty-five young people one year later. This tracking exercise was successful in obtaining some amount of information about the progress of all but three of these young people. In all, fifty three young people were interviewed in the course of the research.

Glasgow has a city-wide network of homeless services for single adults and specialised accommodation for young people provided by the public and voluntary sectors. Emergency accommodation for homeless people (including young people) is provided through the local authority's centralised reception centre called the Hamish Allen Centre (HAC). The HAC is widely acknowledged as an innovative and high-quality service for homeless people (Glasgow Council for Single Homeless, 1993). At the time the fieldwork was conducted, Drumchapel had its own youth housing project (Southdeen) run by the local authority, which consisted of a core complex of self-contained furnished flats, and furnished and supported scatter flats in the surrounding area.

Agencies in Drumchapel which were contacted to obtain the sample of respondents for the group interviews were deliberately *not* asked to refer only those young people who they knew or suspected had experienced homelessness. This approach was adopted to allow contact to be achieved with young people who had not made their homelessness known to any helping agency. It was successful in identifying a large number of hidden homeless young people in Drumchapel, some of whom were invited to participate in the biographical interviews.

The small scale and local nature of the study, and opportunistic sample selection, means that these research findings must be viewed primarily as a basis for formulating hypotheses which should be tested more widely in later research. The generalisability of the findings is enhanced by the selection of Drumchapel as the location of the study because it is very similar to other large housing schemes in Glasgow and elsewhere in Scotland. Furthermore, the available statistics (provided by Glasgow District Council and Stopover, Glasgow) indicate that these areas yield particularly high levels of youth homelessness. It seems likely that many of the processes revealed in this research would be found across the UK, as there is no reason to suppose that the motivations, experiences and attitudes of the young people interviewed are in any way unique to Drumchapel. However, patterns of homelessness will be affected by a range of contextual factors, including the nature of the service network. I return to this point in the concluding section.

Pathways Through Homelessness

This research indicated that there were distinct flows of young people who experienced different forms of homelessness, rather than one, uniform homelessness career. The biographical interviews were used to construct a typology of six homelessness pathways which characterised the general experience of the sample. The pathways were based on three variables. The first factor was whether the homelessness could be categorised as 'official' or 'unofficial'. In other words, whether the young person was staying in the network of accommodation provided by housing and homelessness agencies or had made their own informal arrangements. The second was the geographical location of the pathway. That is, whether young people were homeless in their local area of Drumchapel or had migrated to the city centre or elsewhere in Glasgow. The third factor was the stability of the pathway, that is whether the

accommodation and circumstances varied widely and often. The six pathways were as follows:

Pathway 1: Unofficial homelessness in the local area

Staying with friends and relatives, returning to the family home and sleeping rough in the local area

Pathway 2: Alternating between the official network in the local area and unofficial homelessness in the local area

Moving between the Southdeen complex or scatter flats and periods spent living at home, staying with friends and relatives and sleeping rough in the local area

Pathway 3: Stable within the official network in the local area

Staying for a considerable and continuous period within the Southdeen complex or scatter flats

Pathway 4: Alternating between unofficial homelessness in the local area and the city-wide official network

Moving between the city-wide network of young persons or adult hostels and periods spent living at home, staying with friends and relatives and sleeping rough in the local area

Pathway 5: Staying within the city-wide official network

Staying within the city-wide network of young person's or adult hostels for a considerable and continuous period, however this may involve remaining in one particular hostel or moving around the system

Pathway 6: City centre homelessness

Sleeping rough in the city centre, staying in the city-wide hostel network and (probably) spending periods in hospitals, rehabilitation units or prison

The six pathways are not completely separate because some, though by no means all, young people move from one pathway to another at different stages in their homelessness careers. For example, some young people who were unofficially homeless in their local area (Pathway 1) eventually gained access to the official network of accommodation in the local area (so moved onto Pathways 2 or 3). There was also some overlap between Pathways 5 and 6 as several young people who had been roofless in the city centre settled into the city-wide hostel network. Only one young person in the sample alternated between unofficial homelessness in the local area and the city-wide network (Pathway 4), but this may be more common in areas with no local accommodation provision for young people.

The most significant finding to emerge was that there was no evidence of young people from the local area pathways (1, 2 and 3) ever moving into patterns of

homelessness which involved sleeping rough in the city centre (Pathway 6). This was verified in the follow-up exercise a year later. Hence the principal conclusion of the research was that a sharp distinction can be drawn between city centre and local area homelessness.

This framework of pathways runs from the least to the most visible forms of homelessness, and some of the most important insights relate to the concealed homelessness of those on Pathway 1. The research suggested that unofficial homelessness in the local area is not necessarily a short-term condition which young people either resolve (by moving back home or into their own tenancy) or move on from into visible homelessness (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994). Many young people had been hidden homeless in their local area for very lengthy periods of time without ever coming to the attention of helping agencies, and it is their experiences which form the main focus of this article.

However, for the purposes of contrast, it may be helpful to consider for a moment the opposite end of the spectrum: the city centre homeless on Pathway 6. This is the stereotypical image of youth homelessness so often portrayed by the media, and it is the reality of some young people's homeless experiences. However, these young people appear to represent only one facet of a far broader pattern of youth homelessness. It is important to appreciate that they were not young homeless people 'at the end of the line', but were actually a quite distinct subgroup who gravitated to the city centre almost immediately on becoming homeless. It seemed quite unusual for young people to decide to sleep rough in the city centre rather than in their local area, which would suggest that they constitute a relatively small subgroup. However, this is without doubt the sharpest end of youth homelessness as these young people had the most traumatic backgrounds and complex support needs of any who participated in the study. Many were leading chaotic lives dominated by drug problems, suicide attempts and spells in prison and rehabilitation units.

The research indicated that the experience of homelessness often exacerbated young people's additional problems, such as offending behaviour and drug abuse, but the follow-up exercise revealed clear distinctions in the progress of young people who followed different pathways through homelessness. Young people who had been stable within the official network in their local area (Pathway 3) had made by far the best progress over the year: their employment and housing circumstances had generally improved and they had closest contact with their families. The position of young people who were unofficially homeless in their local area (Pathway 1) seemed to have changed little a year later. They were sleeping rough less often, but were generally still living in insecure accommodation and had made little progress with employment. However, there was a marked deterioration in the circumstances of the city centre homeless (Pathway 6) and young people in the adult hostel network (Pathway 5). They were often still sleeping rough or living in very poor quality institutional accommodation, and had worsening physical and mental health.

This research did support the findings of previous studies that the incidence of institutional living increased as the homeless experience lengthened, but did not indicate that rough sleeping or mobility between cities became more common later in homelessness careers (Jones, 1993; Hutson and Liddiard, 1994). The city centre homeless (Pathway 6), at whatever stage, were the most likely to find themselves in these situations.

The remainder of this article will concentrate on the most hidden group: young people unofficially homeless in their local area. As it concentrates on this particular subgroup within the young homeless population, it is not intended to provide a typical picture of all young homeless people.

Hidden Homelessness in the Local Area

There was a very strong pattern of hidden homelessness amongst young people in Drumchapel. Not only was it by far the most common homeless experience amongst the young people interviewed, but they often said that their siblings and friends had been in similar situations.

The Nature of Local Area Homelessness

A key characteristic of this form of homelessness is being in and out of the family home 'like a yo-yo', particularly early on in the homelessness career. Many young people were like Kate who said 'I've been booted oot millions of times, I've left home millions of times.' Young people did not leave home 'voluntarily': they were either evicted by their parents or driven out by continual conflict. There were frequent attempts to return home, but this rarely offered a long-term solution to their problems.

Most of these young people tried to stay with other family members wherever possible, usually older siblings. However many ended up relying on friends, or more accurately the parents of friends, because they run out of relatives willing to help. As Fraser said: 'through the whole of the family and ended up in pals' hooses.' Sometimes young people managed to stay with a particular household for several months, but usually these arrangements were very short term which meant that they were 'jumpin aboot fae hoose tae hoose.' They often ran out of close friends to help and began to rely on 'anybody and everybody.' Keith summed up this style of living as 'just dossin, gettin your head down wherever you can.'

Young people were able to find somewhere to stay most of the time but as Fraser explained 'you get the odd night you've got tae kip in a close' because 'you leave it too late tae go tae somebody's door.' Or like Iain become too embarrassed to ask for help:

> I think there's always been somewhere I could go if I really, really wanted tae. But sometimes I didnae want tae, it didnae feel right.

Most young people on this pathway had only slept rough for one or two nights in a row, and fairly infrequently, but a few had slept rough in Drumchapel for several

weeks or even months. They normally slept in closes, often near their parents' house, and so were dispersed throughout the estate.

A few young men on this pathway had been to other cities, usually in England, but had come back because they were homesick and missed their family and friends. What is particularly interesting is that these young people will move between Drumchapel and other cities but would not consider staying elsewhere in Glasgow. The reasons for this are explored in the next section of this paper.

The homelessness of these young people is hidden in every sense. They are not recorded as homeless in official statistics, they are not staying in the official network of accommodation, and when sleeping rough they do so away from the public eye. Furthermore, some even concealed their rooflessness from family and close friends. Martin was in contact with his parents throughout a period of two weeks when he slept rough in Drumchapel but:

> *I didnae tell them I was sleepin oot on the streets. They thought I was stayin in ma friends' hooses. That's whit I said tae them.*

Characteristics of Young People Homeless in Their Local Area

Young people on this pathway were often very young and inexperienced. Most had a history of truanting from school and clearly found it to be an oppressive environment -this was the case for virtually all the young homeless people I met. The majority of these young people had been involved with social work services, but they were far less likely to have been in residential care than the city centre homeless or those using the city-wide hostel network. Few appeared to have suffered severe parental abuse in childhood, although they often had a difficult and disrupted family background. These young people were seldom completely estranged from their families, and most had frequent contact with at least one parent (usually their mother) when homeless and often received practical support such as meals and baths. Many young men were involved in theft and other petty criminal activity from early adolescence, and were heavy users of soft drugs and alcohol. A few admitted that they had used heroin. However, these problems were generally not as severe as amongst the city centre homeless.

Causes of Local Area Homelessness

All of these young people left home in an unplanned way, and the 'in and out' process described above often began when they were 14 or 15 years old, but intensified when they left school and could not get a job or training, or lost their training place. This left most of them with no legitimate income, and their inability to pay board money was often the immediate reason why they were evicted from the family home. For example, Martin was told by his parents:

> *If you cannae get any money you'll need tae leave the hoose cause we cannae afford tae keep you cause we're no gettin any money for you anymair.*

It must be borne in mind that most of these young people's parents were also unemployed and it was an immense struggle to maintain another adult out of their social security benefits. However, few young people were thrown out solely on financial grounds; it was usually a culmination of tensions between the young person and their parents which led to their ejection. Conflict often centred on the parents' irritation at the young person hanging around the house or streets all day, and not appearing to be looking hard enough for a job. It was common for young men to argue with their parents about their criminal behaviour or drug use, both of which increased when they were unemployed. Parental drink or drug problems, difficult step-relationships, and fights between siblings were also important sources of tension. In addition, there were everyday teenage arguments about friends, times for coming in, loud music, and so on.

These tensions are much more difficult to bear in households afflicted by poverty and unemployment; where everyone is in the house most of the day getting under each other's feet, with no money to go out. When young people were unable to contribute to the overstretched family budget, and at the same time were engaged in behaviour which caused problems for their parents, these pressures often became intolerable. As Denny told me:

> *They couldnae keep me anymair. I wasnae bringing any money intae the hoose and I was causing too much trouble tae them as well. So they tossed me oot.*

Unemployment lies at the root of these young people's problems; if jobs were more readily available most of them would have been able to sort out their problems without becoming homeless. Many would have found it much easier to remain in the family home until they were ready to embark on independent living. Those who would still have had to leave would have been in a much stronger position to sustain their own home. Young people themselves said that getting a job was the key to resolving their difficulties. Lack of benefits is the other crucial issue, not only because it was so often the final straw that led to these young people's ejection from the family home, but also because it was the main reason why they could not sustain a place in any other household. With some sort of income, most of these young people could at least have avoided rooflessness.

Motivations for Remaining Hidden Homeless
The critical issue for this article is young people's motivations for dealing with their homelessness by remaining hidden in their local community. There were a number of reasons why these young people had not moved into the official accommodation network. Some had only left home for very short periods at a time, others had been homeless for more substantial periods but lacked the confidence or initiative to approach helping agencies. However, by far the most common reason young people gave for not using official services was that they were not prepared to stay in the homeless reception centre (HAC) or the city-wide network of hostels,

even for a very short period. It is important to note that this was a conscious refusal to use these services rather than a lack of awareness about their existence.

Denny explained why he had not used the accommodation network:

Denny: *They say if I was tae move anywhere it'd be the HAC, I'm no moving doon there.*

SF: *Why wouldn't you go to the HAC?*

Denny: *Just aw the things I've heard aboot it. Full of junkies an aw that.*

SF: *Who told you these things?*

Denny: *A pal that used tae stay there, sorta. His room got tanned and everythin got took oot it the second night he was in there. I'm happy where I am noo cause naebody'll steal nuthin aff me where I am the noo [sleeping rough in Drumchapel], no that I've got much.*

These sorts of 'cautionary tales' also extended to other hostels throughout Glasgow, as Fraser said:

> *Don't fancy goin intae a hostel, aw the hostels are aw full of junkies. Heard of people gettin robbed in them. I don't fancy gettin robbed.*

Clearly concerns about the type of people who stayed in hostels and the security of personal belongings were significant factors underlying young people's reluctance to use this official network. However, the most important objection young people had to the HAC and other hostels in the city-wide network was that they were outside their local area.

Before addressing this point in detail, it is worth highlighting that young people's antipathy to the city-wide network was also what prevented many of them gaining access to the local youth housing project (Southdeen). This was because they were under the impression that they would be compelled to stay in the HAC first. This was not actually the case. Southdeen was a planned entry rather than direct access facility so young people did usually have to wait some time before being interviewed and allowed to move in, if they were assessed as suitable. Meanwhile anyone requiring emergency accommodation from the local authority had to stay in the HAC. However young people were also free to make their own interim arrangements if they preferred, and their access to Southdeen should not have been affected by their decision not to stay in the HAC. However some young people clearly thought that staying at the HAC was a 'test' for entry to Southdeen, and were so discouraged by the prospect of spending even a very short period there that they gave up on the system altogether and became unofficially homeless.

It was the 'territoriality' of these young people which presented the main obstacle to them using the city-wide network of homelessness services. Territoriality has

been defined as an attempt to influence people, relationships and things through the control of a geographic area (Sack, 1986), and can operate at various scales from that of the 'turf' of the urban gang to regionalism. Territoriality involves both inclusion and exclusion, and identification with a particular place is often allied with feelings against other places and their residents (Johnston, 1991). Robins and Cohen (1978) focused on the territoriality of working class young people. They conceptualised this as a symbolic process of 'magically' appropriating and controlling the material environment in which you live, but which in economic and political terms is owned by 'outsiders' (p.73). They argued that territorialism, and the 'fierce local loyalties' which it inspires (p.74), applies almost exclusively to working class communities. However, whilst working class adults have a range of institutions through which they can diffuse the functions of territorialism, such as the local pub and shops, the only arena available to young people is the street. Thus young people evolve a set of street-based rules which preserve the boundaries of their peer group network by defining in-groups and out-groups. Territorialism has been somewhat neglected in more recent youth research, although Coffield et al (1986) did touch on this theme by highlighting the 'localism' of young adults in north east England (see also, Blackman, 1995, Jones, 1997).

The territoriality I encountered amongst these hidden homeless young people involved a fierce attachment to the public sector housing estate in which they lived, and could be unpacked into three inter-related elements: social networks; familiarity; and peer group territorial boundaries. These factors are explored in turn.

First, these young people's social networks were usually very concentrated in their local area so they wanted to stay there to enjoy the practical and emotional support of family and friends living close by. It is important to bear in mind that they usually received some level of parental assistance even when homeless. They would be lonely and isolated living anywhere else, particularly as they usually could not afford the bus fares to come back and visit regularly.

Second, young people's desire to stay in Drumchapel was strongly related to psychological feelings of security they gained from being in a familiar environment:

Ken: *You feel secure because you've been brought up in this area.*

Fraser: *Aye, aw your life.*

They did not believe Drumchapel was superior to any other area, but at least it was a known quantity. As Karen put it:

> *I know what the reality is, I know exactly where the cookie crumbles here... it's not exactly better than anywhere else nowadays, but I've been brought up here.*

Young people's knowledgability about their 'ain area' gave them a general sense of safety because they felt they could predict and deal with threats there (see Taylor, 1988). As Liz said 'you know what kind of things will happen here'.

However the third, and most significant, reason why young people were reluctant to venture outwith their local neighbourhood concerned the specific threats to their safety posed by crossing peer group territorial boundaries (see Robins and Cohen, 1978). As Keith explained:

> *Cause you're fae Drumchapel, everywhere else fights wi' Drumchapel... You go intae another district there's a good chance you're gonnae end up fightin. If you say where you're fae you end up gettin battered.*

Young people seemed genuinely frightened to use homeless accommodation outside their local area in case they got 'stabbed', 'battered' or 'hassled'. As Iain told me:

> **I couldnae** *[his emphasis] go over there [HAC]. There wasnae much point in me goin over there and gettin ma heid taken aff.*

Conversely, young people emphasised that hostels in Drumchapel were much more acceptable because they felt safe there. Whilst there were some criticisms made of Southdeen, most young people said that it was 'OK' because 'it's in the Drum.' Stephen told me:

> *I would go tae a hostel in Drumchapel. I wouldnae go up the toon and Possil [an inner-city area in Glasgow] and aw that crap... what I'm saying is, you'd feel a lot safer in a hostel in Drumchapel than a hostel in Possil...*

The 'politics of turf' is a complex and subtle phenomenon and there are peer group territorial boundaries within Drumchapel, as well as boundaries between Drumchapel and other areas. But, as mentioned above, the housing estate was the primary scale of attachment for these young people, and boundaries within the scheme paled into insignificance in comparison to boundaries outwith. So when I asked young people whereabouts in Drumchapel they would want homeless services to be located the typical response was:

> *Anywhere, cause I can walk anywhere in Drumchapel, as long as it's Drumchapel. So you know it's your ain people, your ain area.*

Concerns about territorial boundaries were voiced by both young women and young men, but were given the greatest weight by young men. The dangers they perceive may be exaggerated in some respects, but they do have a basis in reality. The manager of one young person's hostel admitted to me that any young man they accommodate from outside the area is almost certain to be attacked by local gangs within a week of moving in. As indicated earlier, a few of these young men had moved to other cities and then returned to Drumchapel, but were not prepared to stay in other areas in Glasgow. This may be because peer group territorial rivalries, and their attendant physical risks, do not operate in the same way at the inter-city scale.

The strength of these young people's attachment to their local neighbourhood is understandable when one considers how limited their experience of the outside

world can be. I met some young people who rarely set foot outside Drumchapel. This does not necessarily mean that they want to stay in Drumchapel for the rest of their lives. On the contrary, some had ambitions to eventually leave Drumchapel and 'better' themselves. But during this crisis period in their lives they needed the security of remaining within their local community. They felt disorientated and frightened enough as a result of being ejected from the family home; to be ripped from their community at the same time and sucked into a city-wide network of hostels in areas they did not know was a prospect they viewed with horror.

The territoriality of young people diminished across the spectrum of pathways described above, with locational factors being given greatest weight in the decision-making of those unofficially homelessness in the local area (Pathway 1), and least weight in the decisions of those homeless in the city-centre (Pathway 6). The reasons for these distinctions in young homeless people's motivations will be explored in a later paper, and appear to be rooted mainly in differing childhood experiences, such as local authority care.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

This article has demonstrated that the processes of youth homelessness are complex, and do not all conform to the notion of a uniform downward spiral. A typology of six pathways through homelessness was proposed based on the experiences of young people from Drumchapel in Glasgow. By tracing these young people's experiences over a period of time it became clear that there was a sharp distinction between those who are homeless in the local area and those homeless in the city centre. This point has particular policy relevance because most homeless agencies concentrate their activities at city centre locations, in part because it is the most visible aspect of homelessness and is given the most attention politically. However, underlying this focus also appears to be the belief that it will result in reaching most homeless young people eventually. The evidence from this research runs counter to that assumption, as there seems to be a substantial group of young homeless people hidden in their local community who are unlikely to gravitate to the city centre at any stage of their pathways. Therefore the clearest policy message to emerge from this study is that distinct groups within the young homeless population require services located in different places.

The research generally lends weight to arguments for decentralised services. There are two reasons for this. First, the overwhelming preference of most of the young homeless people interviewed was for accommodation services based within their local community. Indeed as many of them refused to use accommodation located elsewhere it seems likely that centralised services will fail to reach a large group of young people in need. The second point is that, whilst my evidence is far from conclusive, it does suggest that homeless young people accommodated in their own area do appear to make better progress than those who take city centre routes through homelessness. One important factor may be that those who remain in their

local area have easier access to family support which can be crucial in helping them establish a stable home of their own.

The location of accommodation services was a far greater priority for most of these young homeless people than any other aspect of provision, such as the physical quality of accommodation, type of staff or rules of residence. The fact that young people generally wished to be accommodated in a familiar location, rather than in an objectively 'good' area, should make it easier to meet their demands. There is insufficient space here to discuss the types of accommodation and support which should be provided to young homeless people in their community, but clearly emergency as well as longer-term accommodation is required. Such facilities cannot be provided in all local areas, but should be targeted on disadvantaged communities where homelessness amongst young people is most prevalent. Given the very hidden nature of these young people's homelessness, even when they are sleeping rough, there is little point in agencies actively seeking them out. Instead, a local 'drop-in' point should be established where homeless young people can be put in contact with appropriate services. Ideally, this facility should be integrated within the general network of services for young people in the area.

However it should also be acknowledged that there are sound arguments in favour of centralised services. In particular, it is easier to control the quality of service offered in a single location with highly trained, specialised staff. There was some evidence in Glasgow that city centre hostels were easier to manage than those located in housing estates where problems with local residents were sometimes encountered. Service providers may also be nervous about 'opening the floodgates' if homelessness services became more accessible to young people. However the purpose of this paper is to articulate the demand from young people for local services. It is for service providers to decide if, and how, they should meet it.

In any case, decentralised services cannot meet the needs of all homeless young people. There will be a continuing need for some city centre based services for young people who want to escape from their local area, those who lack a home area in the city (migrants), and those who come from an area within the city without local homelessness facilities. These groups have not been emphasised in this paper, but are substantial elements of the young homeless population whose needs must be recognised. Thus centralised units like the HAC have a very important role to play and should be supplemented, rather than replaced, by provision in local communities.

While there is no reason to suppose that the experiences and attitudes of respondents in this study are atypical of young people living in large public housing estates, further research would be required to confirm that the homelessness patterns identified in this paper are replicated elsewhere. It is particularly important to establish whether there is a widespread problem of concealed homelessness in local areas as suggested by this research. As mentioned above, the organisation of homelessness services is

likely to have a profound impact on the routes through homelessness taken by young people. In comparison to many communities, Drumchapel was well served by having its own supported youth housing project. Given the strong attachment to their area also expressed by the young people staying in this accommodation (several insisted that they would have slept rough rather than use hostels elsewhere), it seems likely that hidden homelessness amongst young people will be even more common in areas without these facilities.

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HOMELESSNESS AND YOUNG SINGLE PEOPLE FROM BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

LOUIS JULIENNE[1]

Introduction

Young single homelessness has been recognised as a national problem for some years, backed up by substantial and consistent research. Yet, relatively little is known about the extent or nature of homelessness among young single people from black and minority ethnic communities.

