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THE ENGLISH DISEASE?

The Social-legal Construction of Football Hooliganism

GEOFFREY M PEARSON

Introduction

In late 1996, Manchester United launched a new product onto the alcoholic drinks section of supermarkets throughout the country. However, *Red Tribe*, a full strength lager bearing the Manchester United club crest, soon found opponents. *Alcohol Concern* responded to the sale of *Red Tribe* by raising the subject of continued media fascination, when a spokesman for the group stated that,

Having match packs of twelve cans encourages binge drinking by fans on match days and we all know what that leads to - football hooliganism. (The Daily Telegraph, 3/11/96)

What is revealed by this, and dozens of other public statements, is the acceptance of the term, 'football hooliganism', into everyday, common usage. What football hooliganism is, and what causes it, is now seen as common knowledge, something which 'we all know'. With the World Cup taking place in France this summer, the papers are already full of articles concerning the likelihood of incidents of football hooliganism, a process which to some extent had already begun with the crowd disturbance in Rome in the match which led to England's qualification.

In this article I will be considering, and problematising, the supposedly 'common-sense' definitions of football hooliganism which form the basis for our understanding of the phenomenon. In one sense, this is building upon an article by Michael Salter in *Youth and Policy* (No. 13 1985), '*Football Hooliganism: Anticipation and Presence*', which first looked at how football hooliganism was a 'common sensical' phenomenon, a result of an active process of cultural construction by the media and those directly experiencing incidents of football-related disorder. However, this article also goes beyond this, noting the *direct practical effect* in terms of the response of the criminal justice system, that such a construction has upon those traditionally seen to belong to this culture of youth, masculinity, football and violence.

Setting the Argument: The common sense meanings of football hooliganism

What is 'football hooliganism'? What are the definitions which form the basis for our understanding of this widely reported 'phenomenon'? For most, it is a familiar term which requires no introduction, and 'common sense' definitions of football hooliganism, which rely implicitly on '*what everybody knows*' (Salter, 1985, p19) about this phenomena, appear quite acceptable. The phenomenon belongs to the realm of 'the obvious', where explicit definitions are assumed to be unnecessary. In contrast to this 'taken for granted' attitude, I shall start by examining whether we can uncover a clear definition (or definitional framework) of 'football hooliganism' and

its associated terms, or whether the labels are instead built upon 'taken-for-granted' meanings, associations and images; that is, an implicit framework of background understandings which provide *resources* upon which football hooliganism 'stands out' as an issue of a certain kind but which does not itself become explicit and transparent. Can we even identify football hooliganism as such without already possessing an 'interpretative schema' by whose application we can contrast different incidents and determine which of these incidents are included within the phenomenon?

My research, which has included a wide-ranging literature review and analysis of media converse, participant observation and interviews with the affected parties suggests that for most, football hooliganism is a term which does not require explicit definition. When it comes to usage of the label by media, social control sources and even academics, both words in the term 'football hooligan(ism)' are often unclear and undefined. The meanings they attach are based upon a taken for granted perception which is not so much of a definition as a collection of unclear meanings and ideas, best illustrated by an examination of the use of the '*disease metaphor*' which has been ascribed to the phenomenon. The role of this metaphor, the part it has played in constructing this 'common sense' meaning of football hooliganism, is an essential part of our investigation into the term's meaning. It aids the process of making the term self-explanatory, a part of '*what everybody knows*', a *quasi-automatic* association of certain events with the label 'football hooliganism', operating below the level of explicit attention to the interpretative process which constructs it.

It helps us conjure images of tabloid headlines concerning 'yobs' and 'scum' and pictures of skinheads fighting on terraces and tearing up railway carriages on their way to or from matches. These, our common sense knowledge tells us, are football hooligans. By contrast, the ordinary man on the street who does not attend football is not a football hooligan. Nor are the family of football supporters who sit politely in their seats at matches and politely clap good football. This 'type' of spectator is a 'real' fan, whereas young men wearing Newcastle United colours who cause trouble after their team failed to win the Premiership Title are only '*so called fans*' (Newcastle Evening Chronicle 29/5/96). The media and others involved in the reporting, prevention or analysis of football hooliganism have tended themselves to rely on this 'accepted', either/or differentiation rather than consider, in a self reflective fashion, what it is that they are reporting on. It is not so much the type of activity engaged in which leads to labelling as a football hooligan, but more of the type of person involved. Drunken young male supporters shot at by foreign police automatically must take some blame for the disturbance.¹ Middle aged businessmen and women enjoying corporate hospitality who become involved in a similar type of disturbance, on the other hand, must be innocent victims of thug policing, as we saw from the uncharacteristically sympathetic reports following English fans being beaten by Italian police during England's World Cup Qualifier in Rome this year.²

It is only those who go beyond this accepted understanding, and explicitly consider specific definitions which could be applied to the term who realise the confusion, and discrimination, that exists when attempting to produce one definition of 'football hooliganism'. Only when we have recognised, and tried to counter the extremes and prejudices, can serious analysis into the meanings of the term be considered, and the ambiguity surrounding the label can become clear.