The reasons for homelessness amongst young black people are generally much the same as for young white people - a shortage of decent, affordable accommodation for those on low incomes, and restrictions on Housing Benefit. In addition to these shared problems, the fact that black households tend to live in this country's inner city areas, characterised by high housing stress, in overcrowded conditions and with higher rates of unemployment, would indicate that homelessness is at the very least as great a problem for young black people as it is for young white people. Racism and racial discrimination further compounds the likelihood of homelessness. As Greve and Currie pointed out homelessness amongst young people is essentially a working class problem - accentuated by membership of a non-white group.[2]

Black youth homelessness is often seen as meaning African Caribbean youth homelessness and much of the research and anecdotal evidence has consistently reiterated this notion. Not that it is surprising given that African Caribbean young people are over-represented in the channels that are associated with homelessness - under-achievement in schools, high unemployment levels, over-representation amongst people in prison, local authority care and psychiatric institutions. This notion, of course, is over-simplistic. Homelessness among young people from Asian communities is also a reality, often a hidden reality. Although some of the causes for Asian youth homelessness differ from that of African Caribbean youths, as this paper attempts to demonstrate, both groups have to endure racism, racial discrimination and racist stereotyping which is preventing them from accessing services that many young single white people take for granted.

This paper also examines particular categories of people who are more likely to be vulnerable to homelessness, to assess the extent to which black single young people are represented within these categories, including care leavers, refugees and asylum seekers, ex-prisoners and people suffering from mental health problems and how membership of these categories help contribute to black youth homelessness.

Youth Homelessness in African Caribbean Communities

The problem of youth homelessness in African Caribbean communities has been recognised within these communities since at least the late 1960s and early 1970s

with the growth of a 'second generation' increasingly alienated from, and against, their families and the wider community. The Melting Pot, a project set up by Ashton Gibson and others in Brixton to provide temporary accommodation to homeless and unemployed 'West-Indian' youths, was set up during this period, as were a few others, including Brother Herman's Harambee hostel in North-East London, Vince Hines' Dashiki hostel in West London, and George Jackson House in Manchester, run by Ron and Aida Philips. They were part of a movement of concerned activists attempting to meet a housing and support need which was not being addressed by mainstream provision.

London is literally swarming with homeless youths, especially black youths who have been driven out by their communities.[3]

These hostels, as well as offering accommodation, often provided vocational skills and remedial educational classes with a view to the residents obtaining jobs - precursors of the Foyer schemes. The services were targeted to young people, mostly, but not exclusively, males aged between 16 and 22, most of whom had left home because of family disputes and, prior to admission at the hostel, had slept at a succession of friends' and relatives' homes; a substantial proportion of the youths had come from local authority care. The hostels were heavily dependent on charitable and local authority funding. Some had substantial non-housing remits, including a Saturday School, a bookshop, and nurseries. Jack David's Harambee in Birmingham encompassed all these activities as well as a hostel within one organisation up to the late 1970s when, after obtaining registration as a housing association by the Housing Corporation, it was forced by the corporation to divest itself of all non-housing activities as a price for receiving funding.

In the early 1970s there were a number of hostels for homeless youths, usually run by local authorities or funded by the local authority and run by voluntary groups, but they were essentially run by white people for white youths, as black youths did not, and indeed would not, use them. As far as mainstream providers were concerned, it seemed as if there was little or no need for hostel provision for black youths as there was very little demand for their facilities.. Those who ran black hostels knew better as they could barely cope with the demand.

In 1974, the Community Relations Commission published a report[4] recognising the 'alarming levels' of homelessness amongst black school leavers. Following the report's publication, funding was secured from the Home Office to the Commission to help the development of 'self-help' initiatives to help tackle these problems. A set aside budget of £250,000 a year was ear-marked primarily for the benefit of projects catering for 'West Indian' youths who were homeless and/or unemployed and were considered to be beyond the reach of mainstream provision. Through this special fund, a number of black-run hostels were established in the next five years and existing ones supported. These included Ujamaa House in Liverpool, Harambee in Leeds and Harambee in Huddersfield, Karibu Trust in

Nottingham, 376 Hostel in Ealing, 99 hostel in Lewisham, Balham Boys' Hostel, Walter Rodney House in Reading and Ujima in West London. There was a great deal of interaction between the staff of these hostels, essentially to exchange good practice.

In a report entitled 'The Fire Next Time', the Commission for Racial Equality (1974) noted that:

> the supportive ethnic framework of self-help projects has been a major factor in the restoration of a sense of identity and self-confidence among disadvantaged young blacks. The development of the self-help movement has also involved and mobilised the local communities in a way which could not have been expected from statutory provision. This is similar to self-help initiatives by the Jewish community earlier this century which assisted progress towards integration into society.

The Federation of Black Hostels was established in 1982 to 'promote an understanding of homeless Afro-Caribbean adolescents'. The situation of black youth, they knew, was desperate. Many of those who lived in their hostels were impoverished, miseducated, criminalised and alienated. Since the late 1960s, the education system had been failing the 'second generation'[5] which left school with no job prospects, brutalised by an evidently discriminatory criminal justice system, and misdiagnosed and mistreated by a racist mental health system. Add homelessness to their situation and it is no wonder that the black youths uprisings exploded in major cities in the early and mid 1980s. For a time, African Caribbean youths were potentially the most revolutionary force in English society, so stunned and unprepared were the authorities at the scale of anger unleashed in English cities in 1981, quickly followed by copycat action by white disaffected youths.

Homelessness was not the trigger to the uprisings, police brutality was, but it was undoubtedly an important contributory factor.[6] At the first conference of the Federation of Black Hostels[7], the question of why black youths became homeless was addressed. The main reasons were similar to the reasons why white youths became homeless: family disputes were seen as the prime reason, centred on clashing lifestyles and aggravated by over-crowded conditions. A low self-image was implanted by both the culture at home and at school by the devaluation of black people and their achievements. Rastafarianism became extremely popular among African Caribbean youths and was a highly visible manifestation of clashing lifestyles and philosophy between the youths and their parents. 'In effect, it [rastafarianism] approximates the function which the slogan Black Power performed for young blacks in Britain and the United States in the 1960s.[8]

Concern was also expressed at the FBH conference regarding the high number of black youths coming out of local authority care without adequate accommodation or support and ill-equipped to deal with adult life. This was echoed the following year in the evidence submitted by the Association of Black Social Workers and

Allied Professions to the House of Commons Social Services Committee.[9] In terms of numbers of alienated African Caribbean youths, the evidence was largely anecdotal. The CRE, in its 'The Fire Next Time' report, assessed the numbers at between 20 and 50 in most of the major cities and towns in England, totaling 'a few thousand nationally'.

The 1990s have not seen an amelioration of the housing situation of single young people from African Caribbean communities according to reports.[10] They are over-represented among the residents of hostels and bed and breakfast establishments[11], face racist hurdles when seeking accommodation in the private rented sector[12], and are over-represented amongst young homeless people seeking advice and information[13].

Youth homelessness in Asian communities

Youth homelessness in Asian communities had not surfaced as a major problem in the way it had been in African Caribbean and white communities. Rather, the main housing problems were seen as family homelessness and overcrowding[14], aggravated by concentration in manual work with few promotion possibilities, with lower incomes and the need to support a high ratio of dependents to wage-earners. Family life, which is central to Asian culture, was a strong cohesive force for young people born or brought up in this country.

> *The multi-deprived Asians, while gaining support from their extended families and from the community are also threatened from within by the difficulties of maintaining such a life-style in Britain. The isolation of Asian women and the growing cultural confusion of the children reared in Britain weakens the stability of the family; while discrimination and intolerance of cultural diversify weakens the ability of the community to be self-sufficient and supportive of its members.[15]*

In 1983, when the Federation of Black Housing Organisations (FBHO) was formed at a national conference in Reading, Berkshire, it was to replace the Federation of Black Hostels which had become obsolete because of the narrowness of its focus, which was essentially on young, single homeless people from African Caribbean origins. The new organisation took up the housing concerns of Asian communities as well as those of African, African Caribbean and other minority ethnic groups. To reflect its new constituencies, FBHO focused on pushing for the accommodation needs of Asian women fleeing domestic violence and oppression, and Asian elders. There were by then half a dozen refuges run by and for black women. Refuges, which began in 1973, were initially targeted at white women with the assumption (if any was made) that the refuges would cater for all women, regardless of ethnicity, culture or religion. Many black women's refuges, such as Sahara in Leeds, were set up because statutory organisations were failing young black women in the provision of suitable facilities.

> *Opposition and abuse experienced by young black women in hostels and refuges perpetrated by either staff or residents of such establishments, compounded by differences in language and culture, led to the creation of Sahara.[16]*

Some organisations did not start out to provide housing advice and support to women victims of domestic violence. Southall Black Sisters (SBS), a founder member of FBHO, is a case in point. Founded in 1979 in the wake of the Southall uprisings against a National Front march, SBS's original aim was to provide a voice for black women - Asian and African Caribbean - and to campaign on issues including abuse and violence in the family, racism and immigration controls. In 1983 SBS received funding to set up the first black women's centre in West London. SBS aimed to provide advice and assistance on a range of issues such as housing, welfare rights, health and employment but in a fairly short time SBS realised that most women who came to them faced the problem of violence in the home. Supporting victims of domestic violence thus became SBS's main concern. Although SBS supports all women who go to them for help (approximately 1,000 cases and enquiries a year), the majority of women who used the centre were Asian, and the main problem they presented was violence and oppression at home[17].

The development of black refuges has been in the main slow and painful; they have been ignored by local authorities and housing associations, which were not convinced of a need. (In 'Taking Stock: Refuge provision in London' in the late 1980s[18] 44% of 240 women living in refuges described themselves as black.) White refuges were opposed because they wanted to maintain their monopoly; and the communities from which the black refuges sprang were even more fiercely opposed on the grounds that 'these things' are best left for the community to solve[19]. Nevertheless, the firm determination of Asian and other black women activists to develop those projects to meet manifest, but ignored, needs resulted in the development of black refuges in the major conurbations. Of the 200 or so women's refuges in England up to 1996, only 8 are largely for Asian women, three for African Caribbean women and two, including one for Chinese women, are used by black women of other visible ethnic origins.

The need refuges are trying to meet is a growing one, particularly in Asian communities in which women embody the family honour; so if a woman wants to leave home it means cutting off links and being alienated from the community.

The following two case studies, featured in 'Planning for Action', do not concern physical violence but demonstrate the sort of pressures faced by some of these young women.

'S', aged 18

> *I left home because I couldn't stop rowing with my mum. She was so strict. I was humiliated in front of other people. Couldn't have my hair cut short the way I wanted; I had always to wear Asian clothes. I was given no other choice but to leave.... I want to be independent, have my own place, friends and decide for myself.*

Asian boys leave home, but they are still worshipped like gods. No one blames them for leaving home. It is seen as part of their development. It's different for girls.... Boys can still keep in contact. They can come home and have meals cooked for them and their clothes washed, and they can stay as guests as long as they please. We have to cater for them. No one cares for us in the same way

I still see my sister... This way I keep in touch with my family

'H', aged 20

I left my family because it was arranging a marriage for me to this bloke in Bangladesh, where I was born. I couldn't take it. I want to live my own life and decide for myself.

How did I do it? Every day I took bits of my clothes and other belongings to my workplace. Bit by bit I managed to get enough together over a month without my parents noticing it. When I was ready, I took my belongings and arrived at a hostel. I have been here ever since.

My family has put me under a lot of pressure to go back. I am not going to. I am not going through an arranged marriage. Sometimes I sit in my room and cry. I do miss home. Just the warmth of my family, relatives and friends.

I don't like going into Asian shops either as much as I like cooking Bengali food. I may bump into someone who knows me and my family and they would then nose around to find out what I am doing and who I am seeing, I am tired of these things.

Here in the hostel the workers are helping me to find the right area to move to, I want to stay close to my work and the hostel, I want to keep well away and out of reach of the Asian community. It hurts me that I can't have contact with my culture. What can I do?

A particular feature of single homelessness among young people from Asian communities is the paucity of evidence - far worse than that for the African Caribbean community. A recurring mantra from Asian communities is that there is not a youth homelessness problem in Asian communities and, where there is one, the community deals with it itself. Nevertheless the studies that do exist (usually local apart from Census data) suggests that young Asian people are far more likely than their white or African Caribbean counterparts to come from poor, overcrowded accommodation and accommodation no longer available when seeking accommodation from voluntary and statutory agencies.[20]

Contributory factors to Black single young homelessness
Other than those factors contributing to homelessness mentioned earlier, including living in overcrowded and poor conditions, clashing lifestyles and aspirations, low

income and lack of suitable and affordable accommodation, there are other deter-
minants which play a major role in the disproportionate representation of people
from black and minority ethnic amongst young single homeless people. These
include membership of particularly vulnerable sections of the community for whom
access to decent accommodation is found to be more difficult, including care leavers,
refugees and asylum seekers, ex-prisoners and people suffering from mental health
problems. Racism and racial discrimination have a part to play in this equation as
institutional and individual racism assigns black people to these categories and then
penalises them even more than white people within these categories. This section
examines evidence of racist bias within these categories and their effect on housing
outcomes.

Black care leavers

The relationship between social work and the black community, until very
recently, was one characterised by exclusion from employment and services allied
to an active involvement in exercising childcare responsibilities and powers[21].

The comparatively few research studies that have focused on black children in the
care system have shown a disproportionate number of them in care, particularly
children of African Caribbean origins, compared to white children. Rowe and
Lambert (1973) in their study found that 20% of their sample group of 552 children
were black. Similarly, Lindsay Smith (1979) found black representation of children
in care of between 7% in suburban areas and 50% in some inner city areas. A
study in Lambeth (Adams 1981) found that 54% of their sample were black[22].

The identification of the black family as dysfunctional by social work agencies has
long been a feature of social work orthodoxy. A Eurocentric view of child rearing
has resulted in black children being wrenched from their families and condemned
to be brought up with a Eurocentric view of life which ill-prepares black children
to cope with living as an adult in a racist society.

Life in care for black children and young people can and frequently does lead to
isolation from their culture. When leaving care or supported accommodation,
many of them have difficulties in settling within their own communities, as some
are often seen as over-assimilated in the white culture. The stories of black children
in care trying to scrub their skins white, because the 'care' environment in which
they live teaches them to view black skins as negative, ugly and inferior[23], may
well be apocryphal but mines a well of self-hate which is sadly not uncommon in
these situations. This 'wanting to be white' syndrome, it must be said, is not confined
to black children in care. The Bishop of Croydon, the Right Reverend Dr. Wilfred
Wood, a black native of Barbados, recounts the words of his six year old daughter
saying: 'Dad, I would like to be white and live in a white family'[24].

The built-in bias inherent in social service agencies against black communities has
scarcely been helped by legislation. The Children Act (1989) states that 'every

local authority shall take reasonable steps to identify the extent to which there are children in need in their area' (schedule 2, part I). It is therefore important this audit of needs includes the needs of children and young people from black and minority ethnic communities[25] but, as the FBHO/CHAR report, 'Planning for Action' (1995), indicates, this is not always the case. Ethnic monitoring is still resisted by some Social Services departments and that resistance is likely to continue unless the Department of Health makes it mandatory.

Young refugees & asylum-seekers

Refugees and asylum seekers to this country are, at least in the eyes of its inhabitants, overwhelmingly from black and minority ethnic communities. This notion is fed by tabloid newspapers that specialise in sustaining such a belief through the publication of lurid headlines about African and Asian (usually the latter) 'illegal immigrants'. However, the reality does approximate the folklore, essentially because of Britain's imperialist and colonist past which was rooted in continents where black people lived or where made to live by imperialists and colonisers.

The housing conditions experienced by many refugees and asylum-seekers in this country fall alarmingly short of international standards, and would be a source of extreme embarrassment if the media were prepared to highlight their plight sympathetically, which is all too seldom. Many refugees and asylum-seekers entering this country are young and single. 48% of the 2,591 refugees and asylum-seekers accommodated by the Refugee Council in 1995 were aged between 17 and 25[26]. ARHAG, a black housing association specialising in housing refugees and asylum seekers, from Algerians to Zairians, house 385 people, 25% of whom are single young people[27].

Difficulties have increased for asylum-seekers since February 1996 when access to benefits, including Housing Benefit and Income Support was stopped for asylum-seekers who make applications for asylum after the point of entry. This means that unless a young person qualifies for support under the Children Act, they are likely to be left destitute.

Abdul's story

Abdul is a 16-year-old boy from Iran. He entered the UK at one of the Channel ports and made his way to London where he intended to lodge a claim for political asylum. He has no family friends or contacts in the UK and so had nowhere to stay in London. He was clearly confused and disorientated when he arrived in London and this was exacerbated by the fact that he spoke no English. He spent the first night sleeping rough on the banks of the Thames.

The following day Abdul was directed to the Refugee Council who, recognising his age and vulnerability, approached the local Social Services Department. The Council was uncertain whether Abdul had slept on 'their patch' of the river and protracted negotiations took place between the Council and the Refugee Council before the matter was resolved and Abdul was placed with foster carers. Throughout these negotiations, Abdul was uncertain and anxious as to what would happen to him.

Approximately one week after being placed with foster parents Abdul turned 17 years and he was promptly moved from his placement to Bed and Breakfast accommodation.[28]

Ex-prisoners

The prison population is at an all-time high and still more prisons are being built. This has a significant, negative, impact on black people; particularly young black people who are disproportionately represented compared to their numbers in the general population. A study of the prison population in June 1972[29] showed that the proportion of African and African Caribbean men was seven times higher than the proportion of white men, and that the proportion of African and African Caribbean women was almost 20 times higher the proportion of white women.

A more recent report[30] found that in mid-1995 18% of all prisoners (17% of males, and 24% of females) were from minority ethnic groups, despite the fact that they form only 5.5% of the total population in this country.

These findings do not mean that black people are more likely to warrant imprisonment or having bail denied because of their antecedents or because of the seriousness of their crime, but rather that racial discrimination continues to make a disturbing contribution to the disproportionate number of black people in prison. Young black males are significantly more likely to be stopped and searched by the police than white males. In 1994-5 in England and Wales 590,918 people were stopped and searched, of whom 131,579 (22%) were from black and minority ethnic groups. The proportion rose to 37% in the Metropolitan Police Area. Young black people are less likely to be cautioned and more likely to be remanded in custody than white defendants are. Research by Hood into West Midlands Crown Courts[31] found that, after taking into account factors relevant to refusal of bail, black defendants had a 16% greater probability of being remanded into custody. Hood further found that black people were up to 23% more likely to recieve a custodial sentence than white people in similar circumstances.

A substantial proportion of prisoners, by the time they are released from prison, will have lost a permanent home and will need to find alternative, usually shared, accommodation if they are single. A NACRO (1993) report[32] asked 3,000 men and women in prisons, both sentenced and on remand, what sort of help they thought they needed in order to resettle: 59% listed 'finding a job' and 45% listed 'long term housing' (the second highest category of responses). 13% of respondents said they did not have a home before imprisonment; a further 34% said they had lost their homes because of being in prison. Unfortunately, this otherwise informative report does not break down the findings according to ethnicity. It is likely that black people would be disproportionately represented amongst any of these sets of respondents. Yet the Greater Manchester Probation Service (GMPS), for example, has for a number of years acknowledged that its hostel provision is failing to attract black ex-prisoners despite the fact that they are over-represented in the prison population. A

GMPS report[33] stated: 'It is a matter of on-going concern that the hostel population continues to have under-representation of racial minority groups.' The report found some explanations as to why probation hostels in Greater Manchester were not being used. These included that very few of them employed black staff, that they had a very bad reputation among black prisoners as being populated by white 'dossers' and, crucially, because of black defendants being more likely to be remanded in custody they had fewer opportunities of being granted bail.

Housing associations managing offender accommodation have also expressed concern about their relative inability to attract young black residents to their hostels. In 1994, English Churches Group organised a conference entitled 'Why don't black people use our services' which attempted to examine some of the factors contributing to the low levels of black residents in offender hostels. Apart from bail being denied, that is only part of the problem, albeit a considerable one, as Todd (1997) points out in his study[34]:

> The absence of ethnic minority involvement in all aspects of project life - be that referrals, policy development, service delivery or organised activities - is a striking conclusion of [this] evaluation.... Until all the criminal justice agencies ...adopt a co-ordinated approach to addressing the problem of the dearth of ethnic minority referrals, little is going to change

Mental health
Studies over the past 20 years[35] show that black people are more likely than white people to be:

- *removed by the police to a place of safety under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983*
- *retained in hospital under Sections 2,3, and 4 of the Mental Heath Act*
- *diagnosed as suffering from schizophrenia or other forms of psychotic illness*
- *detained in locked wards of psychiatric hospitals*
- *given higher dosages of medication*

They are less likely than white people to:

- *receive appropriate and acceptable diagnosis or treatment for possible 'mental illness' at an early age*
- *receive treatment such as psychotherapy or counselling.*

Homelessness is inextricably linked with mental health and well being. There is a 'cause and effect' relationship between housing deprivation and the maintenance of emotional stability. In some instances it has been wrongly assumed that young people with mental heath problems are on the streets as a result of their inadequacy or lack of coping skills. Work done by mental health and housing researchers[36] has

stressed the significance of housing of a range and type suited to the various needs of people with mental health problems. The compulsory inquiries after homicides have produced an unwarranted level of attention because of the nature of media coverage that has depicted young African Caribbean males as 'mad, bad and dangerous to know'[37].

These studies however also reveal a catalogue of young men, poorly housed, when housed at all, with inappropriate hostel or B&B accommodation with no support, and only a prescription. The well-publicised case of Christopher Clunis who killed Jonathan Zito, is one such instance, where a young talented musician was placed in B&B with virtually no follow up. The long-term effects were tragic for Jonathan Zito but also for Christopher himself.

All too often discharge from hospital arrangements are made with scant thought to the appropriateness of housing. Homelessness can be the inevitable result of an inappropriate placement and mental fragility readily follows. Too often key workers are ignorant of, and insensitive to, the needs of the young black person with a mental health problem.

Homelessness or poor housing cannot justify crime but is undoubtedly a contributing factor in preserving or destroying mental health. For the young black person the access to housing, already fraught with difficulties, is made even less likely with a mental health label. The last government added to the coercive possibilities more likely to be experienced by African Caribbean men in particular by introducing supervision registers and supervised discharge.

For young black homeless people with a mental health problem, access to community services is virtually impossible and routes to the gatekeepers of such services often barred by their entrenched and institutionalised racism.

> *The black experience in society that generates anger or despair is not appreciated, and health professionals have nothing but a disease or criminal model to fall back on.*[38]

Conclusions: Black solutions to Black problems

Homelessness amongst young black single people can be seen as part of a problem of housing shortages and short-sighted dis-integrated social policies. It can also be analysed and identified as part of the more fundamental issue of entrenched racism which is buried deep in the British psyche. The construct of 'outsider', 'otherness' and 'exclusion' faced by young black people growing up in this society is not conducive to short-term solutions. However, as with all major change, predetermined practical action can make significant change. What I propose here is the support and prioritising of black-led services. This is a point of contention for many in the voluntary sector who favour a multi-ethnic approach. The 'multi-ethnics' argue that to support black-run services is to support separation and that integration should be the goal.[39]

When the Federation of Black Housing Organisations (FBHO) approached senior Housing Corporation officials in 1984 to encourage the formation of black housing associations, the Corporation response was to argue that this was tantamount to apartheid in reverse. When it was pointed out that there had been Jewish and Polish housing associations since the turn of the century, the argument still fell on deaf ears. It seemed that such emotive terms as 'apartheid in reverse' only applied to black groups. It took two years before this attitude was changed, when a strategy to register five black housing associations a year, for five years, was launched by the Housing Corporation. That strategy was expanded for another five years in 1992 when Sir Christopher Benson, the then chairman of the Housing Corporation, wrote in the introduction to the document that detailed the second five year strategy that the strategy 'has no parallel anywhere in British or even European social policy. It is the largest social programme directly involving black and minority ethnic communities in existence.'[40]

This was no idle boast. The strategy promised to allocate funds totalling £736 million in that period to black housing associations. The fact that just under £500 million was actually allocated was not the result of promises being diluted but because of funding restrictions imposed on the corporation by central government. The corporation developed this programme as a 'response to evidence provided by FBHO, the National Federation of Housing Associations and others', regarding the disadvantages endured by black people in terms of access to housing association homes and their lack of participation in the housing association movement.

The results of that strategy had, in the words of Harrison et al (1996):

> brought positive benefits for race relations, providing effective role models, reducing racial harassment, influencing practices in mainstream associations and building links with local authorities. Rather than being divisive and exacerbating racial tensions, as some opponents...feared, the new associations have helped community relations by offering an environment where black people can feel secure.[41]

The 'multi-ethnic' argument about pursuing integration assumes that delivery of services cannot be effective outside of mainstream provision, when in fact the history of black people forming groups to improve their situation in this country goes back at least to the 18th century[42] and provided a legacy for other black organisations to follow. Black self-determination frightens and outrages some white people and causes many black people who are fearful of white disapproval to reject the concept without considering either its rationale or its merits. But, as other immigrants to this country have demonstrated - notably Jewish communities - self-help is the quickest and most effective means to address past injustice and disadvantage.

There is no doubt, except in the minds of the bigoted, that the provision of services to young single black homeless people by black-led agencies has made a huge

positive difference in tackling some of inequities that exist. Having said that, though, what I am not advocating here is that young black people should only be serviced by black organisations. That would be nonsensical and would end up doing a dis-service to black communities. Rather I am arguing that priority should be given to funding black-run services to show mainstream providers how to deliver culturally sensitive services. 'Multi-ethnic provision' should mean just that - a multi-ethnic work force and management, as too often so-called multi ethnic services are dominated by white people and end up being an all-white service.

The scale of the problem to be tackled is huge - reclaiming for society impoverished, criminalised and alienated groups who have a right also to a place in the sun. Young black people themselves should be given the tools to begin this reclamation process and devise partnerships and relationships with the mainstream to begin to make it happen.

Louis Julienne, *Housing and Management consultant, formerly Director of Federation of Black Housing Organisations.*

Notes

1   Louis Julienne is a housing and management consultant and Editor of the race and housing Journal Black Housing. He is a founder member and chairperson of Frontline Housing Advice Agency, the only London-wide housing advice agency targeted at black and minority ethnic communities. Between 1980 and 1984 he managed Walter Rodney House, a hostel for homeless young black people in Reading, Berkshire. Up to July 1997 he was the Director of the Federation of Black Housing Organisations (FBHO), a post he held for 13 years.

2   Greve J. Currie E. 'Homelessness in Britain' (Joseph Rowntree 1990 p. 18)

3   Vince Hines quoted in 'Race Today' vol. 4 no. 8 (August 1972) page 281

4   'Unemployment and Homelessness' (CRC 1974) page 10

5   See Plowden 'Children in Their Primary Schools'(HMSO 1967) and Coard B. 'How the West Indian Child is Made Educationally Sub-Normal (New Beacon Books 1971)

6   see Scarman Report (1982)

7   Conference report of the Federation of Black Hostels (WRH Reading April 1982)

8   'The Making of the Black Working Class in Britain.' Ramdin R. (Wildwood House 1987)

9   'Black Children in Care' (ABSWAP March 1983)

10   See 'Young, Black and Homeless in London' O'Mahoney B. & Ferguson D. (Barnardos/Ujima 1991); 'Homelessness Amongst Afro-Caribbean Women in Leicester' Ford J. & Vincent J. (Foundation Housing Association 1990); 'Local Authorities and Black Single Homelessness' Ivegbuna J. (Black Housing Vol. 5 No 5); 'Black Homelessness in South Wales' (FBHO/Barnardos 1996); 'Young and Homeless in Birmingham' (Barnardos 1993)

11   See Crisis Reports 1993, 1995, 1996; 'Counted Out: An investigation of Single Homelessness Outside London' (CHAR 1993); 'Single Homeless People' Anderson I., Kemp P. & Quilgars D. (HMSO 1993).

12   'Sorry It's Gone! Testing For Racial Equality' (CRE 1990)

13   See Frontline Housing Advice Agency Annual Reports 1992/3 to 1995/6; Shelter Research, figures for 1993 to 1995

14   'Homelessness & Discrimination. Report of a formal investigation In the London Borough of Tower Hamlets' (CRE 1988)

15   'Urban Deprivation, Racial Inequality and Social Policy: A Report' (CRE 1977)

16   'Planning for Action: The Children Act and Young Homeless People - A Black Perspective' (FBHO/Char 1995)

17   Kom Y. & McDougall J. 'Inspirations for Action. A Practical Guide to Women's Safety' (Crime Concern 1993)

18   Quoted in 'Race and Housing Fact Sheet' (Shelter 1992)

19   'Asian Women and Housing'. Omarshah Shahida (ASHA, Asian Women's Aid, London 1988)

20   'Young and Homeless in Birmingham' (Barnardos 1993 page 54)

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22   Quoted in Ravinder Bain 'Black Children in Local Authority Care: Admission Patterns' (In New Community, January 1990)

23 See Alan James 'Black': an enquiry into the pejorative associations of an English word.

24 Wilfred Wood 'Keep The Faith, Baby!' (The Bible Reading Fellowship 1994 page 18)

25 McCluskey J. 'Reassessing Priorities: The Children Act 1989'. A New Agenda For Young Homeless People? (CHAR 1993) page 15

26 Quoted in 'We don't Choose to be Homeless: Report of the Inquiry into Preventing Youth Homelessness' (CHAR 1996) page 60

27 'Facing the Future, Building Communities' ARHAG Annual Report (ARHAG 1994)

28 Inquiry into Prevention of Youth Homelessness

29 Reported in 'Multi-Ethnic Britain: Facts & Trends'. (The Runnymede Trust 1994) page 30

30 'Race & Criminal Justice' (Penal Affairs Consortium 1996)

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32 'Opening the Doors, Resettlement of Prisoners in the Community' (NACRO 1993)

33 Morley H. 'Anti-Racism Report to Management Group' (GMPS 1990) page 22

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35 'Services for People from Black and Minority Ethnic Groups: Issues of Race andCulture' in Review of Health and Social Services for Mentally-Disordered Offenders Requiring Similar Services(HMSO)

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'DISPOSABLE GENERATION?'

An ethnographic study of youth homelessness in Kent

SHANE BLACKMAN

Contrary to advocates of the new right in both the previous Conservative and the new Labour Government, young homeless people are not 'scroungers' or disreputable 'moral blackmailers' who enjoy living on the margins of society. Young homeless people in this study are theorised as undertaking rationalised action under pressured conditions of personal and social marginalisation. The paper is based on an ethnographic case study in the south of England which assesses young people's experiences of, and responses to, becoming homeless. The aim is to combine ethnographic description with an analytical understanding of young people's experiences and feelings about homelessness. An examination of youth homelessness is also a means to understand the relationship between state intervention and the ideology of welfare. For some young people the range of vulnerabilities, exploitation and abuse is such that mere provision of accommodation will not solve their social problems. In terms of social policy, the development of 'affordable' accommodation for homeless young people which fails to provide the necessary forms of support will also fail, because homelessness is not only about a lack of accommodation.

This paper presents findings from the ethnographic research and is structured around three central points that emerged from the study. The points are:

1   *Choice*
2   *Deviance*
3   *Dependence*

Here I want to present and develop each point as an area of discourse and as the site of cultural struggle, where the political right during the 1990s have tried to achieve authority and control over homeless young people. The discussion will initially outline the political right argument and will then attempt to counter their portrayal of youth homelessness and challenge their assumption that this group are a threatening 'underclass'; through the use of the ethnographic data where the young homeless are given a voice.

Research methods

The research was commissioned by the Joint Finance Medway and Swale Housing Strategy Group to evaluate the co-ordination between the different housing agencies, to assess how each agency identifies the social problem of homeless young people, and to critically consider its delivery of housing services. The research started in April 1996 and concluded in March 1997 with a seminar to launch the publication of a report: 'On the Condition of the Young and Homeless in Swale'. The intention of the seminar was to publicise and share relevant information from the report with practitioners and policy makers, and to seek to provide a forum for different agencies

working with young people. The key speaker at the seminar launch was John Bird, founder and editor of 'The Big Issue' newspaper.

In terms of the research sample different individuals and groups of young people were interviewed at the following locations: a foyer, direct access accommodation, local youth centres, a homeless hostel for young women and a voluntary agency flat share scheme. Over 50 young people were interviewed and 80 professionals from 30 statutory and voluntary organisations. Throughout the study I employed a range of qualitative research methods to collect first hand responses from professionals who deal with and respond to the issue of youth homelessness, and also gained personal stories and reflections from young people concerning their current situation of being homeless. The length of interviews varied between one hour and several hours, and in some cases I remained with respondents throughout the day; this opportunity enabled extended conversation to occur beyond the normal boundaries of the interview format. The ethnographic data reflects the proposition that at a grounded level some young homeless people are involved in survivalist practices which produce contradictory or hostile outcomes in their personal and social relations with others who are similarly positioned through social exclusion.

Choice

Through a series of ideological messages and images projected by different politicians and the media a specific construction and deliberate portrayal of the young homeless asserts that they are fraudulent and that homelessness is a deliberately chosen lifestyle. Serial Conservative governments have consistently claimed the young homeless not merely as 'work shy' but as people who chose not to do 'proper' work. This image has been supported by the tabloid media through a focus on 'I can earn £300 a day selling "The Big Issue" type of story'. Here politicians and newspaper editors have combined to promote the image of the multi-faceted menacing 'professional beggar' from 'squeegee merchant' to 'street musician'. The political right within the Labour Government too, has differed little and has sought to primarily homogenise young homeless people as 'aggressive beggars'. Furthermore, notices in London underground stations and British Rail passenger announcements warn people on the concourse of railway stations to be aware that professional beggars are operating in the area. The combination of public announcements and public notices suggest that ordinary people may be in danger because professional implies articulate and skilled practitioners (West 1997).

One factor in newspaper and television journalism on the young homeless has been to present their lives through a cocktail of fearful danger, reckless excitement and illegality. Snippets of stories describing the use of illicit substances, criminal activity, street drinking, prostitution and fighting are extracted from young people to suggest that they are involved in deviant social activities which are different from and pose a threat to ordinary people and society. The most important factor in this portrayal is the use of narrative which sets up the possibility for young people

to incriminate themselves through their own remarks. Through such artificial representations young people describe their experience of homelessness in terms of choice and identify positive aspects within that existence. This apparently 'positive picture' feeds into the political argument that they are there by choice and experience comfort. However, it would be more precise to understand these 'positive comments' as homeless young people's attempts to avoid sinking into despair by talking-up their experiences and projecting some sense of personal control.

In this study in north Kent homeless young people asserted that whilst there were many people in the local community who were very sympathetic to their situation, more negative attitudes frequently predominate and have an influence on both planning and policy concerning homelessness. Young people thought that at local level ordinary people in the street were sensitive to their suffering, this was also demonstrated by the amount of people who buy 'The Big Issue', donate to Crisis, Shelter and other organisations, and who want to change things but who feel powerless to do so. In this section the aims are to consider young people's diversity of experiences and different responses to being homeless and also to understand their projection of choice as a rationalised response to no choice.

Homeless youth - a heterogeneous group
It was found that homeless young people do not represent one homogeneous group, nor demonstrate one need. Their personal experiences, knowledge, possession of skills and level of information were diverse. They had different familial experiences, including physical, sexual and mental abuse, marital breakdown and murder and different levels of ability, skill and educational achievements. Overall the young people's different reasons for becoming homeless included:

- *Eviction (by parents, friend, relative, private landlord)*
- *Relationship breakdown*
- *Domestic violence*
- *Divorce of parents*
- *Leaving care system*
- *Experience of abuse, eg. sexual, psychological*
- *Family addiction problems: (alcohol or drugs)*
- *Unemployment of parents/self*

The diversity of reasons put forward by young people for leaving home are confirmed by research undertaken at National Homeless Alliance (formerly CHAR) and Centerpoint. Strathdee and Coster (1996) state 'Young people who leave home at age 16 and 17 do so for very good reasons. They cannot return to their parents and often spend considerable time in dangerous or insecure situations before finally ending up in a hostel....Young people very rarely leave home on a whim and then drift aimlessly, they leave for specific reasons which are often the culmination of years of a particular problem' (p. 14).

In this study two possible explanations which may cause youth homelessness are, firstly a high degree of irregular income within households promotes economic and budgeting problems and secondly economic difficulty for families may result in problems where individual members who are unemployed are threatened with eviction. From the evidence provided by statutory services and voluntary agencies it is clear that youth homelessness is not only increasing, but the nature of the social problem is becoming more complex because it is related to other factors including domestic violence, physical and sexual intimidation and misuse of alcohol and drugs. At a theoretical level, Wyn and White (1997) argue that young people 'are being subjected to the dual processes of disconnection from institutions revolving around production, consumption and community life, and the social and psychological experience of disempowerment accompanying this disconnection' (p. 123-4).

Choice but not positive choice

Many of the young people disagreed about the definition of homelessness. Some thought being homeless meant sleeping 'rough' outdoors, without a roof. Barry thought that 'staying at your mate's place is homeless but you can kid yourself otherwise'. Two young people who had been living in caravans maintained 'you're really roughin' it, but you weren't homeless'. Importantly a number of agencies were aware of a trend towards the use of unsuitable vans for residential purposes. When young people were accepted into direct access or youth hostel accommodation all agreed that they were effectively homeless, although the transition status was uncomfortable. Matt said:

> I could say it's really nice here. Well it ain't bad. But you can't call it home, even though it is, if you get what I mean. Being homeless is terrible. It's not a good experience. If I said it was, I'd be lying. It's awful.

Many of the homeless young people seek to identify a 'positive' experience. This enables them to project a sort of control over their lives and keep from despair. Some described how they would collect together in town centres or city centres, in essence for the purpose of company, Gary said: 'because of having no real family'. In such places it was possible for them to 'drink and chat' although never quite under circumstances of ' your own choosing before being moved on by the busies (police: SB)'. Steve's comment below outlines this point:

> I've met some really amazing people being on the street. People I would call friends for life, although I'll probably never meet them again because some of 'em will be dead. What I've learnt is listening to people's stories, you get a sort of wider view on the world. All types of people become homeless doctors, students, women, coal miners, all sorts, but when you're on the street you're all on the same level. Once you've been on the street you can go no lower than that.

Paul states,

> I've stayed up at London for a while. A few of us used to sleep at airports because you can keep clean and if you've got a bag with you, you look the part, there's no real problem. But you have to stay smart. Being homeless is about walking. So you travel. You walk around all day. That's what happens and you learn a lot I mean you forget it as well but it's all about different things. Like London is open all day and night. There's always something to do.

These comments about the experience of being homeless derive from two young people who have also shared the experience of being beaten up, serving prison sentences, suffering physical and sexual abuse and being under medication. During the same group discussion Vince explained his reasons for becoming homeless were as a result of his parents' drinking problems and violence. He stated: 'The real problems started when my parents used to get drunk. They would smash the place up, fight and then smash me up. I couldn't cope with it. There was no alternative, but to get out'. In general, where young people put over a more 'positive' picture of their experience, it feeds into the political right argument that homeless young people are there by choice. Such an assertion is incorrect because it is only an appearance of choice. In reality it is not about choice in terms of making a decision between options. As Vince said 'there was no alternative'.

The young homeless women who were also parents were proud of their achievement in bringing new life into being. This could be seen through the care and attention which was put into their child's appearance. Some homeless young women who were single parents were aware of the stereotypical images associated with lone mothers. Jenny said 'What do top people know about me? They've got their bias and that's their problem. I'm a single parent now. I wasn't a month ago. But due to his aggression and punches, I couldn't face living with him. I had to get away'. Jenny described her act of leaving her partner as extremely difficult in relation to her new baby. She said 'Being placed in the hostel was desperate but I didn't know what else to do as I decided to get away from him and his family'. Jenny complained that the walls were thin and that the noise kept her up, but she saw her act of leaving a violent partner and becoming more self reliant as an achievement.

For some young people their efforts to break from unhappy circumstances can be thwarted by difficulties beyond their control. Kevin said

> I was put in care at 13 because of violence in the family. At my foster home I was being sexually assaulted. I got back home for a while with my mother and step father but then he started getting in bed with me. Now he's in prison. Since then I've been living with my girlfriend, but I came home one day at lunchtime and found her in bed with my best mate. It had been going on for about six months. I'll tell you I'm trying, but what hope is there left for me?

The experiences put forward by Steve, Paul, Vince, Jenny and Kevin about leaving home can be seen as a rationalised response to no choice under difficult and dangerous circumstances (see especially, Jones 1995). Skellington (1994) argues 'Homelessness creates its own unique pressures and stress related effects, including loneliness, frustration and despair' (p. 259) or as the Manic Street Preachers state (1993) 'Everyday more numb to agony, a mile empty inside, life becoming a landslide'. In conversation with young people it was clear that many were quite prepared to speak about their more public or celebratory deviant activities including offending, illicit drug use, underage consumption of alcohol and violent behaviour. However, it was only after more extended periods of discussion that intimate and private experiences were detailed such as neglect, loneliness, abuse, being beaten-up, raped, being labeled a failure, rejection, bereavement, depression and attempted suicide.

One common thread amongst some homeless young people is the contemplation of suicide. Although it is difficult to gauge the seriousness of such actions approximately 13 of the young people in the study stated that they had made an attempt to take their own life. The majority of these attempted suicides were by young males (only three were by females). The method selected to commit suicide ranged from a cocktail of drugs and alcohol, abuse of prescription medication, the cutting of arms, wrists or legs with blades or knives and also jumping on to electrified railway lines.

From the accounts young people put forward to explain their attempted suicide it would seem that homelessness is not the sole causal factor although it appears to be a significant factor which may be understood as the summation of failure or rejection. Simon states,

> Once you've been on the street there's nowhere lower to go. Even prison is an improvement. When you're homeless life gets you down, suicide will solve my problem and the problem it's causing for others. You don't give a shit, thinking things through, that's why it becomes a nice idea - a way to get outta here. People say it's all my fault - so you've got to do it yourself - commit suicide.

Here the young homeless talk about their closed and bleak reality, yet ethnography is built on empathy through exchange between researcher and researched. This style of discussion allowed Simon and Paul the opportunity for reflection and to shape the conversation according to their feelings. The ethnographic setting theoretically defined as a dialogical relation, allows young people the chance to speak on topics other than that of their bad experience. In their projection of some degree of control young people are attempting to find the good sides to despair which demonstrates an attitude and a feeling that they have some control over 'something'. Where we see young people offer a less negative side to their homeless experience, such personal views were only gained through the exchange basis of the ethnographic relationship, which seeks to increase respect for and give power to research 'subjects'. Such displacement of authority within the ethnographic process, however, as Stacey (1988)

states 'places research subjects at grave risk of manipulation and betrayal' (p. 23) not merely by the ethnographer, but from others with political agendas who may wish to exploit such comments and experiences for ideological purposes.

Deviance

The second main feature to the political right's understanding of the young homeless is to define and identify them as a deviant population, who are pictured and presented as different from others ie. the 'normal' majority. This is specified through drawing up a checklist of assumed characteristics which include, poor school performance, violent personality, early introduction to sexual behaviour, use of illicit drugs, reluctance to gain employment, dependency on benefit etc. These selected items are often placed into sets of behavioural traits which are then thought to demonstrate a causal relationship between homelessness and criminal behaviour. On this basis the young homeless are then addressed through the imposed objective language of medicine and psychology which seeks to separate them from normal people.

In contrast, it is argued here that young homeless people are very much like other people, but given their current situation they are made more visible and thus come under closer scrutiny. There is greater concentration on and investigation into some aspects of young homeless people's actions and behaviour, actions which for other people remain invisible and largely private. Due to their socially constructed public presence the young homeless are understood as and accused of indulging in unacceptable anti-social behaviour and criminal activities showing a lack of morality. This section will look at a series of social contexts where young homeless people experience physical violence which will also include a focus on young women's experience of sexual violence when living in temporary accommodation. The final section looks at the social construction of deviance focusing on the young homeless people's experience and understanding of drugs and alcohol.

Understanding the context to violence

Many homeless young people were insistent that agencies and organisations, although they deal with homelessness, as Julie put it: 'had little real knowledge of what it's like. How it affects you here? (places hand on heart)'. For others the ability to communicate the stress or crisis experienced in their young life was particularly difficult as most had been subject to negative judgements by parents, social workers and important others which they failed to fully understand or thought wrong. It would be incorrect to assume that young people who were homeless did not consider on a daily basis their failures, problems, or mistakes (Blackman 1997b). Gill said:

> I don't know whether there's anything wrong with me. I know my own problems. I wake up with them everyday. I suppose I'm paranoid, but then I'd call that a natural response to being homeless.

Due to their experience of homelessness some young people seemed to show signs of mental illness, demonstrated through attempted suicide as we saw in the

first section and degrees of aggression. Violence is frequently associated with homeless people through stereotypical portrayals within the media. However, very little is understood about the extent or form of this violence. One factor which contributed to young people's feelings of insecurity was their uneven levels of information concerning their rights and also their unfamiliarity with the appropriate means to exercise these rights. We need to recognise though, that due to their marginal status homeless people are brought into increased danger or threat of violence than most because of extreme hardship.

Young people in a range of different types of accommodation gave the impression of being involved in a culture of violence which was often supported by personal ideals of 'tough' masculinity (Blackman 1995). For some young men degrees of violence were described as an ordinary feature of their socialisation within the family and local community. Terry said:

> Beating people up is an effective way of stopping things. You put your point across by smashing a blokes jaw in. This Kevin, he was coming round here, it was really getting on me wick, his comments and such. It had to stop. So I hit him in the face with the end of the snooker cue, you can see where the blood went, all - there (pointing out the location of the blood: SB) still a little bit on the wall and splatters on lid of the blanket box. Blood everywhere. That calmed him down. It stopped the problem. It was pucka.

Amongst certain groups of young people knives had become a familiar instrument to carry or have immediate access to within temporary accommodation. Numerous knives had been taken off young people who entered different temporary accommodation. At one hostel a young man called Steve showed me his armoury of knives that were kept secretly. Some of these knives had blades which were nine inches long and he demonstrated their proficiency by slashing at the table. It is not only males who keep knives: a small number of young women said that they had stabbed males, females, siblings or boyfriends. For some young people it is apparent that they have been brought up within a culture that accepts the possession of such instruments and regard their potential use as a rational solution for trouble (see Coggans and McKellar 1996). Mary said 'Because you ain't got nothing some people, they reckon they can just come round here trample on you, give you a hard time, cause they ain't got nothing and to see if your nothing is worth nicking'. This comment was made by a young woman whose father had recently been murdered. It was found that much conversation amongst young homeless men revolves around themes of violence, territory and conquest. Within a hostel or foyer an artificial group context may be created whereby such displays enhance the appearance of strength and solidarity. On this basis individuals within such a setting feel more secure, less threatened by the company of similar people around them. Thus, it is possible to see that the talk of violence amongst homeless men is both real and a projection, it gives a reputation for danger which operates to rebuff potential

attacks due to the group's capacity for an apparent irrationality. However, this masculine group identity can backfire at the level of the individual because homeless young people are more likely to be ill-prepared for confrontation due to their weaker state of health and because of the strong impact of illicit drugs and alcohol on their faculties as a result of irregular sleep and poor nutrition.

Overall, it would be more accurate to place the familiarity of crime and violence associated with homeless young people within a context which examines these forms of behaviour within wider society. It would be easy to highlight these forms of criminality or deviance as causally related to the young homeless, but this picture would be a distortion. As a senior police officer noted 'we deal with all sorts of trouble on Friday and Saturday nights in north Kent from what are described as normal people'. What is being suggested here is that to focus solely upon the crime or violence committed by homeless young people would lead to misunderstanding when compared with the wider adult population.

Sexual violence
It was found that many homeless young men occupied a world which was largely devoid of women. Such distance was reflected in their fantasized discussion of women which tended to be premised around notions of expropriation and sexual subjugation. Within hostels young women who had been subject in the past to experiences of physical or sexual abuse were often subject to mental forms of similar abuse from teenage men who showed a tendency, as Bridget said 'to treat you like a bit of meat, ready to be shagged and dumped as though in this place you were their property'. Or as Carol said,

> Some of the lads are fine. You do the chores together and it's really good, but others just go on about it (sex) all the time, it really gets you down. Trying to put you down, as though that's impressive.