This process is important from a socio-legal perspective because the way in which the phenomenon is constructed has direct *practical implication* in the sphere of the criminal legal system, at the levels of legislation, the criminal courts, and policing. If we accept the law's stated liberal objectives, couched in terms of 'justice', 'equality' and 'certainty' then we need to reflect on whether the term is an *appropriate* basis for criminal law action. We will consider whether real problems lie not just in discerning meaning to the words 'football' and 'hooliganism', but also in the addressing of the many, diverse, 'deviant' actions (carried out in a 'football context') as a singular phenomenon in itself (whether it be called football-related violence or football-related crime etc.). Do various definitional problems lie deeper than the words themselves, and if so, does this mean that they also permeate the very *concept* of football-related disorder as a specific singular phenomenon at the pre-linguistic level of immediate experience?

How has the criminal law 'constructed' (through an active process of cultural interpretation and labelling) the phenomenon of football hooliganism? Does the disease metaphor influence the legal system's understanding of the phenomenon, and, if so, does this have a direct practical impact upon society's response to it? Where those involved in the 'law-making process' themselves have been responding to, and building upon the popular 'meanings' and values attributed to the term, the area of study expands from a 'mere' semantic exercise to incorporate socio-legal and civil libertarian issues.

Unclear Foundations: Defining football hooliganism

Gaining a clear and unambiguous definition of 'football hooliganism', as may be sought after by a traditional lawyer interested in legislation or sentencing policy used against football hooligans, is particularly problematic. If 'football hooliganism' were a crime in itself, this would help provide us with a formal definition from which we could begin to work (although, of course, this definition may itself be problematic). However, legislation does not provide us with a clear definition of football hooliganism from which to work, although this is certainly not to say that judges and legislators have not responded to the 'phenomenon' of football hooliganism as it has been constructed. However, football hooliganism is not, in itself, recognised as a specific crime, so Parliament, through legislation, has not presented a clear definition of the term.

Prima facie, some clarification might be achieved if we focus on the 'hooliganism aspect' of football hooliganism and gain an understanding of this social category.

However, the term, 'hooliganism' itself is no less of a 'blanket' label without the 'football' aspect. The word 'Hooligan' first came into common English usage to describe groups of rowdy youths during the summer of 1898 (Pearson, 1983), and has been defined as 'A rough lawless young person' (Collins English Dictionary 1988), or 'A young ruffian, especially a member of a gang' (Oxford English Dictionary 1991). At this level, the meanings of the word are particularly ambiguous; what 'lawless' actions need to take place, how 'young' must the person be and what kind of 'roughness' are we talking about? Can any show of rowdy behaviour in any context be considered hooliganism? It has certainly been used in this way, for example when Denis Howell on an interruption by the Home Secretary during the Second Reading of the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1985 commented that, 'It appears that hooligans are not confined to the terraces of football grounds' (Hansard [Commons] 3/7/85: 411).

When the 'football' prefix is added, we might presume this in fact *narrows down* the definition, and that the term 'football hooliganism' is far more specific than 'hooliganism' per se. However, although the prefix in this case does place some restrictions on the context in which the (ill) defined behaviour can take place, it also seems to have the perverse effect of *extending* the boundaries determining what behaviour can fall under the label. As a result, with the 'football' aspect added to the classification, definitions become even less clear.

Presumably, a football hooligan needs to be understood as someone who is, (a) a 'hooligan' and (b) acts as a 'hooligan' in a *football context*. Although the emphasis is on the situation in which the criminal act is carried out, the term football hooliganism is *usually* applied to the certain types of 'hooligan' offences encapsulated by the label 'hooligan'. Threatening or insulting behaviour, affray, looting, common assault, and the carrying of offensive weapons may all be described as football hooliganism if they take place in a context of football (e.g. the offences take place at a football ground, or by supporters on their way to or from a match, or by rival football gangs) whereas, for example, supply of illegal substances in a football context, although obviously 'football-related', would not be considered 'hooliganism'.

However, exactly what this 'football context' needs to be for the actor to become a football hooligan as opposed to a non-football hooligan is unclear. Must the hooliganism take place at a football match? Must the hooligan have the purpose of watching football? Must the hooliganism take place at the time of a football match? These are questions to which there is no answer accepted by consensus. Mostly, these are questions which are not even addressed. Furthermore, the addition of the prefix, 'football' to 'hooliganism' may in fact alter the meaning of the latter word, demonstrated by the fact that a football hooligan does not need to be young to be described as such.³

Another issue which challenges the idea of hooliganism as a quality prior to and independent of 'football' arises when it becomes clear that the addition of the prefix

in fact *extends* the meanings which can be attached to the initial label. With the addition of the prefix, the act itself does not need to be of a 'traditional' hooligan form to be described as football hooliganism. For example, the manslaughter of a spectator at Cardiff Arms Park after a World Cup Qualifier in 1993 was described at court as the '*ultimate act of football hooliganism*'. However, the killing itself occurred when two fans recklessly fired a marine distress rocket which hit a pensioner on the other side of the stadium. This action was far away from the traditional view of hooliganism as defined in the dictionary meanings of 'hooliganism' we considered above. The defendants were aged 31 and 35. Neither were acting as a member of a gang and the action itself was reckless, but was not intended to cause injury or distress.

This apparent confusion between 'football *hooliganism*' and crimes which, if not for their 'link' with football, would fall outside a traditional definition of 'hooliganism' is also demonstrated by the files kept by the Football Unit of the National Criminal Intelligence Service. The Football Intelligence Unit was set up at the start of the 1988/9 season and has since grown to become an important part of the national 'campaign' against football hooligans. Armstrong and Hobbs (1994, p222) note that the Unit keeps files on all those arrested for football-related violence (seemingly regardless of successful charge), and by 1990, had 6,000 names on file. They add,

With over 6,000 names of 'hooligans', it is interesting to note that the offences that brought them to the attention of the unit are just 1,500 for violence, yet over 4,000 for non-violence offences including drugs (470), fraud (446), auto-crime (497) and others (747). What the latter four offences have to do with football hooliganism is a mystery.

The football unit's use of the term 'football hooliganism' appears merely to be a replacement term for 'football-related *crime*', sacrificing a strict adherence to the definition of 'hooliganism' for the 'ease' of being able to categorise those on its files with the 'hooligans' described by politicians and media. The 'link' between these offences and football-related *violence* appears to be that many of these non-violent offences were committed to finance later acts of violence (ibid). Therefore, the non-violent offences are just a means to an end of football-violence, and the whole 'series' of crimes can be placed under the 'football hooliganism' label. However, regardless of whether a link can be made between earlier non-violent acts and later more 'traditional' acts of 'football hooliganism', the label becomes more arbitrary and less specific or discriminate.

In these cases (and that of the two Welsh fans), the criminality of the action linked with the football context appears to have led to its labelling as 'football hooliganism'. On the other hand, behaviour which is not necessarily criminal may be described as hooliganism if it takes place within a football-context, or by those who are traditionally seen as the 'type' to attend football matches. As Robert Wareing pointed

out during the Parliamentary debate on the subject in 1985:

People cannot be expected to go to a football match and not be a little boisterous. If they were all public school boys they would be described as high-spirited, but when working-class youngsters engage in boisterous behaviour, it becomes hooliganism. (Hansard [Commons] 3/7/85: 398)

Wareing's comment is one of the few which does not operate on a common-sense basis. Instead, he problematises the identification of football hooliganism as *selective labelling*, demonstrating that there may be a danger of *class-specific* value judgements in the very act of identification of who is a football hooligan. It may even be that the class divisions actually *form the basis* for this construction of football hooliganism. Football has always been a traditionally working class activity, both watching matches and playing (many public schools or selective grammar schools still refuse to allow students to play football) and there is certainly a possibility that if football had traditionally been an upper-class activity, whilst retaining the same potential for disorder, then the singular, threatening 'phenomenon' of football hooliganism may not have been an issue. The idea that football hooliganism is a product of selective labelling, be it on grounds of class or youth, certainly provides us with an explanation for the confusion and lack of clarity surrounding the label.

This ambiguity adds greater scope for subjective variation in the interpretation and usage from individual to individual and group to group. Vastly different types of people, and different actions are grouped together under this title, depending on the individual interpretation of the term. It encapsulates a wide variety of crimes, misbehaviour and other actions, and the only link is an unclear idea about a 'football context'. Words and terms already exist to describe the various actors and actions which the meaning of football hooliganism may entail. The labels, 'football supporter', 'football fan' and 'spectator' already exist to describe watchers of football whose traditional, more active, forms of fandom may be described as 'hooliganism' by a strict interpretation of the term. Added to these, we already have terms given to us by the criminal law to describe actions typically associated with football hooligans, e.g. 'violent disorder', 'threatening behaviour', committing criminal damage and running on the pitch.