Under such conditions young women often found temporary accommodation to be unsafe and not a positive place to occupy and identify with. Where men are violent or directly exploit young women in temporary accommodation, it was asserted by these women that male control was rarely challenged other than through expulsion and this therefore meant their attitudes remained unchanged. In such forms of accommodation it was found that vulnerable young women were brought into further vulnerability by young adult men who promoted misogyny.

In a small number of cases it was found that young men had a tendency to sexually exploit women in mixed sex temporary accommodation, particularly where these women were without appropriate support or intervention, or were known to be abused. For some young women the level of despondency was very apparent. Tricia said 'Here my love life still hasn't changed except I just get used and passed on'. At two types of temporary accommodation where young men were in the majority and young women where in the minority problems emerged where young

women had been manipulated into offering sex and raped under the influence of alcohol or, forced to undertake sexual displays such as a 'strip-tease'. These forms of male sexual violence and control over young women are not specifically related to homeless young men (Mac an Ghaill 1994). Although Bob may claim that his controlling ambition is to 'hump them and dump them', this comment is no different from the view of Paul Willis' (1977) key male respondent Joey who asserted 'the only thing I'm interested in is fucking as many women as I can if you really wanna know' (p. 199). Sexual aggression towards young women from young homeless men needs to be contextualised; such behaviour shows that these men are similar to, not different from other young adult men.

Illicit drugs, alcohol, and homelessness

One of the central images through which the negative identity of homeless young people has been promoted is their depiction as dangerous or demonic due to their consumption of alcohol and use of illicit drugs. Young people interviewed resented this often glamourised intrigue of homelessness, drugs and alcohol presented by the tabloid media. Evidence from the local Addiction Centre and the Social Services drug team suggested that young people who were known to them for using drugs did not present significant housing difficulties. A senior social worker stated 'out of the current 370 individuals who we see with a drug problem approximately 10 are homeless'. Drug addiction in this sense is largely seen as problematic heroin use, but it was found that recreational drugs were part of the life and culture of emergency accommodation and youth hostels. Therefore, one result is that if an individual becomes homeless there was more likelihood of coming into contact with illicit substances because drugs were a feature within their new immediate accommodation. Overall, there was no necessary connection between young people's drug use and homelessness (Blackman 1996a, Hammersley and Pearl 1997). The young people who were interviewed as part of this study had not all taken illicit drugs, although every young person consumed alcohol.

Young people often referred to local places in terms of drug orientated names, such as 'brown city' or 'speed city' : for the majority of young people the proverbial statement about illicit substances was that 'drugs are cool'. Hutson and Liddiard (1994) maintain that a central part of the media presentation of drug use by homeless young people was to demonstrate that they were different from the majority of 'ordinary' young people. Building on this point Parker, Measham and Aldridge (1996) argue that now ' the availability of drugs is a normal part of the leisure-pleasure landscape' (p. 25). Recent studies such as Coffield and Gofton (1994) have revealed and explored the nature of drug taking as 'part and parcel of growing up in contemporary Britain' (p. 24): this is defined conceptually as 'normalisation' the assertion is that drugs have moved from a subcultural status to a mainstream youth cultural artifact. On this basis the ideological argument which asserts that ordinary young people and homeless young people are different because only the latter use illicit drugs is no longer tenable (see also Shiner and Newburn 1997).

Where young people were without accommodation, had few familial contacts and were displaced from friendship networks; such circumstances of material and cultural poverty led to the tendency for drug and alcohol use to be more public. Here homeless young people came under greater surveillance from CCTV cameras and increased contact with the police. In both cases the young homeless become identified as high profile deviants and such televisual images are replayed endlessly promoting and cementing their actions as different from ordinary young people. At the same time it is important not to associate drug use singularly with people who are on low income and have few accommodation options and become homeless. In this study homeless young people were taking few illegal drugs largely because they were too expensive; when they did use drugs it was generally cannabis as it was cheaper and more accessible. Drugs are not the exclusive property of homeless youth, although the popular image promoted amongst the tabloid press suggests homeless young people commit more crime and use more illicit substances. Danny said:

> What's the real problem using drugs - it's nothing more than just a way of relaxing. It's like putting your feet-up. Just because I've had some puff or had a tab (LSD) some people expect social services to have a bar-code printed on my head. Get a life.

Also it was suggested by some homeless young people that the appearance of drinking alcohol is often a false representation. Gill said 'It's a mask all this fighting and drinking, you get involved in some of it but it's not happening all the time. Mostly it's nothing - there's nothing happening here (direct access accommodation) and there's nothing happening here (points to head)'.

This issue is developed by her friend Gary who said:

> You can't drink alcohol at the Spike, otherwise you get thrown out. You haven't got money to buy rounds in a pub. So you end up on the street drinking, because there ain't nowhere else to go. We can't go home cause we ain't got no home. You can go to a park, but then there's kids and people think you might be a child molester.

From these accounts it seems that the location and consumption of alcohol can present significant problems for homeless people. Their high visibility through being on the street means they can easily be depicted as irresponsible. The sugges-tion is that apparently 'ordinary' or 'normal' people are permitted a whole range of legitimate activities whereas homeless young people are not permitted to act in the manner of other people; it is on this basis that many young people experience processes of social exclusion.

Dependence

The political right's solution to youth homelessness is offered on the basis of individual self responsibility, while the liberal approach favours intervention: neither fully recognise the importance of the creation of environments where young people can

take control and forge their independence. John Bird (1997) argues 'Allowing people to drift into a ghetto of underachievement starts when there are no options to maintaining your independence and your own self respect'. The political right see youth homelessness as the 'street-homeless', where the primary aim is to visibly removal such people and place them into temporary accommodation.

The policy establishes the principle that removing homelessness from the street and into forms of temporary housing solves the social problem of homelessness. This policy intervention makes the condition of homelessness both more comfortable and more invisible. Making homelessness disappear off the street does not solve the problem: the young homeless become homeless in different types of temporary accommodation. For many young people the experience of these uncertain conditions creates further problems and a false understanding of independence because youth homelessness is not solely about providing housing. Dependence in this sense is where homeless young people are denied access to material independence and given welfare which fails to give young people the option to take control of their lives.

Service provision will not have a positive impact unless it is undertaken in a context where young people have the option of taking control of their lives. Benefit should be delivered in relation to need not morality or dogma. The aim should be the creation of an economic environment where homelessness is eradicated and then it is possible to cover for crisis intervention. Currently the forms of welfare support represent interventions which are reactive; in contrast intervention for young people should mean creation of an environment where they can learn to achieve personal control leading to independence through meaningful training, well paid jobs and affordable accommodation. This section on dependence will deal with; firstly, the social and economic factors associated with becoming homeless in north Kent; secondly the experience of homeless young women in violent relationships who are materially dependent, and finally young people's experience of hardship and the concept of risk.

The social and economic context of north Kent

Information from statutory and voluntary organisations detail that the borough of Swale in Kent has specific social and economic problems, which may contribute to the increase in youth homelessness. Such factors include:

- *high levels of unemployment*
- *large numbers of low income households*
- *considerable overcrowding within households concealing homelessness*

In early 1997 the national figure for unemployment according to the Careers Service ran at 7.9%; in comparison the Swale figure was 11.3%. In this context, unemployment and the irregularity of income derived from seasonal agricultural and tourist employment contributes to economic problems for people in poor families. Most young people argued that they had been denied access to benefits, or had not tried to gain benefits because they were either homeless or thought they were not entitled to benefit.

These homeless young people were clearly not part of the estimated unemployment figures and therefore did not feature as part of the 'claimant' count for unemployment. For Doogan (1988) the underlying cause in 'the rise in youth homelessness is but one symptom of the deteriorating economic position of young people that has its roots in the dramatic restructuring of the world of work' (p. 91). In this sense youth homelessness is understood as a deliberate result of social policy intervention sustained under a long period of Conservative political and cultural hegemony: summarised by Carlen (1996) as Thatcher's 'pleb-pacification programmes' (p. 30).

In north Kent a number of voluntary agencies reported a big increase in the number of inquiries and that there is a tendency for young people to return for more than one interview due to the complex nature of their particular housing problem. Swale Borough Council (1996) states 'A high percentage of applicants are young single homeless with an increasing number of domestic violence cases' (p. 10). Senior housing officers maintained that there was considerable discrimination against young single people at a number of levels from policy formation. Discrimination takes an objective form where on the basis of criteria housing officers give priority to families over homeless young people. Discrimination also takes a subjective form as one housing officer notes, 'With families the problem pulls at the heart-strings. So with families it's more easy to identify, than single people. I know it shouldn't be like that, and there's the more snobby element in the community who don't want single person accommodation in the community and it does influence planning policy'. In this sense we can see that many young single homeless people are excluded from the priority need category. Thus for the young homeless two forms of discrimination are apparent, firstly structural discrimination from policies and staff, and secondly, local discrimination from dominant voices within the community.

Material dependence and physical violence towards young women

Dependence in relation to young homeless women was largely determined by their economic dependence on a man and which was often made more complex where the woman experienced domestic violence. One phrase which a small number of young men used to describe a black eye and bruising put on a woman by another male was 'look at the shiner on that bird'. The combination of the words, 'shiner' and 'bird', can be seen to remove any sense of the perpetration of an act of violence committed against a woman and in some senses suggest men's regulation of women through violence which leaves a mark of territory.

Where homeless young women had been in relationships and among some who had also become parents there was a range of feelings towards violence from male partners. For a small number of young women violence was part of a two-way interaction. Karen said 'He gave me some stick, even kicked me, after he had punched me, but I certainly gave him a hard time as well, it was like for like'. Some young women challenged male violence and may themselves enter into violence in order to protect themselves. Jenny, Sheila and Sarah who had recently ended violent

relationships showed different degrees of a changed awareness. For example, Sarah spoke of her experience:

> *Well he can't hurt me and the baby now cause he's in prison. That's all finished. What I've learnt from bad relationships with blokes is I'm not fucking giving in. There's no way I will get married now. All that nice as pie stuff at the start, then it's drinking and out with his mates and what do I get ? - a bloody slap. There's no way now I would be dependent on a bloke. When you live closely with someone things change, you've got to have commitment.*

Jenny continues 'I had to force myself to be independent. I didn't like it. A couple of years back I wouldn't have bothered. But now everything I've got is mine. There's no way I can put it into words how hard that's been. But there's no way I'm going back to how it was before. Many of my friends are like it still, they moan'. Jenny thought her achievement of personal independence was related to the baby and what she called 'maturity'. She maintained that ' having the baby was a big change; it was planned because I'd been in a relationship for 3 three years then'. It is possible to suggest that Jenny and Sarah's positive feelings about motherhood and their newly found independent accommodation, were won on the basis of personalised rejection of masculine violence within a relationship. For these two women their particular struggles against material dependency and masculine control sometimes expressed itself in views which did not recognise other young women as being in a similar situation to themselves. Of other young women Sheila said:

> *You see them and it's just like another toy to them. The baby stays up late like them with their friends drinking, smoking - some of these girls are my age, 18 or younger, but they're more like kids. One girl here reckons she's really big, but she's really pathetic, she deserves a right kicking and it will happen as well. I don't know how to describe it, but they're worse and they're really fucking ignorant.*

It may be that Sheila is critical of these other young women because she sees something of herself in them, whereas Jenny was more reflective and said earlier, of herself 'a couple of years back I wouldn't have bothered'. These three young women demonstrate attitudes which have moved away from aggression and towards self reflection, although their views still demonstrate that young people are encountering different sets of conflicting pressures.

These homeless young women are clearly in a period of transition but are consciously aware that they have struggled to reach a point where they now feel more personal control, rather than dependence.

Overall, it is not that young homeless women enter into a relationship expecting violence, but that they entered into an unequal relationship which was often based around masculine control leading to their dependence which then became difficult to break free of. The main point here is that as a cause of homelessness, the different

forms of domestic violence disproportionately impact upon women rather than men. Foreman and Dallos (1993) state 'Violence is seen as a way of controlling women and keeping them subordinate; their material dependency may keep them in a violent relationship, not because they enjoy pain, or collude at some level, not because they are abnormal or pathological but because they have very little choice' (p. 22). In general, the young women who have experience of homelessness in connection with masculine control did not have a developed understanding of their own rights and worth, as an effect of their experience of violence (Dobash and Dobash 1992).

The 'disposable generation?' material and cultural hardship

A young homeless person described his improved accommodation since he stopped sleeping rough on the street. Rob aged 18 said;

> This is my place. The door is a sheet. You move the sheet to one side and the walls are sort of plywood like a display stand at school. The wall doesn't go down to the ground or up to the ceiling, so there's a gap of about two foot at either end. I've got a bed. The back wall is brick, painted white, there isn't no decoration except for a large light on it, like in a car park, fixed to the wall, a big switch. The noise is terrible, the smell is urrrgh. You're all in it, fleas and all, welcome to 'The Spike'.

During conversation with one group of young people it was cynically mooted by Paul that they were the 'disposable generation'. They greeted this comment with hostile amusement and ironically considered it as a commercial product. Using advertisements as a basis Danny said:

> Yes, the disposable generation. Here for the first time. Just flick the controls: they're gone. No problem, no waste, no cleaning. Just gone!

Amongst some young people it was possible to find degrees of confusion resulting from years of what Tamsin described as 'not being heard or listened to' either at home or at school. It was apparent that many young people had not been in a situation of 'ordinary conversation' with an adult for a considerable period of time. Their communication with adults had been wholly determined by forms of chastisement, punishment, abuse, aggression or being an object of humour. On this basis for many young people their contention was that there seemed to be ' no real reason' to communicate with adults. These young people regularly came into contact with many different adults, but they *considered* that the only people who were interested in talking *with* them rather than at them were young people themselves. Young people identified both statutory and some voluntary services as being primarily led by the extraction of information. Sarah said 'You don't have a conversation with them. They give priority to their forms. You're kept in the dark - it's only what they want, not what I want'. Dependence is closely linked to despondency; where young people thought they had a legitimate criticism of, or complaint against a service many had no faith in formal processes, or felt powerless to gain redress. Shaun said 'nothing's done

about it. I tried to complain to social services and that. But where does it go? What's the point?'

During an interview with eight young people who were part of a Youth Training guarantee group, Donna said:

> The only reason I come here is to get my money. It's the only reason why we all come here. This course is the lowest of the low, it's for invalids - invalids of the mind. It's our choice to be on it, it keeps you busy but it's boring.

Dave added:

> You do a bit of gardening, sit around watch a video, sit around, have a discussion. You don't do anything, you don't learn anything. You say, what about the future? Fuck the future! What about the present? We're going nowhere. This is giving me a headache.

Young people mentioned that alongside poor employment opportunities was the lack of any incentive to undertake proper youth training. Other employment options included 'dodgy jobs' in the informal economy or illegal economy which paid 'cash-in-hand'. Homeless young people suggested that irregularity of employment can also increase family instability linked to becoming homeless (Wallace 1987).

Speaking with young people it was possible to see their attitudes fluctuate between anger, disillusionment and passivity. Many of these young people who initially expressed their anger and frustration about past abuse or current problems through degrees of violence, later went on to show how ordinary were their aspirations, such as 'having a romance' , 'having my own place' 'what about a job' , or 'I really fancy a holiday, but as a homeless person you're not allowed'. Towards the end of one discussion Steve, a young adult of seventeen who I interviewed for four hours and who initially showed me his store of different knives, read some of the poems he had written about love, tragedy, hatred, fear, confusion and life without his mother. Another young person brought out his guitar to demonstrate his teaching and playing skills. Gary and Tim had started to offer guitar lessons as a means to gain a small income and improve their ability to communicate. Two other young people also showed me their drawings and paintings while another had done a mural. In these cases and in others although some of these young people had been subject to exclusion from school they possessed a high degree of intelligence, sensitivity, creativity and innovation but for the most part such skills were unrecognised, undeveloped and certainly not praised.

The concept of risk and youth homelessness
The most striking feature about young homeless people's accounts and demonstration of skills and abilities was their reluctance to assert their capacities. In contrast, they would easily promote images of dependence and deviance as though these represented a choice. Within sociological studies an important issue has been how to conceptualise

forms of behaviour and action by young people without collapsing the analysis into showing either passivity and dependence or resistance. In an attempt to theorise youth homelessness which offers intentionality, the concept of risk has been employed within a number of recent studies in contrast to the notion of an 'underclass' (Jones 1995, Furlong and Cartmel 1997). The epistemological aim of using the concept of risk is to suggest levels of agency when interpreting young people's actions. In this study the ethnographic data shows that many young people are operating and struggling in circumstances which could be thought of in terms of an increased susceptibility to risk.

Theorists such as Giddens and especially Beck have often been employed as a foundation from which others have used the concept making it appear as a fashionable tool articulating conditions of 'post-modern' existence characterised by increased levels of personal, social and cultural insecurity. Risk is understood as a term which captures the distinctiveness of people's experience of danger in late modernity. At a macro level awareness of risk is seen as a global threat which could potentially undermine people's confidence in social institutions and forms of knowledge. At the micro level awareness of threats to modern life such as poverty and homelessness contribute to a heightened sense of personal risk. The theoretical elaboration suggests that an individual acts with purpose and in response to perceived social changes.

However, at a critical level Beck's (1992) theoretical and ideological assumption is that contemporary society is more acutely experiencing risk than ever before. His post-modernist conceptualisation of risk is primarily an individualisation thesis which identifies society as being in a process of transformation where individuals will be set free of constraining social forms. An important weakness in its explanatory power to understand the ethnographic data, is that different and durable social structures of late capitalism such as class, gender, ethnicity and status, critically shape and influence the social and economic lives of young people. Post-modern approaches, as Bradley (1996) notes, are commendable in 'stressing the creativity of individual agents' (p. 168), but underestimate the structural conditions of poverty and the ideological power of the dominant order. The concept of risk appears to offer agency when interpreting individual action, but it denies the impact of structural dynamics, which reduces the explanatory power of the concept as risk becomes another experience available to all with equal opportunity. However, risk is neither open to all people to the same extent, nor with the same consequential outcome: risk is an ideological construction of the deviant other. At a conceptual level the young homeless as Becker (1963) would argue, become successfully 'labelled as outsiders'. The concept of risk represents a class based construction which Foucault (1977) identifies as creatively combining 'the everyday and the exotic'; when the risk behaviour of the bourgeoisie 'does find its way into the courts, it can depend upon the indulgence of the judges and the discretion of the press' (p. 288).

The ethnographic data here describes the extent to which homeless young people are forced into what can be described as varied practices of survivalism due to economic and social inequality. Within some post-modern sociology the emphasis has been to 'articulate' meaning in these activities which is then theorised as showing agency because it demonstrates young people's resourcefulness and identity. The combination of ethnographic data and post-modern theory can be seen to celebrate 'localism' allowing multiple and different voices to speak thereby giving other cultural articulations legitimacy. However, the danger of such neatly described subjects and crafted theory is its distance and separation from causal analysis and empirical understanding (Clifford 1988). In this study I have tried to show that the different voices of the young homeless can be understood, however contradictory, as a series of rationalised social actions under material conditions of social exclusion. In relation to sociological understanding, the very weakness of post-modernist theory relates to what Eagleton (1996) argues is the way it 'teaches that general categories are unreal' (p. 102). What is real about youth homelessness is the different social experiences of young people who encounter structural oppression and discrimination at the level of class, gender and ethnicity.

Conclusion

Under Conservative hegemony youth homelessness became a site of political struggle and manipulation directly produced by new right cultural policies and economic theory. With the new Labour government youth homelessness still remains as a site of political struggle, where the party's expressed commitment to ending social exclusion may contradict with more authoritarian policies for example 'zero tolerance'. Throughout I have argued that youth homelessness is not only about a lack of accommodation, and that the ethnographic data which describes young people's experience shows the considerable pressures which they encounter. The strategy of the political right was to place the homeless on the streets to intimidate and to promote fear and conformity amongst ordinary and respectable people. The social policies of the political centre, have a deliberate strategy which is to make homelessness more acceptable by making it more comfortable and invisible. In terms of the wider social policy context of youth homelessness, this study concludes with four major concerns which are; firstly, young people's removal and restriction from state benefits increases hardship, secondly, young people have little access to affordable appropriate housing, thirdly, employment and support networks are currently insufficient to meet the identified range of needs amongst young homeless people and finally organisations lack co-ordination and communication when dealing with youth homelessness.

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YOUTH HOMELESSNESS, THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ATTITUDES

MARK LIDDIARD AND SUSAN HUTSON

Introduction

The mass media are crucial to understanding social issues. As we near the 21st century and experience a revolution in global information and communication, our understanding and comprehension of the world around us is increasingly mediated by the mass media. Many researchers - including ourselves (Hutson and Liddiard 1994, pp.73-98) - have examined and analysed the content of these media accounts to understand more about how issues such as youth homelessness are interpreted, packaged and presented to both the public and policy-makers. Yet comprehending the nature and content of media accounts is only part of the picture. It is important too to be clear about the ways in which audiences, be they the public or policy-makers, receive and interpret the myriad of messages and images that they are presented with.

The treatment of youth homelessness is an interesting illustration of the role of the mass media in influencing and determining public perception and attitudes, not least because it is an issue that has received a very substantial amount of media coverage. We have discussed elsewhere the somewhat paradoxical relationship between media coverage of youth homelessness, which has often been favourable in approach, and the responses of policy makers, which have often been both limited and punitive (see Liddiard, forthcoming a). We concluded that media accounts of homelessness and other social problems can sometimes be influential in placing issues on the political agenda, but policy responses to such issues are almost invariably determined by ideological concerns, even if these may sometimes be at odds with public opinion. What is less clear, however, is just what effect mass media accounts have upon public attitudes. In the context of youth homelessness, for instance, there is certainly an assumption on the part of pressure groups, agencies and even academic commentators that media coverage is important for changing public perceptions. But is this really the case?

This paper is therefore split into several parts. The first section briefly discusses the ways in which the mass media, specifically the press, interpret and represent the problem of youth homelessness. The second part of the paper then considers the impact that this coverage may have upon public attitudes towards homelessness and the young homeless themselves. Drawing on research examining the impact of media accounts upon public audiences, we suggest that press coverage of homelessness, and indeed other social issues, does not have a clear or straightforward impact upon those who read these accounts. Nonetheless, we do suggest that these media presentations of youth homelessness may be an important influence upon public perception in a number of ways. In particular, the broadly stereotypical and simplistic

interpretations of youth homelessness found in the press are pervasive, and may both reflect and perpetuate public misconceptions about the young homeless.

The paper concludes with a consideration of why these crude stereotypes tend to pervade so much press coverage of youth homelessness. We suggest that these interpretations may reflect a number of themes. The media presentation of youth homelessness in terms of easily assimilated and understood notions of sex; drugs and violence, for instance, are understandable given that these are the very features that can make homelessness so newsworthy to the press. Nonetheless, we also suggest that Government and political agendas can also influence and inform media coverage of social issues. Throughout the 1980s, the Conservative government were certainly instrumental in encouraging changes in public attitudes towards the state provision of housing. Similarly, the Government actively encouraged crude public perceptions of homelessness as an issue of individual pathology. These moves often met with some degree of success, not least because these interpretations were often congruent with existing media agendas. We conclude with a point of real disquiet - by considering the suggestion that pressure groups and agencies in the field of youth homelessness have sometimes compounded these stereotypical interpretations of homelessness, by colluding with journalistic agendas in their thirst for media coverage which, in turn, may bring agencies valuable publicity and funds.

Press coverage of youth homelessness
The mass media are far from homogeneous. The content and style of presentation, and the nature and size of the audience, may both vary dramatically between different media. There are crucial differences between television, radio and press coverage of social issues, and these differences can have important implications for discussing the impact of media coverage upon public attitudes, particularly given that the public in the UK appear to give more credibility to television news than they do to press accounts.

Even when focusing specifically upon press coverage of a social problem, this can still be highly heterogeneous. On the simplest level, for instance, there is an obvious distinction between the tabloids and the broadsheets. In terms of the press influence upon public opinion and policy making, this may be an important distinction (Negrine 1994, p.143). The tabloids are more generally concerned with sport and scandal than pressing political issues, and social problems are likely to be discussed accordingly. Whilst broadsheets more often contain detailed political coverage and comment, as a consequence of lower readership levels, they may have considerably less impact upon public perception than mass circulation tabloids although, in the context of the policy-making process, the broadsheets may have a disproportionate influence (see Liddiard forthcoming a).