However, 'football hooliganism' *transcends* all the boundaries set up by these pre-existing terms. It is this indiscriminate grouping together of often unconnected acts and actors under one uncertain, blanket term which makes 'football hooliganism' a particularly contrived label. It becomes an unnatural 'construction' because the label, although it does not designate a criminal offence, has created a specific picture in the minds of people receiving the metaphoric images. Perhaps it has even led to the creation of a sub-culture of football hooliganism, recognised by both those involved (who feel that they belong to it), and those who try to distance themselves from it, the 'either/or' distinction between the 'hooligan' and the 'normal fan'

referred to above. But the creation, to whatever extent it may lead, is based on unclear and undefined parameters and, as we will see later, may result in serious consequences of stigmatisation which affect all those grouped together under the term.

Football hooliganism, as a label and a concept, is not a natural phenomenon. By 'natural', I refer to a variety of interlinked concepts. Something is 'natural' whose existence for us is unforced and uncontrived. It has existence *in itself* and does not depend for its existence on acts of recognition by human subjects. A natural construction is something which has come about as an almost inevitable, or at least probable, consequence of the evolution of pre-existing, primary elements. It does not have to continually relate to itself consciously, nor does it have to establish its identity by choosing a certain life for itself. It exists regardless of whether it has been recognised and classified externally by the interpretation of human beings. In other words, the 'natural' is discovered *in* and *through* experience, rather than being *constructed by it*. Even if we remove the 'layers' of social meaning imposed upon a 'natural object' *something still remains*. The opposite, however, is true of purely *cultural* objects. If we remove the layers of meaning surrounding the 'object' of 'football hooliganism', we will not be left with a residue that is recognisable as the singular, threatening phenomenon which it has been socially constructed as.

The Role of Metaphor: Football hooliganism as the English Disease

Given that 'football hooliganism' exists first and foremost as a social (and not specifically legal) construct, the next question to ask is, 'how is it constructed?' One important contribution to this process is the particular metaphorical interpretation of the phenomenon. Comment on football hooliganism has often involved use of the disease *metaphor* to describe the phenomenon⁴ and during the 1980s, the phenomenon became known throughout Europe as The English Disease, or The English Sickness.⁵ This analogy between the phenomenon (as it has been constructed) and a clinical disease is particularly significant. The metaphor illustrates the way in which the football-related violence has been constructed by (or for) society. The apparent similarities between what has been constructed as 'football hooliganism' and a disease are clear. Firstly, like disease, football hooliganism is regarded as undesirable for society and the individual, its consequences leading to economic 'waste' and physical injury. Secondly, football hooliganism has been described as 'contagious', for example in the judgement of Justice Waterhouse at the High Court in 1992:

Football hooliganism is not akin to a random outbreak of violence by a gang of bullies on a Saturday night in a public house or other public place. If the evidence for the prosecution in the case is accepted, it is more like a contagious disease, inflamed by the excitement of violence and erupting with depressing and deliberate regularity. (R v Manchester Crown Court QBD 6/4/92)

According to Waterhouse, whilst gang violence on a Saturday night can also be described as an '*outbreak*', it does not have the same specific characteristics of football-related violence. The active role of football hooliganism is emphasised in his judgement. It is likened to a progressive disease, which although continually, and often quietly present in a dormant form within the body, frequently reveals itself in the '*eruption*' of sores and general '*inflammation*' of the body as it continues to take over the unfortunate victim. Only with football hooliganism, the eruptions are of violence and the 'body' or 'victim' is the general public which, like the carrier of a disease, is considered to be an innocent victim. Like the ancient belief that diseases were inherently evil and often sent as a punishment from God, football hooliganism's '*malignant*' form is also emphasised, not only its contagious characteristic - its threat of '*spreading*' throughout society, but also in its apparent ill will and harmful intent.⁶

According to this view, hooliganism '*spread*' like a plague from England (its apparent place of origin) until the whole of European football was '*infected*'. Those on the continent looking for something to blame for the affliction automatically turned to the nation from where the disease was spread, hence its labelling as '*the English Disease*'. Incidents of football hooliganism are frequently described as '*outbreaks*', the initial virus being the same, but bursting from obscurity time and time again, occasionally in a new, usually more '*dangerous*' mutation, creating a new strain of the same disease.