We have discussed elsewhere the detailed findings of our empirical research on press coverage of youth homelessness (see Hutson and Liddiard 1994, pp.73-98). Based upon a review of 26 feature articles about youth homelessness in London

and South Wales between 1987 and 1991, and 41 articles in the Australian press between 1987 and 1990, we have previously made a number of salient points about the content of press coverage and the manner in which the press interpret and present youth homelessness, and young homeless people. Although this article is concerned with the potential impact of press coverage, and not press content per se, some of our previous observations about the treatment of youth homelessness are worth reiterating.

Evidently, the press do not give equal coverage to every potentially newsworthy issue. On the contrary, stories are more likely to be selected if they exhibit, or can be made to exhibit, certain characteristics. The press are often attracted to negative and problematic themes, and youth homelessness undoubtedly has - or can be encouraged to have - many of the qualities sought by the press. However, it is important that the characteristics pervading press coverage of youth homelessness are not necessarily accredited to the young homeless themselves. While it may appear that the press are describing reality, they may actually play an important part in creating this reality (Beresford 1979, p.141). Whilst the press select items for news according to certain rules, the news is written as if these rules do not exist. The more an issue satisfies the media's criteria for a good story, the more likely it is to be selected but once it has been selected, the elements that made it newsworthy in the first place, will be accentuated.

Negative news is more likely to be selected by the press for several reasons, not least because the public response to negative news is more likely to be consensual than is the public response to positive news. A number of negative themes can be identified in the press treatment of youth homelessness, in particular, the problematic life style of some homeless people. Sex, drugs and violence are common currency of the press, and prostitution, sexual abuse, drug addiction and violence were all alluded to in the press articles that we studied. In many articles, the more extreme and problematic features of youth homelessness were given primacy. Yet, on closer inspection, it was sometimes surprising how rarely these press articles were actually reporting first hand and concrete evidence of prostitution or hard drugs, for instance. Of course, this is not to deny that prostitution, drugs and violence are significant problems potentially facing many young homeless people. What is interesting, however, is the manner in which the press feel compelled to introduce these negative stereotypes even when they may lack any direct evidence to support their claims.

Whilst we have made a number of other observations about the nature and content of press coverage of youth homelessness (see Hutson and Liddiard 1994, pp. 73-98), the ubiquity and pervasiveness of stereotypes is tangible in the treatment of young homeless people by the press. Indeed, we want to argue that stereotypical press coverage may actually have a profound impact upon public attitudes towards youth homelessness and the young homeless themselves.

The impact of press coverage on public attitudes

Public attitudes towards many different areas of social welfare are notoriously difficult to delimit. Public opinion is profoundly heterogeneous, and levels of knowledge and interest in social issues vary widely. As studies such as the British Social Attitudes Survey have regularly shown, eliciting accurate information about public attitudes towards different areas of welfare, is difficult and laden with methodological problems. Interpreting the meaning and origin of shifting public attitudes is more difficult still. Nonetheless, many researchers have explored the impact of mass media upon audiences of different kinds, and a number of themes are of interest when considering the impact of press coverage of youth homelessness.

The question of how the media influences the viewing audience has long concerned academics and there have been a number of important shifts in how they have approached the issue. Initially, a dominant theme was the notion that the media somehow has a direct and inherently straightforward impact upon the viewing audience. This is certainly a pervasive idea, and one which regularly attracts interest in the unresolved debates about on-screen violence and its effects upon children and young people. Generally, however, this approach is now somewhat discredited, largely because of the manner in which it implies a *passive* audience. In other words, such an approach implicitly suggests that the viewing audience unquestioningly absorb whatever images and messages they are presented with by the media. This approach clearly gives inadequate consideration to the complexities of viewing audiences. The public are not empty vessels, but come to interpret media images and messages equipped with pre-existing knowledge, views and belief systems. Our existing views and perspectives, mediated as they are by a wide variety of factors, such as family; friends; 'opinion-leaders'; education and, of course, the media itself, are crucial for framing our interpretations of the information, messages and images with which we are presented. There is certainly now much agreement about the fact that the public select and interpret mass media according to their existing viewpoints. In other words, far from being passive recipients of media messages, the pubic are actually highly active in their interpretation of the images and messages with which they are presented. Morley (1980), for example, illustrated that only those media messages which reinforced what individuals already believed were selected by the audience. Negrine (1994) speaks of the press resonating with rather than affecting the public. In this way, the same media item can be interpreted differently by different categories of people. The result is a mass public which may be largely ill-informed of key social issues, and whose knowledge is only modified or mediated on the basis of their own pre-existing agendas and misapprehensions. In short, the potential impact of press coverage upon public attitudes towards youth homelessness may be far from straightforward. Nonetheless, in fully considering the impact of press coverage of youth homelessness, a number of points do seem to be of significance. Not least, the importance of stereotypes which, to different extents and in different ways, almost ubiquitously pervade press reports, and indeed media coverage more generally.

There is no doubt that in the minds of many of the public, and indeed in the minds of many policy-makers, the problem of homelessness is seen to be synonymous with that of 'rooflessness', or literally having no roof over your head. The 'roofless' are undoubtedly in very pressing need, and are the most visible manifestation of homelessness. In this respect, the roofless may warrant disproportionate media attention. Certainly, this stereotypical view of homelessness pervades much media coverage. Whilst this may reflect existing public attitudes, the equation of 'home-lessness' with 'rooflessness' is an important point because of the way in which much press coverage consequently excludes the 'hidden homeless'. These are the thousands of young people who have nowhere to live, and yet are excluded from most media coverage because they may have a roof of some kind. They may be squatting or skippering; sleeping on friends floors; living in caravans or in hostels and many - particularly 16 and 17 year olds - may be in desperate hardship. These are the very groups that many homeless agencies and pressure groups are working with, and yet they are largely excluded from media coverage. Kemp (1997), for instance, presents survey evidence on the diversity of single homeless people and says:

> *This heterogeneity is not well captured in the rather simple stereotypes that have often pervaded presentations of such people in the mass media and in political debates. (p.85)*

There are, of course, some good reasons for the prevalence of these stereotypes in press coverage. The very real difficulties with defining homelessness should not be under-rated (see Greve et al. 1971; Watson 1984; Bramley 1988; Hutson and Liddiard 1994; Pleace et al. 1997). Moreover, it is also likely that the prevalence and maintenance of these stereotypes reflects the visibility and conspicuousness of the roofless. The equation of the roofless with the homeless is also easily understood and accepted by the public, in a way which may be more contentious with other forms of homelessness. In a practical sense, the street homeless are also relatively easy to find and to interview. As the manager of one homelessness advice centre explained to us:

> *It's when they become roofless ... that they become an image that can be understood by most people, because the image of a young person living in a squalid bedsit would be difficult to film ...but with these young people (the street homeless), you just send the cameras down.*

The active promotion and endorsement of these stereotypes, however, is far more than simply an academic issue. On the contrary, these simplistic images of homelessness, pervasive and ubiquitous as they are, may be important in terms of perpetuating public misconceptions about youth homelessness and the homeless. Certainly, O'Mahony (1988) feels strongly that the manner in which the media employ crude stereotypes in discussions about homelessness does have a detrimental impact upon public attitudes, which are too often crude and misguided:

Some of this ignorance has to do with the way in which the young are portrayed. Newspapers, especially, latch on to a particular stereotype that is both visible and easy to define. (p. 2)

Stereotypes serve to simplify the complexity of an issue. In a sense, this can be part of the value of press stereotypes, simplifying complex debates and issues for easier public assimilation, and youth homelessness is undoubtedly a complex issue. Yet the regular stereotypical portrayal of youth homelessness - in crude and simplistic terms of 'rooflessness' and sex, drugs and violence - has undoubtedly impacted upon public attitudes and perceptions in a number of ways.

On the one hand, of course, we must acknowledge that the very themes and issues which excite media interest may also have helped to encourage public interest in the plight of the young homeless. Indeed, we have suggested elsewhere that public unease and outrage at young people visibly sleeping rough - albeit mediated and directed by the mass media - may have helped to initiate policy responses (see Liddiard forthcoming a). The genesis of the Rough Sleepers' Initiative in 1990 could arguably be one illustration of this. However, it is important to acknowledge and remember that the pervasiveness of stereotypes in press treatment of youth homelessness can also damage the interests of the young homeless.

Press coverage, with its emphasis upon the more sensationalist elements of homelessness, has certainly helped to stigmatise the young homeless. Issues fundamental to the lives of young homeless people, and fundamental even to most young people's lives, such as independence and adulthood, are ignored for lurid tales of drugs, pornography and prostitution. It may make good copy, but the invariable outcome is a presentation of young homeless people as being somehow distinct from the rest of the population. The reality - that most of the problems they face are the problems faced by their housed contemporaries - is too often lost.

Such coverage must make it more difficult for the public to identify with the homeless. Whether or not this press coverage reflects public attitudes, as the press claim they do, is not at issue here. What is of more concern is the manner in which ill-informed stereotypes often frame public debate about youth homelessness. Too often, politicians and the press have individualised the problem of youth homelessness, and the young homeless themselves are discussed in simplistic terms of personal fecklessness and shirked responsibility. The manner in which issues such as youth homelessness are personalised by the press, and the mass media more generally, may have helped to effectively de-politicise housing and homelessness as social issues.

It is certainly important to remember that media coverage may not have a *consistent* impact upon public attitudes or indeed policy-makers. On the contrary, the influence of media coverage is mediated by the wider social context in which this coverage is taking place, a point outlined at length by Somerville (1994). For example, a number of authors have argued that the television documentaries *Cathy Come*

Home (1966) and *Johnny Go Home* (1975) were instrumental in shaping public opinion towards the homeless, which in turn manifested itself in the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act. Yet Raynsford (1986) acknowledges that the significant impact of *Cathy Come Home* upon public opinion was only as pronounced as it was because of what was happening to the housing market more generally - in particular, a growing acknowledgement that the slum clearance programmes of the 1960s were actually contributing to the rise in homelessness by displacing people whom the local authorities were then failing to rehouse. This may be an important point because in the 1960s and 1970s, against a quite different social, economic and political environment, public perception commonly acknowledged that factors such as slum clearance and eviction by private landlords ('Rachmanism') were causing homelessness. In turn, the problem was evidently not necessarily the responsiblity of the homeless themselves. In the 1990s, however, the main structural causes of youth homelessness - particularly dramatic changes to the housing market and punitive benefit cuts - were not so widely part of public perception. Rather, blame was first placed on young people for leaving home prematurely by ministers, which was followed by a broad pathologising of youth homelessness, which again placed the blame firmly on young homeless people. Nor, indeed, should the impact of public and political debates about begging be forgotten, for clouding the issues surrounding youth homelessness (see Murdoch 1994). In this sense, media coverage and public attitudes towards youth homelessness and other social issues may reflect the wider political context in which this coverage takes place. This context changed markedly from the 1970s to the 1990s. Welfare responses had given way to individualist reponsibility and the withdrawal of the state (Jacobs et al. 1998 forthcoming)

The role of Government
We have discussed elsewhere the effective de-politisation of housing, and the various reasons for this (see Liddiard, forthcoming b). Despite the very real housing problems facing the UK, the paucity of serious debate about either housing or homelessness in the 1997 General Election clearly illustrated the fact that housing is no longer the political issue it once was - either in the minds of the electorate or politicians. This is an interesting change, given that housing in the immediate post-war decades was a political issue of the very utmost significance and importance. In 1945, for instance, Gallup asked *'What do you think is the most urgent home-front problem that the Government must solve in the next few months?'* 54 per cent of the electorate perceived housing as easily the most important issue, in contrast to just 13 per cent who mentioned the second-placed issue - employment. In 1996 and 1997, however, regular Mori surveys showed that just 7-10 per cent of voters cited housing as *'one of the most important issues facing Britain today'* (Kellner 1997). Nonetheless, as we enter the new millennium, one and half million homes are unfit for human habitation and three and a half million are in urgent need of repair, while there is a widely accepted need for some 100-120,000 new social homes a year. Yet in the eyes of many voters, housing is no longer a mainstream issue.

We have suggested that there may be a number of reasons for the diminution of housing as a mainstream political issue. Throughout the 1980s, the Conservative government was certainly instrumental in promoting a New Right perspective of many areas of welfare. These perspectives informed many policy decisions and many wider debates about the appropriate role of state intervention. In the context of housing policy, the active and vigorous promotion of home ownership, and of course its association with risk-free wealth accumulation, undoubtedly had a profound influence upon both the housing market and attitudes towards housing and the role of the state and the individual in housing provision. Owner occupied housing now accounts for almost 70 per cent of all housing stock in the UK, and the dominance of home ownership has certainly encouraged a view of housing provision as the responsibility of the individual, which has had important implications for attitudes towards housing and indeed homelessness.

The British Social Attitudes Survey regularly examines attitudes towards different areas of welfare and shows that, for most of the population, housing is not a political priority (see Taylor-Gooby 1995). The findings from this survey are very interesting, and have attracted considerable comment. What does seem clear, however, is the centrality of self-interest in reflecting public preferences for more state intervention. Universal state services from which most of the electorate benefit, such as education and health, attract high levels of public support. Indeed, these were the two most important issues of the 1997 election. Yet selective services, such as social security, receive considerably less public support, because fewer of the public actually benefit from these services, or at least perceive themselves as benefiting. From once being something of a universal service, the rise in owner occupation and the residualisation of local authority housing stock, has led to housing becoming an increasingly marginalised and selective welfare service. In turn, housing has become much less of a political priority for most of the population. This public perception is perhaps ironic, given that MIRAS and subsidies to home owners are a very considerable burden upon the Treasury. Nonetheless, the notion that housing is somehow beyond the remits of state provision has become pervasive, actively promoted as it was by successive Conservative governments.

It would be naive to suggest that governments do not seek to frame and inform media interpretations of social issues, such as youth homelessness. Throughout the 1980s, the Conservative government was certainly explicit in seeking to place the responsibility for the homeless directly onto the homeless themselves. As Margaret Thatcher herself said in Parliament, in response to Randall's (1988) compelling evidence of rising homelessness in London:

> *There is a number of young people who choose voluntarily to leave home;*
> *I do not think that we can be expected, no matter how many there are, to*
> *provide units for them (Hansard, 7th June 1988, Vol. 134, p.713)*

The impact that these approaches have had upon public opinion is evidently open to discussion, but it is nonetheless clear that these agendas and notions of individual culpability often helped inform much media coverage and debate. We should remember that policy-makers and politicians can play a crucial role in terms of informing, even manipulating, the media and media interpretations (see Broadbent 1993; Miller 1993). Indeed, one could certainly argue that the centrality of rooflessness in much press coverage reflected the Government's active promotion of homelessness in simplistic terms of rough sleeping and problematic behaviour - images which helped to minimise the scale of the problem and marginalise and stigmatise the young homeless themselves. Certainly, the portrayal of youth homelessness by the Government in individual and pathological terms was broadly congruent with journalistic agendas employing negative stereotypes and personalised accounts and we must not forget the political and ideological bias of the press, which has regularly and consistently resulted in adverse and inaccurate treatment of many marginal groups. Yet when the public are overwhelmingly encouraged by the Government to view homelessness as a consequence of individual failure, and this is reflected by consequent media coverage, we should not be unduly surprised if these interpretations are reflected in public attitudes.

The simplistic and stereotypical representations of homelessness paraded by the press are also important in terms of their impact upon policy. Press coverage and in turn public opinion can certainly be important for informing policy responses. When the homeless are perceived and presented as simply'... *a blemish to be removed, a nuisance detrimental to the community's own self-image'* (Study Group on Homelessness 1993, p.103), we should not be surprised by punitive policies towards the homeless, which in Denmark culminated in the removal of benches from public parks.

It does seem clear then that the mass media have an important role to play in terms of actually setting the parameters for debates about youth homelessness, and at least playing a small part in framing policy discussions. In the words of Golding and Middleton (1979), the mass media may:

> *shape the political climate ... so that ultimately legislation and the overall allocation of resources are influenced by mass mediated versions of priorities and necessities (and) they influence the cultural context ... by setting the tone for public discussion and providing the imagery and rhetoric ... (for) administrators. (p.19)*

There is no doubt at all that the mass media can provide a very important and powerful source of communication, enabling issues to be conveyed to millions of people who may not otherwise have been involved or particularly interested. The potential to reach and sensitise many people to social policy concerns is crucial. Indeed, this is why so many involved pressure groups and agencies attach so much importance to securing media coverage.

The role of agencies

Increased awareness of the central importance of media coverage has convinced many pressure groups that they need to seek the aid of the media in order to achieve their aims. ... The belief that one ought to capture the media as a prerequisite to shaping perceptions and definitions of problems so as to win an argument has now filtered down from politicians to trade unionists to pressure and lobby groups (Negrine 1994, p.139)

Homelessness agencies and pressure groups perform a number of roles, one of which is campaigning for political action to alleviate the problem of homelessness. Anderson (1997) suggests that a new kind of presure group emerged in the 1960s which combined negotiating directly with Westminster and Whitehall with exploiting the media in order to influence the politicians with whom they were in dialogue. The housing pressure group Shelter was the pioneer of this approach (Wilson 1984), although many homelessness agencies now actively attempt to win media coverage, with a view to exercising some political leverage. Indeed, many of these organisations have shown themselves to be particularly adept at attracting media interest in youth homelessness, in part, a consequence of the fact that journalists themselves often heavily rely upon these agencies for information and respondents.

Increasingly, agencies, pressure groups and even academics working with the homeless have attached much importance to securing media treatment, often with a substantial degree of success and certainly more so than with many other areas of social concern. Moreover, there is often an explicit acknowledgement that the importance that homeless agencies and campaigning groups attach to the media and securing favourable media coverage, is time and effort well spent:

The consciousness-raising and information activity of voluntary organisations has played an effective part, as it still does, in altering representations and attitudes among both politicians and the public. There tends to be a better grasp of the scope and social character of the problem. (Study Group on Homelessness 1993, p.105)

This is a bold statement. Whilst many voluntary agencies may be engaged in presenting and promoting a more balanced view of homelessness, one cannot simply assume that this has a clear impact upon public attitudes. On the contrary, one cannot even assume that these balanced interpretations of homelessness actually come to inform media coverage. Journalists evidently operate with a variety of professional agendas, dominant of which is the need to maximise newspaper sales. In this sense, only the ideas, notions and concepts which are consistent with pre-existing media agendas will be accepted and promoted. In other words, although agencies may rightly or wrongly view the media as being in a position of enviable power to influence public opinion and policy-making, in order to attract media interest, agencies must first subscribe to media agendas and modify their messages and

concerns. We have already seen that that many journalists employ stereotypical images of the homeless because they make good copy. Importantly, homelessness agencies may collude with such images in their enthusiasm to attain media coverage of the problem:

> *Much of the energy of the voluntary agencies is directed towards campaigning and fund-raising. They compete with other social causes and even among themselves for influence and resources. To command attention, they often present an alarmist picture of the extent and dangers of homelessness. The problem is packaged in black-and-white terms to ensure easy public assimilation and to provoke unambivalent feelings of anxiety, pathos and guilt. (Brandon et al. 1980, p.26)*

As Waters (1982) notes, these efforts will often produce much needed finance, and donations will rise - particularly over the Christmas period - but the perpetuation of such stereotypical images may inadvertently serve to further alienate and stigmatise the homeless, and confirm the misapprehensions that people may already adhere to. We have previously discussed the very real dilemmas that many homelessness agencies face in deciding how to publicly present their clients (see Liddiard and Hutson 1991). On the one hand, a presentation of young homeless people and the problems they face as somehow distinct or different from the rest of the population can be highly stigmatising. Yet it can also raise important finance, and attract publicity. In contrast, an emphasis upon the inherent normality of young homeless people may often be a more accurate portrayal, but less effective for raising both money and publicity.

In short, we are suggesting that agencies working with the young homeless may sometimes attach too little importance to the mass media as a means of promoting a more balanced view of youth homelessness. Instead, too often media coverage may be seen simply as a means of securing funds; resources and publicity for their particular organisation. These points about the vexed relationship between homelessness agencies and the mass media were being made by commentators such as Beresford (1979) and Brandon et al. (1980) almost twenty years ago. Yet their observations remain as pertinent as ever:

> *The media are crucial to the agencies for the part their publicity can play in legitimising them and their version of the problem, gaining them resources and ensuring their survival. (Beresford 1979, p.152)*

Conclusion

How the mass media interpret and present issues such as youth homelessness is evidently an important feature in understanding public attitudes towards welfare. Whether or not they reflect or determine public attitudes, the fact remains that the mass media are an important forum for public debate, even if the public may come to interpret and assimilate this media coverage in a variety of different ways. The press play a particularly pertinent role by placing issues on the public agenda,

although how the public and policy-makers respond may reflect a number of other agendas. Nonetheless, we have suggested that the press presentation of crude and stereotypical interpretations of youth homelessness may be important for perpetuating public misapprehensions, and may also reflect factors other than journalistic agendas. Governments certainly attempt to instil their own interpretations of social issues, which can be reflected in consequent media coverage and shifting public perceptions. Indeed, given the very media-conscious nature of the new Labour government, it will be interesting to see how they attempt to influence or mediate media coverage of youth homelessness. Of most concern, however, is the manner in which some agencies and pressure groups - on whom much media coverage is often heavily dependent - may sometimes collude with stereotypical interpretations of homelessness in their quest for publicity and funds. Too often, even on the part of academic commentators, there is an assumption that media coverage per se is sufficient in itself. Instead, we need to think much more carefully and critically about the quality of media coverage, and how this may impact upon public perceptions and attitudes. Only then might we be able to hope for a more balanced and informed public understanding of youth homelessness and young homeless people themselves.

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NOT ONLY STREET SLEEPERS ARE HOMELESS:
Issues of gender and ethnicity in researching youth homelessness.

JOAN SMITH AND SHEILA GILFORD

Introduction

During the 1960s and early 1970s homelessness was seen as a problem of poor families and older single people without families. Full employment among young people, youth wages that had risen relative to adult wages, and the availability of low-cost bed-sitters for those young people who did leave home meant that youth homelessness was not a major social problem. In 1977 when the first homeless persons legislation was passed its provisions were designed to deal with family homelessness and homelessness among those aged 60-years plus. These two groups were classified as 'priority need' under the legislation and a statutory right to access to permanent accommodation through local authority housing departments.

The Homeless Persons 1977 Act did not include young single people who were homeless in the priority need categories. Prior to the 1980s single homelessness appeared to be an issue affecting some older men in their 40s and 50s, without families, who were largely accommodated in traditional hostels, and a very few older women. However from the beginning of the 1980s increasing numbers of young single people were found to be arriving at traditional shelters previously designed to provide basic accommodation for older men. One of the earliest studies of single homelessness provided evidence of growing homelessness among young single people (Drake, 1981); and this study also found that although a third of the single homeless included in the survey were women among those under 29-years the proportion was 40%.

By the late 1970s (in London and some other big cities) and the mid 1980s elsewhere the number of homeless young single people had grown sufficiently large for churches and voluntary agencies to begin providing additional night shelter places and then residential accommodation specifically for young people. The YMCA, for example, allocated an increasing proportion of their beds to homeless young people in different city hostels.

As board and lodgings allowances and income support payments were withdrawn from 16-18 year old in 1985 and 1988, the profile of homeless youth also changed. In 1987 Geoff Randall conducted a survey in London in which he found that the main reason young homeless people had left their 'last settled base' was to find work (40%), that they were typically aged 18 or 19-years and that a high proportion were from outside London (Randall, 1988). Geoff Randall's study, however, was undertaken before the withdrawal of income support for young people of 16-years and 17-years had taken effect. Five years later Centrepoint repeated the Randall study and found, in 1992, that the majority of young people in this survey were now from London, typically aged 16 or 17-years, only 18% said they were homeless

because they were 'looking for work' and the main reason given for homelessness was 'household conflict' (Strathdee, R., 1992).[1]

Rising numbers of young single homeless in London meant that increasing numbers were also forced to live on the street. It was noticeable that as homelessness amongst young people became ever more visible, then media attention turned from investigations of family homelessness and life in bed-and- breakfast hostels to in-depth reports of the life of young street-dwellers or runaways.[2] Public attention was shifted from the policy issue of providing social housing for homeless families and also for poor older people, to the problems of emergency accommodation for rough-sleepers and the provision of youth residential projects which could provide accommodation with training (foyers). The Rough Sleepers Initiative of 1990 was therefore a direct result of the withdrawal of Income Support payments from young people of 16- and 17-years two years earlier. In essence the RSI was a policy 'targeted' on those young people who had failed to survive within their own families after the withdrawal of state benefits or no longer had the income to support themselves (however poorly) outside a family home. Young people in the latter position included young people leaving care (who often left with no care plan), young people fleeing violence and other young people whose family was now disrupted and they were no longer welcome in the family home of the new partnership (mother/mother's new part-ner, father/father's new partner).[3]

The Rough-Sleeepers Initiative was an extremely gendered policy - it was also ethnically exclusive. The large majority of those helped by this £100 million initiative were young white men in the heart of London. Both young white women and young men of colour were much less likely to be found sleeping rough on the streets. The Rough Sleepers' Initiative reinforced an image of youth homelessness in London which was single, male and white. In this article we present the findings from an agency survey undertaken in 1996 which rectifies this picture of youth homelessness because it includes all young people aged between 16-years and 25-years, whatever their parenting or partnered status, who presented as homeless to any housing or homeless agency in a particular city or London borough over a three month period.

Three research questions are addressed. First, how large is the problem of youth homelessness? Second, what are the differences in domestic status and parenting status of homeless young men and women?. Third, what is the likelihood of different groups of young people being rough sleepers? Finally an argument is made that the gender differences in patterns of rough sleeping are important for understanding the different trajectories that young people take in a risk society.

How big a problem is youth homelessness? Who are the young homeless?

Because of the statutory right to permanent accommodation for homeless families with dependent children and elderly people in priority need, studies of homelessness have become divided into two quite different research fields. Studies of homeless people who qualify as homeless under the 1977 Act (largely families or older people)

have been concerned with the criteria of 'priority need' applied by different local authorities; the proportion of applicants accepted and reasons for their rejection; the length of waiting time and the type of emergency accommodation offered to accepted applicants, and the quality of the social housing that was offered including the issue of whether single parent mothers were being directed towards 'sink' estate (Murie and Forrest, 1997; Niner and Thomas, 1989; Niner, 1989; Power and Tunstall, 1995;)

Studies of the single homeless and of the roofless have been concerned with quite different issues relating to the process through which the young person becomes homeless, the numbers of young people becoming homeless, the problems of 'runaways' and rough sleepers, unemployment and youth homelessness, mental health and drug and alcohol abuse problems associated with homelessness, and criminality and criminalisation among and of young homeless people. (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993; Hutson and Liddiard, 1994; Carlen, 1996; Strathdee, 1996; Evans A. (National Inquiry into Youth Homelessness), 1996).

What is lost sight of in the separate study of statutory and non-statutory homelessness, principally of family and single homelessness, is that first, heads of households accepted as family homelessness are most often in the same age cohort as the single homeless. Homelessness among young people aged 16-25-years includes young single mothers, young couple parents as well as young single and many single parent mothers who are homeless will have once been homeless single young women. Second, the separate study of young single homelessness has given rise to a series of research reports which have consistently reported a gender division of 70% young men and 30% young women among the young single homeless (Anderson and Kemp, 1993; Hutson and Liddiard, 1994). Of necessity, therefore, the experiences these studies have reported have been primarily those of young homeless men and the description of the 'downward spiral' of youth homelessness has been principally derived from young men's accounts of homelessness. Taking a broad snapshot over a specific period of time allows both these issues to be addressed.

A third consideration is that the distinction between statutory and non-statutory homelessness arose from a legislative decision to prioritise the needs of homeless families and homeless older citizens for housing. But agencies working with young single homeless people have always adopted the definition of homelessness found in the 1977 Act and this approach was summarised in the report of the National Inquiry into Youth Homelessness (Evans, 1996) which argued that single young people are homeless if they are

1 *without any accommodation - for example sleeping rough or with no accommodation to go to.*

2 *in temporary accommodation such as a hostel, bed and breakfast hotel, squats.*

3 *staying temporarily with friends or relatives, who are unable/unwilling to accommodate in the longer term.*

However, in her report (Evans, 1996) youth homelessness was defined as a person in one of these three situations who was also single and without dependants. In this article youth homelessness is defined through age alone - all those aged between 16-years and 25-years are included and therefore young people with dependants are included.

In order to estimate the extent of youth homelessness in Britain a range of agencies, statutory, voluntary and Housing Associations, were contacted in seven different cities and in four London Boroughs and asked for information on all those young people aged 16-25 who approached them as homeless or in housing need during the three month period, April-June 1996. Almost all agencies were very willing to co-operate despite difficulties arising from local government reorganisation. In all, information was collected from over 200 agencies working in Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester and over 70 agencies working in the Inner London Boroughs of Camden, Lambeth, Southwark and Westminster. Only information given by young people to the first agency they contacted in the three month period was retained in the data set and each young person was only counted once. All young people were classified as homeless or in housing need by the agencies and in this article all figures and percentages are of young people who were identified as homeless. There were over 6,879 cases of youth homelessness in the seven cities and 4,254 cases in Inner London out of the original data set of over 15,000 cases. A full description of the method used can be found in the research report published in December 1996.[4]

Across the seven cities, considering all the young people who were either judged homeless by local authorities or were living in hostel accommodation or as temporary guests the range of homelessness discovered was 3.5 to 7 % of 18-25 year olds per annum. This is a very close range using the same method with a wide range of different types of provision in each city. Considering this range it can be said that in British cities during a year about 1 in 20 young people will present to agencies as homeless - from the street, from temporary 'guest' accommodation, from their parents/relatives house, or be actually living in hostels. This represents a figure of 140,000 in any one year who would be recorded as homeless in this age group in all cities of over 250,000 population. Higher proportions were found in 'magnet cities' like Glasgow and Cardiff.

TABLE 1. **Homeless young people in seven cities, April-June 1996.**

CITY	young people 16 to 25 yrs ONS 1995	homeless young people 16 to 25 yrs	estimate for year multiplied by 4, plus 10%	percent of homeless young people
Birmingham	145739	1487	6543	4.5%
Leeds	104347	1201	5284	5.0%
Liverpool	71587	539	2372	3.3%
Manchester	75386	1024	4506	6.0%
Bristol	59821	677	2979	5.0%
Cardiff	43260	668	2939	6.8%
Glasgow	91527	1283	5645	6.2%
All cities	591667	6879	30268	5.0%

Source. J. Smith, S. Gilford, P. Kirby, A. O'Reilly, P. Ing, 1996, *Bright Lights and Homelessness: Family and single homelessness among young people in our cities.* National Inquiry/YMCA Survey

This 'one in twenty' estimate is a rough estimate of the depth of the homeless crisis for two reasons: first, in any city 10-20% of homeless single young people are not local; second, the percentage of homeless young people was estimated by taking the numbers found in a three month period and multiplying by four to achieve an annual figure which could be turned into an annual rate.[5] Nevertheless this count presents a more accurate estimate than previous ones, including a slightly reduced figure for single homelessness among young people.

Youth homelessness - a broader picture

Despite popular perceptions of youth homelessness being predominantly a problem affecting young single males, in five cities the majority of young homeless people were women. Only in Manchester and Glasgow were more men recorded. Although the most common domestic status for homeless women was 'single', a high proportion (between 25% and 44% in any city) fell into the homeless 'single parent' category whilst the great majority of young men were single homeless (see Table 2).

TABLE 2. **Domestic and parenting status among young homeless people by gender in percentages.**

Female Status %	Leeds	Liver	Manch	Birm	Bris	Card	Glas
single	45	52	60	42	50	42	61
single parent	44	35	30	41	33	37	25
couple	2	6	7	7	7	9	3
couple parent	8	6	7	9	9	12	11
N =	647	285	489	830	300	381	547
% of all city homeless	**54**	**53**	**48**	**56**	**45**	**57**	**44**
Male Status %	**Leeds**	**Liver**	**Manch**	**Birm**	**Bris**	**Card**	**Glas**
single	87	89	92	79	84	77	88
single parent	3	2	2	3	3	2	3
couple	5	6	2	8	9	10	2
couple parent	5	2	3	10	4	10	6
N =	548	249	528	652	361	286	697
% of all city homeless	**46**	**47**	**52**	**44**	**55**	**43**	**56**
Total N =	**1201**	**539**	**1024**	**1487**	**677**	**668**	**1283**

Source. J. Smith, S. Gilford, P. Kirby, A. O'Reilly, P. Ing, 1996, *Bright Lights and Homelessness: Family and single homelessness among young people in our cities.* National Inquiry/YMCA Survey.

Note
Not all columns will sum to 100% owing to rounding up and down.

The difference between the domestic and parenting status of homeless young men and young women was not so stark in the four Inner London boroughs.[6] In the London Boroughs of Camden, Westminster, Southwark and Lambeth, 4,256 cases of homelessness among young people were identified over the three months April-June 1996 of which 56% were young men and 44% were young women. Inner London had the highest preponderance of single homelessness among young women 85%; which partly reflects the predominance of hostels and youth residential hostels in the Inner London survey but also reflects the absence of data from housing associations -

almost all of whom had either closed their waiting lists or accepted no new referrals in the three months of this study. In the Inner London study, therefore, family homelessness (including single parents) is under-represented. As much of the picture of youth homelessness derives from media reporting of the situation in Inner London it is worth noting how different this situation is compared with cities outside of London and emphasising the importance of future studies of 'hidden homelessness' among single parent women and couples in Inner London.

Taking a 'snapshot' of youth homelessness by collecting data from all agencies on all young clients therefore gives a different picture than that which has been offered by studies of youth homelessness which has considered single homeless people living in hostels, emergency accommodation and on the streets. Almost all research studies have found a *gender* split among the young single homeless of 28%-30% women and 70-72% men (Hutson and Liddiard 1994; Stockley 1993; Anderson and Kemp, 1993). But when young people of all domestic and parenting statuses are included the pattern of gender difference becomes clearer. The single status of young homeless men becomes a research finding in its own right, worthy of further exploration. This is also true of the comparison between those young people who slept rough the previous night and those who didn't.

Who sleeps rough?
The third question raised at the beginning of the article was how far the experience of rough-sleeping was specific to young white men. This is an important question because the Rough Sleepers Initiative of 1990 had not only been continued in London but in 1995 extended to cities outside of London. Following the widening of the Initiative, rough sleeping counts have taken place in 23 cities which has had the additional effect of influencing the definition of homelessness that is being applied to young single people. Whilst homeless persons legislation accepts those in insecure accommodation, facing eviction or roofless as homeless, the RSI has equated rooflessness with homelessness and any local authority seeking money under the RSI has had to adopt Department of Environment guidelines for undertaking rough-sleeping counts.

Why it is particularly important to compare which groups of homeless young people are excluded by this definition of homelessness can be seen in the evaluation of the RSI (Randall and Brown, 1993) published by the Department of the Environment, which makes the following bold statement based on an examination of hostel records only *'Although far fewer women than men were homeless, they were more likely to get a hostel place.'* (p.vi) There are three assumptions in this statement that help render women invisibly homeless. First, the statement that far fewer women are homeless than men is only true if we are talking about single people, and/or if rough-sleeping is being equated with homelessness. Second, it assumes that homelessness can be counted through studying hostel records alone i.e. that the records of other agencies, particularly local authorities whom local single women are more likely to access than local single men, have no part in counting homelessness. Third, it has muddled up what happens when women are in danger

of becoming rough-sleepers and their likelihood then of getting a hostel place with what actually happens to the majority of women who present to agencies from friends and relatives and other situations which are detailed below. In this second circumstance women may be deemed less at risk.

The 1996 agency survey provides evidence of who is excluded by 'rough-sleeping' initiatives - and it was not confined to hostels. Most agencies keep information on where the young person slept the night before and this information is available for 78% of Inner London cases. The greatest difference between young men and young women was whether they had slept rough that night; 22% of young men had slept rough compared with only 11% of young women. Seven per cent of all young homeless people (6% young men, 8% young women) came to agencies from their parental home, a slightly smaller proportion than in any of the other cities, despite the high proportion of young women aged 16-years and 17-years or under. One in four came from a friend's home or family home (22% young men, 29% young women). Unlike other cities a small and very similar proportion of young men and young women came from their own home, 3%. (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. **Night prior by gender. Inner London Young Homeless. 1996**
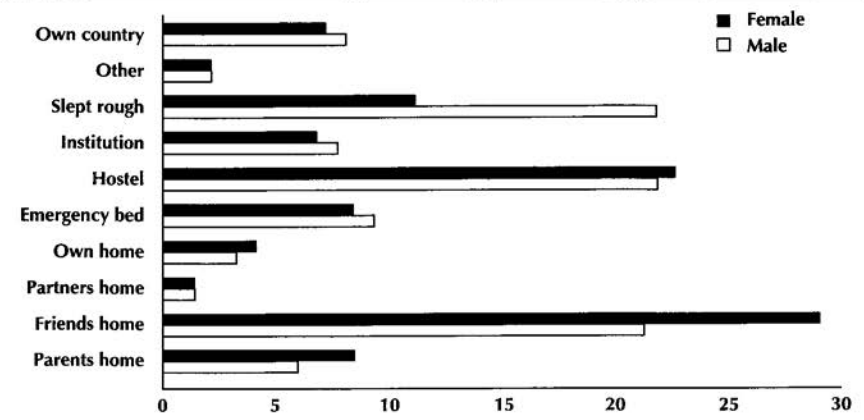
Source. National Inquiry/YMCA Survey see J.Smith, S.Gilford, P.Kirby, A. O'Reilly, P.Ing, 1996, *Bright Lights and Homelessness: Family and single homelessness among young people in our cities.*

Gender differences in relation to night prior accommodation are not due to some women having responsibilities for children and therefore avoiding being on the streets. Considering the night before history of young *single* people only, young *single* homeless women were also less likely to sleep rough than young single men; 23% of young single men presented to agencies from no fixed abode/slept rough, but only 11% of young single women did so. Moreover, whereas a quarter of single young men presented from emergency hostels only 12% of young single women did so. Young single women were more likely to present from friends or families (38% compared with 28% for young single men).

TABLE 3 - **Night Prior Accommodation of Young Single Homelessness Men and Women in Inner London**

	Male Count	Female Count	Row Total	Male Col Pct	Female Col Pct	Row Total
own home	48	40	88	3.3	3.6	3.4
friends/family	401	428	829	27.5	38.1	32.1
institution	128	113	241	8.8	10.1	9.3
hostel/emergency	411	303	714	28.2	27.0	27.6
sr/nfa	332	124	456	22.8	11.0	17.7
bb/lodgings	73	33	106	5.0	2.9	4.1
other	66	83	149	4.5	7.4	5.8
Total	1459	1124	2583	56.5	43.5	100.0

Number of Missing Observations 903

Comparing single parent mothers who were homeless with single women it is notable that single parent mothers were *less* likely to present from friends and families than single young women (33% compared with 38% of young single women), as likely to present from emergency shelters as single young women (both over a quarter) and much more likely to present from bed and breakfast accommodation and lodgings where many would have been placed by housing departments (over a quarter compared with almost no single homeless women). As would be expected very few young single mothers/pregnant women or partnered women and couple parent women presented from no-fixed abode or rough sleeping.(see Table 5)

TABLE 4. **Night Prior Accommodation by Domestic and Parental Status of Young Homeless Women in Inner London.**

		Single	Partnered	Single & Child	Partnered & Child	Row Total
own home	Count	40	5	6	3	54
	%	3.6	10.0	7.9	8.6	4.2
friends/family	Count	428	22	25	15	490
	%	38.1	44.0	32.9	42.9	38.1
institution	Count	113		2		115
	%	10.1		2.6		8.9
hostel/emergency	Count	303	6	21	3	333
	%	27.0	12.0	27.6	8.6	25.9
sr/nfa	Count	124	8	6	3	141
	%	11.0	16.0	7.9	8.6	11.0
bb/lodgings	Count	33	9	14	9	65
	%	2.9	18.0	18.4	25.7	5.1
other	Count	83		2	2	87
	%	7.4		2.6	5.7	6.8
Total	Count	**1124**	**50**	**76**	**35**	**1285**
	%	87.5	3.9	5.9	2.7	100.0

Number of Missing Observations 561

Not surprisingly an initial study of RSI provision found that only one quarter of those helped by the programme were young women (Douglas and Gilroy, 1994:

134) which led to an argument that women might be by-passing RSI provision because agencies gave them priority over available accommodation because of agency perceptions of vulnerability. This argument is not confirmed by our study in which 18% of young women were classified as in housing need and not homeless by the agencies they approached compared with only 8% of young men. It is more likely that their night prior accommodation is perceived as making them less at risk.

With the order of 1995 the RSI has been extended to cities outside of London and in all 23 cities have been surveyed to determine the extent of rough-sleeping. From our agency survey of seven cities the proportion who had slept rough or had no fixed abode (NFA) the night prior to presenting to any agency was much less than in London, between 3% and 8%. The cities of Glasgow (8%) and Bristol (7%) had the highest proportion of young people who slept rough the night before and in those cities a further 2% to 4% had stayed in bed and breakfast or lodgings. In five cities between 9% and 18% of young homeless people came to agencies directly from their parental home; but in two cities, Glasgow and Manchester, housing departments included parental home among a wider 'friends or family' category. Considering all relatives, parents, friends and partner's homes as one category it is possible to say that in each city between 47% and 67% of all young homeless people presented from friends and relatives and in each city proportionately more young women than young men came from friends and relatives. Another 8% to 14% came to agencies from their own home and again proportionately more young women than young men. Large numbers of young people presented to agencies from other institutional situations: 9% to 27% from hostels or emergency accommodation and between 1% and 10% from institutions such as probation hostels, social service hostels and hospitals. (Smith, Gilford et al, 1996)

Although the pattern of where they had slept the night before was different for young men and young women differences were not as marked as in London because of the lower proportion of all young people who had slept rough the night before; although the ratio of 2:1 young men to young women rough sleepers were similar only 8% of young men reported sleeping rough the night prior to coming to any agency across all cities compared with only 3% of young women. (Smith, Gilford et al, 1996)

Rough-sleeping initiatives, gender and ethnicity.
The gender differences in 'night prior' accommodation are transformed once one looks at the ethnic background of young women and young men in the 1996 survey in London. Young white British and Irish men are most likely to sleep rough among young men, and young white British and Irish women are most likely to sleep rough among young women.

Our survey demonstrated that among the homeless in Inner London and in Birmingham young people of some ethnic backgrounds (principally British African-Caribbean) are over-represented. In the Inner London area nearly one in five young homeless people were of black British/African-Caribbean origin and one in seven were of African origin (including many refugees). Outside London,

Birmingham had the highest proportion of young people (35%) from ethnic backgrounds other than White European. Given this high degree of over-representation, especially in Inner London of British African Caribbean and African young people why is it that homelessness among them is not more visible? Part of the reason must be, as with young women, that young men of ethnic backgrounds other than white are less likely to sleep rough. The following tables of night prior experiences for young men and young women of different ethnic backgrounds give the results for Inner London. Because of the gender differences in night prior experience, and in domestic and parental status, the following tables are for single homeless men and women only.

Table 5. Night prior experience of single homeless young men of different ethnic backgrounds presenting to agencies in Inner London April-June 1996.

Count Row % Col %	Asian	Black/ British	African	White British	Irish	Combined Race	Other European	Other	Row Total
own home		6	7	22	2	3		1	41
		14.6	17.1	53.7	4.9	7.3		2.4	3.1
		2.9	4.4	3.6	1.8	4.0		1.5	
friends & family	18	98	46	142	27	18	3	12	364
	4.9	26.9	12.6	39.0	7.4	4.9	0.8	3.3	27.8
	32.7	46.7	28.9	23.5	23.7	24.0	10.7	18.5	
institution	6	19	13	67	3	13		6	127
	4.7	15.0	10.2	52.8	2.4	10.2		4.7	9.7
	10.9	9.0	8.2	11.1	2.6	17.3		9.2	
hostel/ emergency	15	52	45	151	24	26	20	19	352
	4.3	14.8	12.8	42.9	6.8	7.4	5.7	5.4	26.9
	27.3	24.8	28.3	25.0	21.1	34.7	71.4	29.2	
sr/nfa	12	24	14	186	46	11	4	5	302
	4.0	7.9	4.6	61.6	15.2	3.6	1.3	1.7	23.1
	21.8	11.4	8.8	30.8	40.4	14.7	14.3	7.7	
bb/lodgings	2	9	11	21	9	3	1	10	66
	3.0	13.6	16.7	31.8	13.6	4.5	1.5	15.2	5.0
	3.6	4.3	6.9	3.5	7.9	4.0	3.6	15.4	
other	2	2	23	14	3	1		12	57
	3.5	3.5	40.4	24.6	5.3	1.8		21.1	4.4
	3.6	1.0	14.5	2.3	2.6	1.3		18.5	
Column	55	210	159	603	114	75	28	65	1309
Total	4.2	16.0	12.1	46.1	8.7	5.7	2.1	5.0	100.0

Number of Missing Observations 664

Of the 1309 single homeless men in the agency survey whose domestic status and ethnic background was recorded, young white British men (31%) and young white Irish men (40%) were most likely to have reported that they slept rough the night before coming to the agency than any other situation - taking both groups together they made up 77% of all young men recorded as having presented as sleeping rough, no fixed abode. Only one quarter (29% young white British, 24% young white Irish) reported that they spent the previous night with friends and family and one quarter than they had been in a hostel or emergency bed.

Young black British men of African-Caribbean heritage were most likely to report that they had spent the previous night with friends or family (47%) compared with one third of young men of Asian background and a quarter of young white British or Irish. Nevertheless 11% of British African Caribbean men presented from a rough sleeping situation as did 9% of African-Caribbean men although together they were only 13% of all young men who slept rough the previous night.

Among the 981 single, homeless young women whose ethnic background was recorded a similar difference between ethnic groups can be found. A majority of young black British women of African-Caribbean heritage had stayed the previous night with friends and relatives (53%), compared with 38% of young white British women and 40% of young British Asian women. Only a quarter of young African women and young Irish women spent the night prior to coming to any agency with friends and relatives, reflecting the absence of family among many. Only young Irish women were more likely to report sleeping rough than any other situation in the night prior to coming to any agency (but there were only 42 young Irish women identified in the agency survey). Among other ethnic groups very low numbers reported sleeping rough the previous night; only 58 (16%) of young white British women, and 6 (17%) of young Asian women. Young women were more likely to report coming from emergency hostels rather than sleeping rough.

Table 6. Night prior experience of single homeless young women of different ethnic backgrounds presenting to agencies in Inner London April-June 1996.

Count Row % Col %	Asian	Black/ British	African	White British	Irish	Combined Race	Other European	Other	Row Total
own home		2	7	22	2	2		1	36
		5.6	19.4	61.1	5.6	5.6		2.8	3.7
		0.8	3.8	6.0	4.8	4.0		2.6	
friends & family	14	133	44	138	10	14	5	11	369
	3.8	36.0	11.9	37.4	2.7	3.8	1.4	3.0	37.6
	40.0	53.0	24.0	37.6	23.8	28.0	35.7	28.2	
institution	7	24	4	51		19	1	2	108
	6.5	22.2	3.7	47.2		17.6	0.9	1.9	11.0
	20.0	9.6	2.2	13.9		38.9	7.1	5.1	
hostel/ emergency	5	71	56	83	10	12	2	14	253
	2.0	28.1	22.1	32.8	4.0	4.7	0.8	5.5	25.8
	14.3	28.3	30.6	22.6	23.8	24.0	14.3	35.9	
sr/nfa	6	6	12	58	15	3	4	2	106
	5.7	5.7	11.3	54.7	14.2	2.8	3.8	1.9	10.8
	17.1	2.4	6.6	15.8	35.7	6.0	28.6	5.1	
bb/lodgings	1	9	8	8	2		1	3	32
	3.1	28.1	25.0	25.0	6.3		3.1	9.4	3.3
	2.9	3.6	4.4	2.2	4.8		7.1	7.7	
other	2	6	52	7	3		1	6	77
	2.6	7.8	67.5	9.1	3.9		1.3	7.8	7.8
	5.7	2.4	28.4	1.9	7.1		7.1	15.4	
Column	35	251	183	367	42	50	14	39	981
Total	3.6	25.6	18.7	37.4	4.3	5.1	1.4	4.0	100.0

Number of Missing Observations 472

As can be seen from Table 6 within a much smaller category of rough-sleepers (108 cases for young women, 11% of all young women), young white women are in the same relationship to women of colour as young white men to men of colour. Young women of British white origin and of Irish white origin make up 69% of all the young women recorded as sleeping rough.