What is also significant is the type of disease which has been associated with football hooliganism. The seriousness which has been attached to the phenomenon by commentators on football, and especially by politicians, means that the characteristics possessed by *any* contagious disease are not enough to satisfy the imagery which is being created. A comparison with the common cold, or childhood mumps does not seem to be '*sufficient*' to demonstrate the threat posed to society by football hooliganism. When one strives to find what type of disease is being visualised by the metaphor, we find one which still kills thousands a year, an outright '*cure*' still beyond the reach of medical researchers. Colin Moynihan, then Minister for Sport, commented in 1988 that football hooliganism was, '*...a cancer in an otherwise healthy body*' (Armstrong and Hobbs, 1994).

It is fortunate that the cancer comparison is a metaphor, rather than a '*scientific*' comparison of phenomena. According to traditional medical research, cancer is not a contagious disease, and would not serve to demonstrate how the phenomenon could '*spread*' from England to the Continent. However, the metaphor here does provoke the image of the cancerous cell, or part, as a singular corruption in a body which is otherwise healthy. The body here is society, and we can see that the characterisation of football hooliganism as a disease also has implications for the ideological representation of the rest of society. According to Moynihan, the '*body*' of society has only one serious disorder: 'Football hooliganism. The paradox

here lies in the fact that Thatcher's 'law and order' drive of criminal legislation identified football-related crime as only a minor aspect of wider public disorder.⁷ A logical following of the metaphor of football-related disorder as a disease would see the 'body' of society stricken by numerous crippling illnesses. Fortunately, the use of metaphors does not require, or encourage, reflection or self-criticism, and does not normally lead to critical explication of what is being said. In fact, the use of an established metaphor usually does the opposite. For those for whom the metaphor is intended, it should not be questioned whether the body is otherwise healthy, whether cancer is contagious, or whether the metaphors, when analysed, contradict themselves.

In this way, the disease metaphor has in fact replaced the 'need' for a definition. Metaphors are more powerful than definitions, by-passing the 'rationality' of the individual and instead conjuring *images* in the subconscious. Metaphors provide us with a linguistic method by which we, '*...bring together and fuse into unity diverse thoughts, and thereby re-form our perceptions of the world,*' comparable to the workings of a symbol such as a national flag (Kittay, 1991, p.6). The images provide us with an irreducible meaning, reproduced without reflectivity, whereas unsatisfactory definitions might lead to serious critical investigation. With the 'image' of football hooliganism in the mind of the public, it is unnecessary to ask for a definition. We *know* what football hooliganism is, because we have the ability to reactivate a certain, already formed, picture in our minds of it. Its meaning is implicit, 'common knowledge', something which exists without question. As Turbayne writes,

A good metaphor is a beguiling thing. Once it is understood and accepted, one sees the thing illustrated through new spectacles that, when worn for a while, are hard to discard. (1970, p.103).

According to Turbayne, those who are 'victims' of the metaphor then confuse the image of the situation as given by the metaphor with the 'actual' situation. In effect, the victim of metaphor, '*has mistaken the mask for the face*' (1970, p.27).

The disease metaphor is one way by which football-related disorder of all kinds has been grouped together under one heading and constructed as a single phenomenon, a gestalt entity. By describing football hooliganism as a 'contagious disease' in comparison to other types of violence which (although appearing, *prima facie*, to have similar foundations,⁸ and to be expressed in similar ways)⁹ are not comparable to a disease, *firm lines of demarcation are being drawn across the sphere of public disorder*. Moreover, by this process, football-related violence is *excluded* from the more general category. According to this argument, the 'football hooligan' is a specific type of person, with *his* own motives for violence which are '*not akin*' to *his* peers who are involved in 'normal' gang violence or politically motivated protest. Differences in motives between different types of people involved in football-related disorder are discounted as merely a slightly different strain of the same disease.

Furthermore, the analogy between football-related disorder and a disease can be used to do more than 'merely' instil an unquestionable image, or representation, in the public's mind. There are two separate (albeit interacting) issues at stake here. Firstly, is the issue of *how* 'football hooliganism' is being created as a singular, threatening phenomenon. As we have already seen, the use of the disease metaphor, in rhetoric by politicians, judges and those involved in the sport itself has played a great part in 'installing' the idea of 'football hooliganism' as a phenomenon not akin to any other type of disorder, and 'football hooligans' as a breed apart from other criminals and anarchists, their behaviour threatening the very fabric of our society.

An important point is that whilst the metaphor claims to simply *describe* the inherent qualities of football hooliganism (emphasising it as 'singular' and 'threatening'), it has in fact *constructed* the phenomenon as such. The interpretation of football hooliganism according to the metaphor can (for those affected by it) in effect change the very 'facts' surrounding the 'phenomenon' in the same way in which established metaphors giving animals human characteristics lead to those affected by the metaphors believing that, for example, the fox *is* cunning (Turbayne, 1970, p.22). Similarly, for those affected by the disease metaphor of football-related violence, football hooliganism is a singular entity, with the characteristics of disease which threaten society itself. In doing this, the metaphor supports and re-inforces the common-sense labelling of 'football hooliganism' at the implicit level below express explication.

However, for us, the introduction of this disease metaphor is also a useful tool in explaining why football hooliganism is not a 'natural' construction. In a comparison with a 'real', biological disease (cancer for instance), we can see that football hooliganism is purely a forced construction. All definitions are, in one sense, artificial, whether or not the 'thing' being defined is 'natural' or 'unnatural', but the relationship between the definition and what is being defined is what separates football hooliganism from a specific disease such as cancer. As we have seen, football hooliganism exists only (for us as a socially meaningful phenomena) through its identification and recognition as football hooliganism. If such identification and labelling does not exist, then the specific action is not football hooliganism.

This is not true of cancer, however. The existence and operation of cancer as a biological disease is not dependent upon its *recognition as cancer* and the identification of cancer is not wholly subjective. A different disease may be *mis-diagnosed* as cancer, but this does not mean that the new disease is cancer. Such a mis-diagnosis is not possible around the boundaries of football hooliganism, as much of the definition of football hooliganism relies heavily upon a subjective element. Furthermore, cancer was a distinct entity, causing specific physical damage, before the label to describe it as such was introduced, but this is not true of football hooliganism. As such, the existence of a word, in this case, 'cancer' (and here we are considering the existence of the term, not the build-up of the word itself) to describe the existing

disease was, in a developed society, inevitable. The difference between cancer and football hooliganism lies in the fact that football hooliganism itself *is not a distinct entity*. The term has been invented to describe a wide variety of actions which fit into the category 'football hooliganism' dependent on the interpretation of the user of the word, and the context in which 'the action' took place. The term, 'football hooliganism' is therefore more than just 'unnatural'. The forcing of such a blanket term upon what is in effect a wide variety of acts and actors gives us a false impression that we are looking at a specific, singular and distinct phenomenon whose pathological character is comparable in this respect to something such as cancer.

From Theory to Practice:

The legal implications of the construction of 'football hooliganism'

In addition to these theoretical problematics concerning the role of the disease metaphor in the social construction of football hooliganism, the use of the analogy has serious practical implications for those involved within the 'phenomenon'. Especially problematic is the consequence of the metaphor's role within the criminal justice system. What is being brought about at the level of social reaction as a result of its use?

It is first necessary to note exactly who is 'imposing' the metaphor, and upon whom. The metaphor is one imposed by those who possess power in society: politicians, judges, those co-ordinating social control action against the 'football hooligans' and the media. The 'victims' of the metaphor are those influenced by it (Turbayne, 1970, p.27), the rest of society (although many judges, media and police officers are 'victims', as well as 'secondary' imposers), and it is in the minds of these 'victims', where the *creativity* of the metaphor takes place (Kittay, 1991, p.119). The importance of the metaphor lies in the way in which it is *used* by those in power for their own ends, to construct 'reality', or 'truth' for us, and to justify action taken on the basis of this 'truth'.

...truth is always relative to a conceptual system that is defined in a large part by metaphor. Most of our metaphors have evolved in our culture over a long period, but many are imposed upon us by people in power - political leaders, religious leaders, business leaders, advertisers, the media, etc. In a culture where the myth of objectivism is very much alive, and truth is always absolute truth, the people who get to impose their metaphors on the culture get to define what we consider to be true - absolutely and objectively true. (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p.159)

In the case of football hooliganism, the disease metaphor's 'truth' helps the construction of the common-sense labelling of the 'phenomenon', and also re-enforces the power relationships between those in positions of authority and the rest of society. Political leaders and those with social control 'interests' (e.g. police, club stewards, the media) are enabled, in part by the metaphor, to construct the 'truth' of the mat-

ter for us. Football hooliganism becomes a singular, threatening *problem* requiring certain *solutions*. In addition, the solutions tend to be imposed by those who are also initially imposing the metaphor, preventing an opportunity for analysis and reflectivity at this level of searching for a 'solution'.