The surprising information gained from the agency study there was how far the differences between young single men and young single women were also found between young single men and women of white British/European background and young men of other ethnic backgrounds who were also less likely to sleep rough. The proportion of young white women who had slept rough the night before was 16% once ethnic background had been controlled for.

There are many reasons why young women do not sleep rough to the same extent as young men even when they are living in the same hostels and approaching the same advice agencies. Some of these reasons, threats of violence or harassment, may also apply to young people from different ethnic minorities who also face additional hazards living on the street. The result was that despite being over-represented among the homeless population presenting to agencies, young women and men of British African-Caribbean/African origins are under-represented among the rough sleeping population.

Youth homelessness: a gendered picture

In Europe, Beck (1992) has identified that we are living in a society that places all of us at a greater degree of risk than hitherto. In the epoch of 'risk society' as the old institutions of industrial society - family, community, social class - are undermined by the process of global modernization each individual must learn to navigate society for her/himself.

> *Opportunities, threats, ambivalences of the biography, which it was previously possible to overcome in a family, in the village community or by recourse to a social class or group, must increasingly be perceived, interpreted and handled by individuals themselves. To be sure, families are still to be found, but the nuclear family has become an even more rare institution.(Beck, 1994;8)*

For the young, of course, the threat is intensified, having to navigate risk society while navigating their own 'ambivalent biographies' with the support of increasingly fragile social structures including their own family.[7]

From our qualitative research with young homeless people (Smith et al, 1998) and of many others (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994) it is becoming apparent that large gender differences are taking place in that navigation. Young homeless women are often becoming single mothers in order to replace a family they have lost, or never had, or to reconcile with the family they once had (Smith et al, 1998). Other young women become homeless after they become mothers because of the breakdown of their relationship or because the parental home can no longer support them.

Whereas the majority of young homeless were single at age 18-years or under, they were either coupled or parenting at age 19-years and over. (Smith et al, 1988) Young women were prepared to have children at 19-years or older but this did not necessarily mean that they were ready to 'settle down' until slightly older. The young men we interviewed sometimes broke off relationships which were becoming 'too serious' because they had no expectations of 'settling down' before their early twenties.

The comparison of the domestic and parenting status of young men and young women raises several questions in relation to gender difference (Morgan 1996). The first major question raised by the data from the 1996 survey is the life-style gap that is demonstrated by homeless young women and homeless young men. The majority of young men are single (a small minority are coupled or part of a couple with children) whilst the young single women are almost equally divided, outside of London, between those with and those without a child. In the US Wilson (1987) has argued that one of the problems faced by young women is the declining pool of 'marriageable men', that is men with jobs who can provide for a wife and family. It is also possible to stand this information on its head and ask - how far are homeless young men being excluded from even the basic social experience of having a family compared with homeless young women or how far are they excluding themselves?

Young homeless men were not only predominantly single. Among young homeless people gender differences in domestic and parenting status are only part of the picture. Young homeless men are much more likely to have been involved directly in crime or drugs/alcohol and to have slept rough; young homeless women are likely to become single parents (Smith et al, 1998). At present there appears to be a growing rift between the life paths of some of the most excluded young people in our society.

The second major question raised by the 1996 data is to explain the difference in rough-sleeping patterns between young men and young women. Golden (1992) has argued, in her study of an older group of homeless women in New York, that at all times remaining clean and respectably dressed is a method of self-protection for women. Rough sleeping presents particular difficulties for all women, not only because of the perceived danger of sexual harassment and abuse, but also because of the importance of cleanliness for women who face particular problems during menstruation and also a particular need for cleanliness. Young single women there-fore make extreme efforts to stay off the streets even if they have been homeless for a long time, whereas for most homeless young men periods of street sleeping are common when they reach the bottom of the 'downward spiral' of homelessness. (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994).[8] It is therefore to be expected that there are large gender differences in patterns of rough-sleeping.

There are two additional points that should be made, however. One, the differences between young white men and young white women are reproduced in differences between young white men and young men of colour, young white women and young women of colour. It is possible to surmise that young men of colour are avoiding the streets for similar reasons as young women - to avoid harassment - and that young women of colour are facing a double burden of harassment. Two, the argument that all young women and young men from ethnic minorities are less likely to be found on the streets because they are most likely to be offered hostel places is not always true. It is also the case that young people who do not present from rough-sleeping situations but from friends and relatives will be assumed to have other means of support outside the hostel.

Conclusions

This article has presented two distinct but interrelated issues which have important consequences for our current understanding of youth homelessness and for policies designed to provide services for homeless youth. The first issue is the 'framing' of our understanding of youth homelessness by the provisions of homeless persons legislation, and the consequent separation of research into family homelessness and research into single homelessness among young people. From our survey it would appear that this separation has prevented the building of a comprehensive picture of youth homelessness across the whole generation, has obscured gender differences in patterns of homelessness and has presented a picture of young single homelessness which has been heavily drawn from the experience of young homeless men. Our agency survey demonstrates that youth homelessness is a problem common to all UK cities and wears a different face - more female and more black - than is commonly considered.

If information on homeless young people is also collected from housing departments and housing associations as well as hostels, advice agencies and soup runs whatever their parenting or partnering status,[9] the picture of youth homelessness changes.[10] First, if we include all young people in an agency survey of homelessness the rate is around one in twenty young people a year presenting to agencies. Second, women are as likely to be homeless as young men but they present from a variety of domestic and parenting statuses unlike the vast majority of young men. Third, young people from ethnic backgrounds other than white European and Asian are likely to over-represented among the homeless population. Fourth, initiatives to help rough-sleepers will target only one section of the homeless population.

This article is not arguing that initiatives to deal with the very real problem of rough sleeping among young people are unimportant. Young homeless men in particular are dying of alcohol and drug misuse and a series of illnesses at very young ages. Their lives are truly desperate. But short term emergency accommodation is only a partial solution to the problem of youth homelessness. In particular such

emergency accommodation is not providing social housing and long-term supported housing to the range of homeless clients that agencies are working with. Outside of Inner London only a minority of homeless clients of any gender or ethnic placement sleep rough. In Inner London only a minority of both young women and young people of ethnic minorities other than British or Irish white European are likely to sleep rough. Rough Sleepers Initiatives have been given a limited amount of the money that has been taken from social housing budgets and from housing benefit budgets. They need to be integrated into a comprehensive strategy for the support of young homeless people.

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Notes

1   Conversation with Radiance Strathdee who was responsible for the repeat study of 1992. See also Anderson et al (1993) and Hutson and Liddiard (1994) on household conflict. See Evans. (1996) for a summary of Randall and other studies on the relationship between family conflict and youth homelessness.

2   See Hutson and Liddiard (1994) for a discussion of media approaches to reporting the issue of youth homelessness and Liddiard (1998) forthcoming.

3   This has been found in a research study, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, of the family background of young homeless people in which, as far as possible, the parents of young homeless people were also interviewed. See Smith, Gilford, O'Sullivan, 1998 (forthcoming).

4   J. Smith, S. Gilford, P. Kirby, A. O'Reilly, P. Ing, 1996, Bright Lights and Homelessness: Family and single homelessness among young people in our cities. YMCA, England. 640, Forest Road, London E17 3DZ. The research was undertaken on behalf of the National Inquiry into Youth Homelessness and the YMCA, England and was funded by YMCA, England. The method of counting young homeless people and removing double-counting by means of an identifier was developed during research undertaken in North Staffordshire, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and in Birmingham, funded by Barnardos, England

5   The multiplication of clients found in a three-month period in each city by four to give an annual homeless rate is the major likely cause of an over-estimation. However, the three month period in which figures were collected from April-June 1996 was not only the last three months before the passing of the 1996 Housing Act, it is also a quarter of the year in which demand for homeless accommodation from young people is usually less than during the winter months. In future it is hoped to carry out a year long survey of one of the cities included in the study in order to test how far data collected over a three-month period reflects the pattern found over twelve months.

6   Both Camden and Westminster have an over-representation of homeless youth hostels and emergency accommodation and therefore the percentage of homeless young people in Inner London, 5.5%, was estimated in a different way from the seven cities. First, only the number of young people who approached the local housing departments were used to estimate the annual percentage of local youth homelessness using a similar approach as for the seven cities (only three London boroughs could be used for this estimate as Lambeth's housing statistics were not available). Second, the average percentage of local youth homelessness for these three boroughs was then applied to the local youth population for Inner London and an estimate made of the numbers approaching all housing departments in Inner London. Third, the actual number of young people living in the hostels and emergency accommodation in the four boroughs was multiplied by four. This produced an estimate of youth homelessness in Inner London of 5.5% of the youth population; not very different from that for the seven cities. This is likely to be quite a large under-estimate because the area covered did not include the hostels of the Kings Cross area in Islington.

7   Many states have restricted welfare provision for young people based either on their age or on their lack of employment history. All Western European states have higher rates of youth unemployment than twenty years ago and have rising, some dramatically so, rates of family reconstruction.

8   The redefinition of homelessness as 'rooflessness' has implications even for those who are statutory homeless if single parent mothers are more likely to be classified as being 'in housing need' rather than 'homeless' by housing departments of local authorities when they present from temporary accommodation rather than from a roofless situation or from emergency accommodation. This tighter definition of homeless is being applied at a time when more young families are living in concealed households.

9   A description of the method used to collect the data is given in the report Bright Lights and Homelessness.

10 Previous research undertaken in Birmingham in 1993 had found that homeless single young women were as likely to approach the housing department or a housing association as a hostel or shelter (Smith and Gilford, 1993)

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WORKING SPACE

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS
Ways forward

SIMEON BRODY

Introduction

This article sets out a brief agenda for preventing youth homelessness and how National Homeless Alliance would like to see the issue being addressed. For those who don't know much about National Homeless Alliance, it is the new name for what used to be CHAR, the housing campaign for single people. The name change isn't simply cosmetic. The Alliance creates, for the first time, a national membership organisation which works with and supports around 2000 primarily local organisations tackling single homelessness. Our role will be to:

- *bring together organisations into productive networks*
- *lobby for change*
- *provide information, advice and training*
- *undertake research*
- *broker resources for our members.*

We have a number of projects working in specific areas relating to single homelessness, including the National Day Centre Project, the National Resettlement Project, the Benefits Project and the Youth Homelessness Team. We are also looking to develop an Information Technology project which will link our members together using the latest Internet and bulletin board technology, to share information and co-ordinate campaigning work.

Tackling youth homelessness

It is not easy to give a simple answer as to how youth homelessness might be solved. The causes are wide ranging and complex, taking in the welfare system, housing policy, changes in family structure, poverty and unemployment, the care system and education. Any responses will have to recognise this and be wide ranging and holistic in their approach. The report of the Inquiry into Preventing Youth Homelessness, published in 1996 and the result of collaboration between ten national charities, recognised this and produced a comprehensive package of recommendations. Those recommendations form the basis of these proposals.

The legislative framework

The starting point, one might argue, is the legislative framework. Local authority implementation of The Children Act 1989 has been failing homeless 16 and 17 year olds across the country and the legislation needs to be amended in a number

of ways. It needs to be made explicit that local authorities carry out an assessment of need on all 16 and 17 year olds who present as homeless. Local authorities also need to be given clearer guidance as to what factors to take into account in their assessment. Further to this, there needs to be a more accessible and speedy grievance procedure in operation. The current system effectively discourages young people from making complaints if they do not receive an appropriate service or are not accepted as being in need.

The homelessness legislation could also offer more protection to young homeless people. Single homeless people need to be accepted as being in 'priority need' for accommodation. Appropriate support should be made available to all young homeless people who are accommodated.

The benefits system

The single room rent restrictions to Housing Benefit are beginning to have a very damaging effect on the housing opportunities of young people. Many local homelessness agencies are reporting an increase in the numbers of young people approaching them for assistance. The current review of the welfare system should include proposals for the withdrawal of these regulations and their replacement with a system that is fair and actually covers the cost of accommodation. Similarly, the issue of housing care and support costs needs to be speedily resolved. Care and support costs might be separated from Housing Benefit payments and paid out by local authorities as part of local single homelessness strategy.

The New Deal for young people offers both opportunities and risks. We welcome the broad approach and the large amounts of money that are being spent on young people. There is concern about the sanction element, however, and the potential this has for increasing youth homelessness.

Prevention

The Inquiry recommended that a greater emphasis needed to be placed on preventative work with young people. Clearly a major factor in preventing youth homelessness would need to focus on improving preparation for leaving care and after care provision. There is also much that can be done in terms of prevention with young people who have not been in local authority care. A number of family mediation schemes have been set up around the country and the approach needs to be promoted, as much to negotiate continued contact and support from parents and relatives as to facilitate a return to the family home.

Co-ordination

Given the multiple needs of many young homeless people, it is important that there is a co-ordinated response at both a local and national level. A local youth homelessness strategy, based on a shared local understanding of the issues by all the relevant partners, has been found to deliver substantial benefits in terms of service provision and resources. Promoting the value of local strategies, together with providing

guidelines as to how they can be put into practice needs to be a high priority for the Government.

Similarly, there needs to be co-ordination at a national level between different government departments. The Departments of Environment, Transport and the Regions, Health, Social Security and Education and Employment need to ensure that their policies are complimentary rather than contradictory.

A ministerial working group

One of the main recommendations of the Inquiry was for a ministerial working group to be convened to look at the issue. This appears to have been fulfilled, with the recent announcement by the Housing Minister, Hilary Armstrong for a Youth Homelessness Action Partnership. The partnership will bring together representatives from national and local government and the voluntary sector with the aim of carrying out research into the extent and nature of youth homelessness and drawing up an action plan to tackle it. This is a great leap forward and we look forward to seeing how it progresses. Perhaps finally we can have some concerted and co-ordinated action to address the growing crisis of youth homelessness.

Simeon Brody, National Homeless Alliance.

WORKING SPACE

YOUNG PEOPLE AND HOMELESSNESS IN THE NORTH OF ENGLAND

NEIL BOWDEN

The number of young people in the North of England becoming homeless each year is still high. The reality is that young people, many forced out of home, have few places to go - particularly in rural areas. There is growing evidence of 'hidden' homelessness in rural areas, and that rural isolation and deprivation exacerbates the seriousness of youth homelessness in remote areas. Homelessness is not restricted to the city streets and young people no longer flock to London on the same scale as they used to. Increasing evidence is emerging that young people are at risk in many parts of the North and the numbers of young people who have contacted the few places offering help are likely to be just the tip of the iceberg. Young people have been recorded as regularly sleeping rough in most towns and cities in the North, Carlisle, Durham, Preston, York, Leeds, Bradford and Wakefield. In Lancashire, 91 people were recorded sleeping rough and this is likely to be a gross underestimate.

In the counties of Lancashire, Cumbria, County Durham and North Yorkshire, initial research has highlighted a number of common issues faced across the region.

Firstly, the single most important factor which needs addressing is the lack of co-operation and co-ordination of service delivery between the voluntary and statutory sectors in a wide range of services which currently operate in this field. This creates gaps in provision and resources are wasted as services are duplicated and areas of low need gain at the expense of high need. Housing and Social Services are generally still not sharing a common agenda on youth homelessness (eg joint assessment or protocols). 'There would be benefits if agencies could agree joint policies on appropriate responses to homeless young people, shared definitions of "vulnerability" and systems for joint assessments' (Cumbria, Children's Service Plan 1996-97).

Secondly, there is little consultation with young people. Very few local authorities have housing or other providers that pro-actively encourage the participation of young people regarding the strategic planning of housing provision for young people.

Thirdly, there is a huge need for emergency and supported accommodation. In many areas demand is greater than the supply of emergency and supported accommodation. Rural counties provide little or no emergency accommodation even though need is increasing. For example, over 1200 young homeless people were recorded by one project in County Durham (Nightstop, 1996-97).

Fourthly, there is a need for better 'move-on' provision. That is more and better quality accommodation for young people which they can easily and affordably access after supported housing. Simply, there is a lack of range of accommodation.

District Housing strategies and children's service plans indicate the need for a wide range of service delivery projects to meet multi-faceted needs, but need (recognised or unrecognised) is rarely met by a broad and appropriate range of accommodation for young people in the North. One plan states that 'There is a lack of an appropriate range of accommodation for homeless teenagers' (Cumbria, Children's Service Plan 1996-97).

In addition there is a lack of affordable rented accommodation which is compounded by the financial squeeze on young people by the changes in Housing Benefit and introduction of the Jobseekers Allowance. As the Rural Development commission states 'A lack of availability in rural areas of private accommodation also drives up rents'.

Fifthly, voluntary agencies are being overwhelmed. In Lancashire voluntary agencies providing temporary accommodation are experiencing an acceleration in referrals which exceeds their ability to assist. In County Durham nearly half of referrals to emergency accommodation had to be turned away because of a lack of bed spaces.

Centrepoint is looking to work in partnership with local agencies to address these issues by setting up Regional Development Projects across the North of England. Current regional development projects are underway in Warwickshire, Devon, Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire, and we are now looking to run similar projects in the North of England.

This model of working involves a Centrepoint Development Worker, working with local agencies to:

- *Assess local needs and identify gaps in provision*
- *Establish strategies for the development of service*
- *Promote and co-ordinate a multi-agency response*
- *Offer practical assistance covering issues such as project design, fund-raising, developing policies and procedures, and project management.*

This way of working proved extremely successful in Centrepoint's pilot project, Oxfordshire, where at the end of three years the project had contributed to:

- *Raising around £1.8 million for young people's projects*
- *Developing 90 units of social housing*
- *Creating four deposit guarantee schemes*
- *Developing a variety of support services, a foyer project and piloting leaving home education and schools.*

Centrepoint exists solely to improve housing opportunities for young people. It will maintain this focus whilst working alongside partners who have other priorities, allegiances and responsibilities. Centrepoint's new Northern Office, funded by the Halifax, is looking to work with young people, statutory and voluntary agencies to improve the housing options for young people in the North of England.

Neil Bowden *is Centrepoint's Northern Development Officer based in Leeds.*

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Anna Whalen

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 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 in 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

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a lot of focus on raising self-esteem as a starting point for enhancing coping mechanisms, Frydenberg points to evidence which suggests that developing 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 inapppropiately 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.

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

Tony Jeffs and Mark K Smith
Informal Education - Conversation, Democracy and Learning
Education Now Books
£6.50
pp 72

William Clemmey

If you want an excellent introduction to the whole subject of Informal Education then you should go out and buy this book. It is written in manageable bite size portions which encourage the reader to want to keep reading. And since it is a fairly short book of only 72 pages in length then you should have no difficulty in finishing it. The advantage is that the reader is given a good introduction to the issues involved - the disadvantage comes for those wanting a more in depth analysis of the issues. However, for such readers Appendix 1 contains a summary of some more books to help explore informal education. Those who want a fuller and continuously updated listing can surf the Web and find the details on http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/Mark-K-Smith/ This brings me neatly to one of the

most exciting options that this book offers namely the chance 'For those with internet access, we have set up some pages giving details of further reading; suggestions about extra exercises and activities; and the chance to give and receive feedback on this book'. It reminds us that we stand on the doorway of technological change. In future we may buy not books, but simply our own password to the website where the document resides and we can read it on screen and download sections whenever we wish.

But back to the present day. The book itself is at times quite basic but this is because it is designed for those embarking on a career in Informal and Community Education. However I think that the book makes excellent reading for all youth and community workers at all levels. Those at college will find it to be an excellent introductory text. Those just out of college will find the questions to consider section at the end of each chapter a helpful tool in evaluating their work practice. Those who have been practitioners for a long time should find that the book gives them a helpful nudge to check out how their theory links to practice. It may also challenge some of their long held ideas about the purpose of informal education. One such challenge is to the idea that one of the roles of youth and community workers is to empower people. As educators, 'We don't change people, people change themselves in interaction with others. To talk of empowering people is thus to risk being anti-liberatory. At worst, it encourages dependency of the "empowered" on the empowerer and a view of people as objects to be acted upon' (p 11).

The book comprises an introduction, seven short chapters and two appendices. As already mentioned the chapters end with a series of questions for students and practitioners to ask themselves. They act as revision notes but also as an excellent way of helping the reader to reflect on their current practice. The questions can be used on an individual basis but would also be suitable for tutor group discussions. For an introductory text I was surprised at how few illustrative diagrams there were with most chapters not having any. Some more thought could have been given to these diagrams operating on a stand alone basis so that their meaning could have been conveyed in small explanatory notes underneath them, rather than in the main body of the text. With regard to the Kolb learning cycle diagram it needed to have some arrows to show the flow. Some mention could have been made of the fact that the learning cycle includes both inductive and deductive learning. Having said that, there is a good outline of the problems with using the learning cycle. The book is good at drawing the reader forward in their thought processes.

At times whilst reading the text I wondered whether it was simply a juxtaposition of the authors previous essays on the subject into a single volume.

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This is not a fair criticism since the start of each chapter begins with a useful summarisation of their argument so far. I found the concluding two paragraphs entitled 'In Conclusion' to be an unsatisfactory ending to an otherwise excellent book. My limited grasp of grammar is struggling with the meaning of 'distinctions' being 'overblown'.

So this is an introductory text which may well become a classic. It is a well written text and I would personally like to see the ideas developed further. It has certainly stimulated me to further reading and to finding more about the theories behind our practice. I shall certainly be recommending it to the full and part time workers with whom I work.

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

John Bates, Richard Pugh & Neil Thompson (eds)
Protecting Children: Challenges and Change
Arena 1997
ISBN 1 85742 323 2
pp 263

Steve Rogowski

Child protection, as social work concerning child abuse allegations is now called, is undergoing something of a welcome change since the publication of 'Messages of research'[1]. There is a move away from child protection work per se towards an emphasis on helping and supporting families in need. This research, however, emerged as this book was in production and as a result perhaps, despite the title's mention of change, features here less than it should. Nevertheless *protecting children* is worth a read and is one of those books that does not have to be consumed from cover to cover - rather it can be dipped into, each chapter being a read in its own right.

The book presents a series of readings by academics and practitioners and is divided into three parts: part one looks at key issues which are having an impact on child protection; part two looks at children who have not only been abused but who also go on to abuse others; and part three looks at staffing issues, in particular at the need to support staff during the difficult changes that are taking place.

I found part one to be the most interesting bit of the book. For example, Pugh's chapter, for me the highlight of the book, looks at social difference and how child abuse is defined. Thus child abuse occurs when: people do not follow the culturally acceptable behaviour expected within their own culture; practices deemed acceptable in one culture are rejected as being abusive or harmful in another; social conditions like poverty, inadequate housing, poor child health care and lack of nutritional resources either contribute powerfully to child abuse or are considered as child abuse themselves. Of course, child protection in Britain is primarily conceptualised as being in the first category and less so the second. The third category is not, unfortunately, usually seen as being within the preserve of Social Services departments. As Parton puts it - 'ideologically the way the problem has been constructed blames the parents and social workers and absolves society and the State from issues of social distribution'[2]. Pugh goes on to argue for a move away form the narrow perspective on child protection which conceptualises abuse solely as a result of individual pathology though this obviously leads to problems with the powerful who do not want to see moves which politicise what they see as non-political problems.

Another interesting chapter in part one is Colin Pritchard's. He notes that good social work is effective, showing how child deaths from adult abuse have declined since the advent of organised interventions by social workers and others.