This 'dual power' increases the need to be reflective about the ways in which metaphors set social 'problems' such as football hooliganism within particular 'frames' (Schon, 1993, p.150),¹⁰ if we are truly to understand the construction of a social phenomenon and be able to evaluate the response to this phenomenon.¹¹ For the construction of social phenomena through metaphor (and other methods) in turn effects how we respond to them. As regards phenomena constructed as social 'problems', the 'frame' in which they have been set may directly effect the nature of 'problem-solving solutions'. Schon explains,

The ways in which we set social problems determine both the kinds of purposes and values we seek to realise, and the directions in which we seek the solutions. Contrary to the problem solving perspective, problems are not given, nor are they reducible to arbitrary choices which lie beyond inquiry. We set social problems through the stories we tell - stories whose problem-setting potency derives at least in some cases from their generative metaphors. (1993, p.150)

The reliance upon a metaphor to construct a social problem is not always problematic, with metaphors often needed to interpret and elucidate on new 'situations' (Mooij, 1976, p.14), '*...casting abstract concepts in terms of the apprehendable...*' (Glucksberg and Keysar, 1993, p.420). However, problems over the 'appropriateness' of social policies can arise when the metaphor may give a picture of the 'phenomenon' which does not truthfully reflect the situation. The metaphor may give a picture of the phenomenon in which certain aspects are hidden or over-emphasised, leading to a '*cognitive myopia*' on behalf of the 'victims' of the metaphor (Ortony, 1993, p5). The disease metaphor applied to football-related violence, for example, emphasises aspects of the phenomenon such as its threatening, contagious and damaging characteristics. This kind of short-sightedness may be particularly concerning where the metaphors are used by those in power to explain, and justify action against, particular social phenomena. As Lackoff and Johnson point out,

...in the area of politics and economics, metaphors matter more because they constrain our lives. A metaphor in a political or economic system, by virtue of what it hides, can lead to human degradation. (1980, p.236)

In the case of football-related violence, the *re-activation* of the analogy with a disease can be used to justify 'tough action' to be taken against the football hooligans; new legislation from politicians, heavy sentences from judges,¹² oppressive tactics by police¹³ and condemnation from the media.¹⁴ A serious disease is seen as a 'bad thing', something which has to be stopped, and a cure for the disease is a top priority

if the body (in the case of football hooliganism, the state) is to be protected. The overcoming of the disease is paramount, and often requires sacrifices. Sometimes the leg of the sufferer must be amputated to protect the rest of the body from a spread of the infection. The question to be asked is, what is being 'amputated' from society to try and protect it from the phenomenon of football hooliganism?

Despite Margaret Thatcher's widely reported dislike of the sport as a whole (Butler, 1991, p.238),¹⁵ even the apparent 'peak' of football-related violence did not lead to an end to the national sport, or the practice of spectators (or even visiting spectators) attending live matches. The sport itself was not sacrificed for the sake of society. However, individuals convicted of football-related crime following the disorderly 1984/5 season were 'amputated' from society for a long amount of time.

The Cambridge United 'hooligan General' received a five year sentence for football-related disorder,¹⁶ and the apparent leaders of Chelsea's hooligan firm received ten year sentences for conspiracy to cause violent disorder. The severe sentences handed down to these, and other football 'hooligans' were to relate not just their own crimes, but the 'shame' they had brought on society. Deterrent sentences to try and stop the 'spread' of the disease were by now *expected* for cases at the higher courts,¹⁷ with prevention of further infection overriding the desire for individual justice.

Aside from the courts' responses to the more serious football-crime perpetrators, sacrifice in the course of finding the all-important cure continued on a more general scale, with 'tough' action by the police and the state against the hooligans considered necessary and, as a result, acceptable, even when these actions cause infringements on the civil liberties of fans. Fans travelling to football matches are subject to draconian police powers (some based on criminal legislation, others as a result of local police policy or practice) which prevent them consuming or carrying alcohol on transport, and which may force supporters to travel a particular route and which prevent them stopping, or passing through certain public areas. Once inside the ground, many spectators are quite literally 'caged in', with tall, often spiked fences which curtail their movement around the ground and obstruct their view.

In addition to these crowd control measures which can be witnessed every week, covert police tactics which have been condemned as methods of controlling other types of social deviance are seen as acceptable as part of the fight against football hooliganism (Pratt and Salter, 1984, p.201). No justification for spying on fans and the blacklisting and keeping of secret files on those *suspected* of involvement in football disorders is needed because argument and justification is replaced by the spurious 'justification' of arguments by analogy or association of cultural images. In statistical terms, drink driving may account for far more injuries and deaths a year than football-related disorder, but neither statistics nor logical argument are used to explain why covert police tactics are 'openly' used to infiltrate and spy on football fans, and yet were condemned in relation to drink driving.¹⁸ It is the *symbolic*

threat of football hooliganism, 'captured' in metaphoric images, which provides the additional justification needed for such tactics.