Part two has chapters on, for example: children trapped in abusive relationships; a short-term focused groupwork approach to young male abusers involving role play, support and education; and a groupwork project aimed at supporting groups of boys who are victims of organised sexual abuse.

Part three examines aspects of the staff dimension in relation to child protection work: 'emotionally competent organisations'; risk assessment in relation to the appointment and support of staff so as to prevent institutional child abuse; foster carers, particularly in relation to when they are accused of being abusers; and finally a 'package' of necessary measures to ensure a basic level of staff care.

Of these, Bates' chapter on the central role that male power plays in relationships with colleagues, children and within agencies in which they work is certainly worth reading. He rightly argues for and puts forward strategies for changing the status quo in relation to practice. These include: debanking strategies; involving men in families and family work, and women in organisations; avoiding masculinism; challenging sexism; and rejecting heterosexism.

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Overall, although not a ground breaking book it is, as indicated worth a read and should appeal to all those interested in child abuse and ways of tackling it.

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1 Department of Health (1995) 'Child Protection: Messages from Research' HMSO

2 Parton N. (1985) 'The Politics of Child Abuse' MacMillan

Steve Rogowski *is a social worker (children and families) with a local authority in north west England*

Wilma Fraser
Learning from Experience: Empowerment or Incorporation?
NIACE 1997
ISBN 1 872941 60 5
£12.00
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Pam Coare and Alistair Thomson (eds)
Through the Joy of Learning: Diary of 1,000 Adult Learners
NIACE 1997
ISBN 1 86201 001 3
£14.99
pp 212

Lynn Tett

These two books are united by a focus on the learning of adults but take quite different perspectives. I shall, after providing a brief description of their contents and stated aims, assess them in relation to their value to the students and practioners of community education with whom I work.

Fraser's book is an examination of current trends in learning from experience based on insights gained through involvement in 'Making Experience Count' (MEC) programmes and is concerned to critique the assumptions that an adult is 'a coherent and unified subject, "I", who can reflect on experience, extricate the learning gained and...translate the relevance of the learning to vocational or educational requirements' (p xii-xiii). She aims to offer theoretical insights into the issues around 'learning from experience' and also practical help. The book is arranged in three sections covering the issues that have arisen from the MEC programmes, the

courses that were run as WEA pilots and the courses that were associated with the Kent Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) consortium.

Coare and Thomson present an edited selection of twenty eight whole diaries and extracts from a number of others arranged around significant themes about the motivations, challenges, experiences and achievements of adult learners. Their justification for taking this approach is that diaries 'can illuminate the lived experience of institutions, structures and relationships of education' (p 201) by providing life stories about educational experiences. The diaries are very varied and include accounts of informal learning through family life as well as through more formal courses in a range of institutions. This book claims to be mainly aimed at adults interested in learning although the material contained in the diaries is expected to offer useful insights to practitioners. It was produced as part of the celebration of the 1996 European Year of Lifelong Learning and NIACE's own 75th anniversary.

From the perspective I outlined at the beginning 'Learning from Experience' is clearly the most useful to my target audience. Although overall the book is somewhat patchy, the chapters in the first section especially 'Gendered reflections: notes towards gynagogy' are valuable because they problematise the whole notion of the inherent value of experience and provoke the reader to question 'the simplicity of the premise that "adults are what they have done"' (p 24). Fraser argues that much of the work undertaken through APEL procedures is conservative, supports the status quo and is gendered. I would agree and also point out that it is 'classed' and 'raced' as well. She suggests that 'if we are to embark upon an educative process which offers genuine possibilities for creative change, then we have to engage with the factors which constrain our understanding of *who, why and what we are*' (p 40). The accounts of courses contained in sections two are three to a certain extent allow for the examination of the hierarchical nature of what counts as experience and the lack of parity between 'learning gained in one arena and the skills and competences demanded by another' (p 191). The problem, however, with these accounts is that these insights have to be culled from a great deal of information about what was done and so, whilst they would be quite useful to readers who wish to engage on MEC courses or develop APEL procedures, they are less value to readers who wish to gain a clear understanding of the policy and politics of 'making experience count'.

Although the individual contributions of the 400 adult learners who responded to NIACE's request for diaries that expressed 'views and experience about (what) learning (means to you)' (p 201) hold some interest in themselves, it was the way in which the editors have constructed a particular discourse of the adult learner that I found fascinating. The book does not make the ways in which the diaries were collected and edited very clear

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except to say that they 'tended to choose diaries which situated learning experiences within the rest of a life, rather than those which just recorded the details of a particular course' (p 204). However, the editors themselves obviously have a firm belief that participation in adult learning is enjoyable - 'a joy' - that it builds self-confidence, that it enriches and complicates everyday experience, that it can change your life and that 'very often the learning of adults has multiple and even unexpected outcomes' (p 189). Such a view clearly does not problematise what is meant by learning in marked contrast to the issues raised by Fraser, particularly as there is no reference made to gender, age, race, or class as mediators of learning experiences. However, the book, and the archive of diarists that NIACE intend to develop, could provide useful source material for those that are interested to quarry this selected sample for insights into what adult participants get, or more likely think they are expected to get, from participating in learning.

In her book Fraser quotes from Jarvis (1985) who suggests that education can imply preparing 'a person to take their place within the structures of society (or can)...place more emphasis on the person and the process' (p 43). Both books concentrate their efforts on the latter construct but Coare and Thomson fail to problematise the discourse of participation whereas Fraser is able to theorise the problematic of learning from experience and thus contribute to our understandings of adults. It is worth noting that both books concentrate on learning rather than education and that NIACE, the publisher, describes itself as the 'National Organisation for Adult Learning'. Something to ponder for people like me who still describe themselves as engaged in education rather than facillitators of learning.

Lynn Tett, *Moray House Institute of Education, Edinburgh.*

James G Deegan
Children's Friendships in Culturally Diverse Classrooms
The Falmer Press 1997
ISBN 0 7507 0267 2
£10.95 (pbk)
pp 108

Dan Connolly

This is a useful reference book on the topic of children's friendships. It falls somewhere between a theoretical work and a practical handbook, covering aspects of the sociology, research and policy implications of friendship study.

In his introduction Deegan sets as the 'touchstone' for his work the notion of children's friendships 'at promise': Essentially he is proposing that adults generally but more importantly those involved in the education of young people which fail to make use of a potential wealth of knowledge about young people which can be gained from a greater understanding of the ways they make and maintain friendships. Children's friendships thus represent a rich but largely untapped vein of information for teachers and educators, which could provide critical insights into children generally and into their reactions within culturally diverse settings.

What follows is a largely practical overview of the history of theory and research in the field of children's friendships including examples from research which Deegan himself has either conducted or supervised. Whilst this provides extremely useful material and practical advice for students and researchers as detailed below, Deegan sometimes appears to lose touch with his own 'touchstone' of friendships 'at promise' and leaves it up to the reader to relate the descriptive material to his theoretical framework for the book. This aside, there is much of interest both in ideas in the examples from the research.

Deegan positions himself very much within the Symbolic Interactionist camp, preferring to allow a definition of friendship to emerge from the meanings which children themselves ascribe to their relationships rather than searching for an unattainable 'objective' definition or standard against which all friendships might be judged. Crucially for educationalists, he moves away from an understanding of young people as merely passive subjects of social structures and processes, towards one which celebrates:

> *...the centrality of children's friendships as socially constructed, integrally woven into, but not reducible, to the effects of race, ethnicity, gender and class and autonomously constructed by children in their own social worlds* (p 11).

Adopting this stance, Deegan suggests, it is likely to produce particularly useful insights into children whose behaviour is challenging and whose personal circumstances are not advantageous. Focusing positively on the (often un-noticed) effort which such young people put into forging relationships with peers is likely to bear more fruit than simply dismissing them as 'trouble-causers'. The 'dissonance' of some relationships exemplified by fighting, for instance, need not be a necessarily negative thing but may be a stage in a process of friendship negotiation. What to a distant adult might be viewed as a collapse of the relationship, to the children involved may be merely a manoeuvre:

> *then the next day (after a fight), she started to be nice to me. Then I got to know her, and then we got to be friends (p 45).*

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Chapter 3 provides a concise historical review of the principal areas of research in the field of children's friendships, beginning with the pioneering sociology of Durkheim, through the psychological child development theories of Piaget and concluding more specifically with key examples of research in culturally diverse settings, including Troyna and Hatchers recent study of race and racism in two UK schools.

Although Chapter 5 appears to sit outside the rest of the book it remains similarly useful for the student of friendship and friendship research. Deegan deals exclusively with issues surrounding the adoption of the role of 'friendly cultural stranger' during ethnographic research. He provides several intriguing insights into the concept of reflexivity and the practical dilemmas which such a role invites (eg being an assistant member of the teaching staff at a school whilst at the same time mocking the teacher behind his back in order to create distance from the establishment). A brief excerpt from his writing-up of a first visit to a school reveals the richness of high quality reflexive writing:

> *Quickly the universal smells of the ethnographic present began to mix with the smells of the ethnographic past. These are the particular smells that linger long after they are exhaled.*

> *...These are the smells from the days when I was truly among school children in Mr Kildangan's classroom - the smell of the smelly Skellys with the rubber bellies who smelled of the free bun and milk. I can smell their poverty again. (p 57).*

With the exception of the conclusion, the remaining chapters consist of research reports written by the author and his students which Deegan uses to support his contention that a more advanced and detailed understanding of how friendships operate might lead to improvements in teachers' ability to work *with* what is happening in classrooms rather than against it.

In his own research of 13 year olds at a school in Atlanta, Deegan provides sufficient evidence to confirm Jonathan, Lean and Donna's inability to 'nego-tiate the parameters of their friendships' due to problems relating to transiency, drugs and homelessness - citing these as examples of 'dissonant' friendships. He suggests that teachers should focus not on such dissonance but on the potential which the three children have for negotiating within the more acceptable (or 'consonant') parameters such as 'niceness' and 'togetherness' to which their less problematic classmates adhere. Although his argument is refreshingly positive, the evidence which he provides to support the positive potential of Jonathan and Lena is weak and in Donna's case non-existent.

What is most revealing in the studies of his trainee-teacher research students is their acknowledgement of the benefits of trying to see the issue of

friendship from the child's perspective: 'Anything that allows us to get into the mind of a child can only help us become more effective teachers'. (p 80).

Deegan concludes with several practical suggestions which he hopes will influence educational theory, research, policy and practice. These include keeping friends together over a number of years, relaxing the impulse to control children's friendships, making children's friendships a focus for their own action research projects (instead of using multi-cultural 'packages') and celebrating children's playground lives as 'lenses for addressing what matter most to children'.

In summary, whilst the links between this short collection of chapters are sometimes strained, the primacy which the author places on the voices of children and young people and the meanings which they themselves attach to their experiences is the key strength of this book. It challenges those of us working as educators with young people, whether formally or informally, to not only *listen* to what young people are telling us about their friendships but to *hear* and then to *act*.

It is increasingly trendy to listen to young people, but how much is actually being heard, and how much of what is heard results in any meaningful changes to policy and practice?

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Jan van der Ploeg and Evert Scholte
Homeless Youth
Sage, October 1997
ISBN 0 8039 7806 5
£12.99
pp 176

Mark Cieslik

This book provides a wide ranging and well organised review of recent research into youth homelessness and includes sections on the problems of offering an adequate definition and estimation of youth homelessness. There is also discussion of the plethora of other 'problem behaviours' associated with homelessness as well as chapters on theories and explanations

of youth homelessness. The final sections of the book deal with the efficacy of existing prevention programmes and how these could be improved by the development of a more comprehensive, long term and multi-agency approach.

This book is valuable as it outlines in a concise and engaging way a wealth of studies into homelessness from around the world. Though given the state of recent research, studies from North America and Western Europe are inevitably over-represented. It illustrates the sheer scale of the problem of youth homelessness, both globally (current estimates of between 30 and 80 million) and at the level of individual countries. A particular strength is how we are shown that irrespective of national context key individual and structural factors such as family conflict, low educational attainment, residence in care, declining labour market opportunities and welfare reforms are all associated with trajectories into homelessness. The authors also document how these trajectories are structured by gender, ethnicity and a range of socio-economic factors such as the employment category and material resources of parents. The authors note for example that young women who have become homeless tend to have experienced more physical or sexual abuse in the parental home or household of origin than young homeless men. Young homeless women also tend to run away from home more than young men who, the authors suggests, tend to be 'thrown out' of their households of origin more often than young women do.

A particularly interesting feature of the book is how the authors, drawing on some of their own empirical research from the Netherlands, discuss how existing policies and provision for 'at risk' youth not only fail to address the needs of young people but may actually contribute to their social exclusion. They argue that state welfare agencies often aim to manage and control the 'problem' of homeless youth. This approach can undermine the independence of young people which in turn can reinforce their passivity and their reliance on welfare agencies.

To their credit the authors acknowledge the difficulty of trying to adequately explain why some young people are more vulnerable to homelessness than others. They rightly suggest that although a range of factors, such as family conflict and low educational attainment and 'problem behaviours' such as mental illness and delinquency may be associated with being homeless. How these factors interact over time to structure trajectories is still unclear. There is therefore still very much a 'chicken and egg' dilemma confronting those researchers aiming to uncover the key causal factors which account for the patterning of homelessness amongst young people today.

In this respect the book may have benefited by drawing upon recent qualitative research projects which have explored how 'problem behaviour' such as delinquency or factors such as low educational attainment interact over time to structure vulnerability and homelessness amongst young people (MacDonald: 1997). Studies by Craine (1997) and Blackman (1997) for example have shown how some types of behaviour such as soft drug use and involvement in petty theft can in the short term be important coping strategies for young homeless people but in the long term these can further add to the marginality they experience. Though the book abounds with statistics related to homelessness, which in themselves are important, this reader was left with the feeling that the book would have been better if the authors provided some account of the experience of homelessness. An experiential perspective would have allowed the reader to piece together how different factors in a young person's life can come together to structure the descent into homelessness. Such criticisms however may be unfair as the aim of this book was to review a section of literature which deals specifically with homelessness from a behavioural science/social policy perspective.

It is this focus which I suspect also accounts for the absence in the book of discussion of the links between youth homelessness and wider social, political and cultural transformations which have occurred across Europe and North America over the past thirty years. One of the most obvious debates in this respect, and one which has recently preoccupied many youth researchers is the restructuring of the transition to adulthood and with it the creation of new patterns of exclusion and the emergence of a youth underclass.

Nevertheless, despite these criticisms this book is still a valuable contribution to the study of homeless and vulnerable youth as it is one of the few studies which situates these issues in a global context. Furthermore, as it is written in a straightforward and accessible way it will appeal to a broad range of academics, youth workers and students interested in the study of youth homelessness.

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References

MacDonald, R. (1997) (ed) Youth, the Underclass and Social Exclusion. London, Routledge.

Blackman, S. (1997) 'Destructing a giro': A critical and ethnographic study of the youth underclass' in MacDonald, ibid, pp. 113-129.

Craine, S. (1997) 'The Black Magic Roundabout': Cyclical transitions, social exclusion and alternative careers' in MacDonald, ibid, pp. 130-152.

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Merle Davies

I have to admit to finding this book extremely irritating to read. The constant changes in gender in the text is confusing, in fairness the writer does warn the reader in the introduction that he will do this to avoid discrimination, but it would work better if the gender changed every other chapter rather than, what felt like, each sentence. Apart from that, the way in which the book was written was extremely patronising and I felt he condescended to his readers by assuming that the parents reading the book should be treated like children. My experience of friends and family with children does not bear this out and therefore I can only presume that Bob Myers, whom the text tells us has worked with children and young people for several years, is now only able to communicate in a parent to child way with everyone.

Myers believes that we should treat young adults differently to toddlers and that teenagers need to be talked to more to encourage them to make their own decisions where as with young children we need to be more directive. All sound advice but surely just commonsense? A list of words, which takes up over a page, used when having an argument/discussion around moral development with an obstreperous adolescent had me imagining parents in the middle of a heated debate saying 'hold on while I get my manual to check what the problem is'. As we are told 'when there is a Fair Go or Safety problem' one will be conscious of this fact because discussions will include words such as; late, aid, no, obey, push, fix, water and gloves along with other such enlighting dialogue are to alert an unsuspecting parent to a potential problem. At the end of each chapter there is a check list of 'things to think about', such as, 'parents, as well as children, have rights' and 'personal best competition make every child a winner', all of which made me groan.

In the chapter 'Responding to irresponsible behaviour' the author talks about risk taking amongst young people and enters the realm of unprotective sex and AIDS and the need for adults to make young people aware of the consequences of their actions. The basic principals touched upon in this segment are fairly common to youth work and a good point was made when the author states that adults do not help young people to differentiate between their sexual feelings and 'being in love' by 'going all gooey about young love'. I got the impression that this, along with the segment on 'smoking and other drugs' and 'inadequacy, depression and suicide', was included

to ensure that all aspects of youth culture were mentioned but, as with the rest of the book, in no great depth.

The one good thing in the book is the graphics, these are quite entertaining and relieve the boredom in what turned out to be a tedious book. By the time I reached the penultimate chapter, titled 'consequences', even these were failing to brighten the read. I found the examples given of parental responses to different situations difficult to relate to the behaviour of parents I know have quite successfully raised responsible teenagers and who would find the behaviour of adults who followed the authors guidelines on how parents should put distance between themselves and the 'kids' as childish. I cannot imagine any situation whereby an adult can justify ignoring a young person or refusing to speak to them on the grounds of teaching them to be a responsible teenager.

The last sentence in the book is probably the most relevant to the subject matter, the author states that, 'Most kids have great tolerance; they try to understand the misbehaviour of parents but wish they would listen when they are spoken to and show a little more respect'. Had this been the opening rather than the closing sentence of the book it may have led into an interesting document which followed on from that point rather than a tedious book which failed to convince me that the author really did have contact with young people.

As a lover of America and the American culture I was disappointed to find myself reading what can at best be described as 'typical American schmaltz'. This books typifies, for me, the worst in American self help manuals.

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Robert MacDonald (Ed)
Youth, The 'Underclass' and Social Exclusion
Routledge 1997
ISBN 0 415158 30 3
£45.00 hbk
£13.99 pbk
pp 228

Lyn Tett

This is a timely and useful book that attempts to grapple with the idea of 'the underclass' in relation to contemporary youth. I was pleased to be asked to review it as I have long been interested in the implications for

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social policy of the ideology (perpetuated by Charles Murray, in particular) that there is a new, dangerous, underclass emerging that is distinct from the 'respectable' working-class.

The book focuses upon unemployment, training, the labour market, crime, homelessness, citizenship and shifts in welfare and youth policy in order to examine why young people have become the prime subjects in discourses of the underclass. It opens with a review of the debates and issues surrounding the 'underclass' concept by Robert MacDonald who suggests that, since a central tenet of underclass theses is that young people are being socialised into the 'deviant cultures of their economically sidelined parents,... then the debate is in large part about youth' (p 19). The contributors to the book offer explanations of the social exclusion of disadvantaged youth by using evidence drawn from recent British studies to show how 'economic and social transformations have impacted upon the transitions and experiences of young men and women in the late 1990s' (p 22). Not all the writers are critical of the underclass idea. For example, Ken Roberts argues that existing research does not disprove that there are a group of young people that may become excluded on a permanent basis. Most of the other writers, however, show how underclass theories simplify the complex processes of social exclusion and ignore the interplay between structure and agency in shaping the transitions of young people. This in turn leads to social policy that is more concerned with controlling 'dangerous youth' than it is with finding solutions to the transitions experienced by young people.

The individual chapters, as well as addressing the underclass idea, also provide valuable summaries of issues that arise in relation to particular transitions. In this respect I found Malcolm and Susan Maguire's chapter on 'young people and the labour market', Howard Williamson's chapter on 'Status ZerO youth' and Gill Jones' chapter on 'Youth homelessness' particularly illuminating of some of the key areas of difficulty that young people face. In addition the detailed ethnographic work undertaken by Shane Blackman (chapter 8) and Steve Crane (chapter 9) in their careful analysis of the complex processes of social exclusion provide insights into the everyday cultures of marginalised young people. Other chapters focus more specifically on the policy implications of a particular analysis of 'the underclass': Hartley Dean (chapter 4) on social citizenship; Debbie Baldwin, Bob Coles and Wendy Mitchell (chapter 6) on 'vulnerable youth'; Tony Jeffs (chapter 10) on youth work policies and practices. All these authors demonstrate how differing conceptualisations of youth lead to particular solutions to the perceived problem.

In his concluding chapter Robert MacDonald summaries the key findings in respect of the youth underclass thesis, assesses the usefulness of the concept, and suggests how the social exclusion of youth might be better

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understood. As he points out 'social structure changes have generated serious economic exclusion amongst sections of the young population' (p 170) but the changing labour market is not the only aspect of exclusion that should be considered. 'The interaction of macro-economic forces, institutional changes and policy intervention..., local market conditions, and localised subcultural responses and individual strategies [provides a means] of understanding how different groups of people become socially and economically excluded in different ways' (p 172). The evidence provided by the book's contributors shows why a simplistic view of the underclass is inappropriate and also demonstrates 'that more balanced, empirically warranted and realistic representations of young people and their lives' (p 183) are necessary if social scientists are to clearly refute the arguments of the Radical Right.

Whilst the underclass thesis remains 'not proven', rather than totally refuted, there is no doubt that youth transitions are becoming riskier, more insecure and, for already disadvantaged youth, structural unemployment has led to their economic exclusion. This transformation of employment should in turn generate policy changes that clearly address the future of work for young people but this book, written under a Conservative government, shows how their policies failed to respond to these issues. It also seems unlikely that the 'New Labour' policy of 'Welfare to Work' will be any more effective. Yet these studies show that all young people want to work but it has to have meaning and training and education need to lead to 'proper jobs'. Robert MacDonald's conclusion is that 'research that unearths the lived experiences and cultures of survival of the young poor, unemployed and otherwise disadvantaged' (p 195) will lead to 'a more productive recasting of research on contemporary youth, their transitions and social exclusion' (p 196). In my view this book has made a significant contribution not only to this debate but also to a clarification of the underclass thesis.

Overall, then, this is a valuable book for students on youth and community work, community education and social policy courses because it combines detailed investigations of particular youth transitions together with analysis of their policy implications. My only caveat is that its treatment of gender and 'race' issues is very superficial being confined to a few paragraphs in the concluding chapter. This is particularly surprising given the centrality of the myths of 'unmarried mothers' and 'violent black youth' to this debate. Perhaps this should be the focus of another book that looks in detail at how gender, 'race', sexual orientation and disability intersect with class to exclude young people in their transitions into adulthood. How about it Routledge?

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Notes

SUBMISSION DETAILS

Working Space: is the section of the journal which aims to reflect: Current practice done by or with young people; and opinions on issues facing young people. Contributions can be written in whatever style the contributor feels comfortable with. For further details contact Richard Barber or Tia Khan.

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

All articles must be typed with double spacing on white paper and authors should send three copies. *We also encourage the submission of the final text on computer disk* (3.5 inch) saved in 'text'/ASCII format (please enclose adequate instructions for our typesetters). Attention must be paid to our statement concerning equal opportunities and offensive language; contributors should adopt the house style of the journal laid out below:

Single quotation marks should be used unless quoting within a quote, where double quotation marks should be used. Indented quotes do not require quotation marks but where a quote is presented within an indented quote, single quotation marks should be used. Abbreviations that have attained common usage can be used (e.g.USA) but those which are less well known should be spelled out in the first instance with the abbreviated form following in parentheses, e.g. British Youth Council (BYC). The abbreviated form can be used thereafter. Tables, graphs and diagrams should be set out clearly and included in the relevant place in the text. Subheadings should be clearly marked and underlined. References should be set out in the Harvard system. Thus, the author's name, date of publication and, if necessary, page number should be included in parentheses in the main text, for example, (Smith, 1984, p.10). All references should be listed at the end of the article, with the title 'References', in alphabetical order by author's surname and including publication details.

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

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

And for a report:
The Thompson Report (1982) Experience and Participation, cmnd 8686, London, HMSO.

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

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