Conclusion: The need for a clear basis for criminal-legal sanctions

As we have seen, although the criminal legal system does not expound a singular definition of 'football hooliganism', in terms of both legislation and policing the criminal law does respond to the various 'guises' of the constructed phenomenon as if such a definition exists. This response is based upon the implicit, often metaphorically created, meanings attached to the 'phenomenon', casting it in terms of its singularity and threatening characteristic. Instead of a demarcated definition provided in statute or case law, we see the judges, legislators and police acting upon this 'common-sense' knowledge, a knowledge contained in metaphoric images of disease which protect our 'understanding' from reflective scrutiny. The danger here lies when this 'knowledge' provides the footing for criminal-legal sanctions as it has in the case of the response to football-related disorder by statute, court decisions and police practice. Such sanctions show little respect for the civil liberties of the majority of football fans, for whom support only comes when a vocal minority of middle-aged, middle-class supporters are also caught up in such draconian crowd control measures. Whilst our law claims to adhere to general liberal principles such as certainty, equality and justice, we need to recognise the *inappropriateness* of a legal response to football-related disorder based upon such an ambiguous and reactionary understanding of the phenomenon.

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Notes

- 1 The Times (21/3/97) following seemingly innocent Manchester United fans being fired upon by Portuguese police following their team's match in Oporto.
- 2 e.g. The Guardian, The Times, The Daily Mirror 13/10/97
- 3 It would appear that most of the 'super hooligans' (see J.Kerr: 'Understanding Soccer Hooliganism' 1994 Open University Press) are in their late 20s and 30s. The presence of middle-aged hooligans (mainly dockers) was a distinctive feature of crowd disorder at Millwall in the 1950s and 60s.
- 4 N.Fairclough points out that the metaphorical representation of other social problems in terms of disease is 'extremely common' ('Language and Power', Longman 1995, p120)
- 5 According to Lord Justice Russel (*R v Rogers-Hinks and Others* 11 Cr App R (S) 234 at p237)
- 6 Although it is noticeable that the very understanding of a disease as an malignant entity is incorporating a metaphor for disease itself!
- 7 The Public Order Act 1986, for example, was not intended to be used against those involved in football-related violence. Government response in the 1980s was concerned more with public disorder in the inner cities (e.g. the 1981 riots) and on the picket lines
- 8 Be they based on 'youth culture', 'aggressive masculinity', 'social depravation' or alcohol consumption
- 9 e.g. through threatening and aggressive behaviour
- 10 Schon describes this reflexivity as 'frame awareness'
- 11 Paul Ricour points to the inadequacy of, 'an interpretation [of metaphor] that gives in to ontological naivete in the evaluation of metaphorical truth because it ignores the implicit 'is not'' (1986)
- 12 The use of metaphors by judges has not, however, been limited to their response to football-related disorder, and metaphors have been frequently used by judges to justify decisions (e.g. the 'Neighbour Principle': *Donaghue v Stevenson* [1932] A.C. 562 and the idea of 'Opening the Floodgates': *McLoughlin v O'Brian* [1983] 1 A.C. 410)
- 13 e.g. Covert observation and fans and undercover police operations such as 'Operation Own-Goal' in 1988.

- 14 The labelling of incidents of football-related disorder in terms of: 'Shame', (Daily Mirror 8/3/93) 'Shameful', (Daily Mirror 16/5/96) or 'Night of Shame' (Blackpool Evening Gazette 14/12/97, Lancashire Evening Post 14/12/97), 'Soccer's Latest Shame' (The Guardian 17/2/95) etc...
- 15 'She gave the impression that she believed it would be no great loss to mankind if the professional game was stopped altogether' writes Butler of Thatcher's response to the riot at Heysel in 1985
- 16 *R v Muranyi* 8 Cr App R (S) 176, 1986
- 17 *R v Wood* 6 Cr App R (S) 2, *R v Bruce* 65 Cr App Rep 148, *R v Motley* 66 Cr App Rep 274
- 18 G. Armstrong and D. Hobbs point out that while covert 'big brother/police state' police operations had been condemned in relation to drink driving (which kills 800 a year in Britain), it tended not to be questioned as regards football hooliganism (which even in its apparent 'peak' in the late 70s and early 80s was leading to less than 2 murders a year). (1994, p226 and 196

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THE FRANKFURT 'ROCKMOBIL':

A new insight into the significance of music-making for young people

DR ANDY BENNETT

The cultural relationship between popular music and youth has been a subject of academic interest for many years. Interestingly, however, the issue of 'music-making' among young people has only recently been acknowledged by academic writers and researchers. Moreover, even as work into this area continues, there is a sense in which many of the richer benefits of music-making activities for young people are being ignored, writers and researchers tending to restrict themselves to issues of composition and performance and the relationship of such 'local' instances of 'music-making' to the global music industry. In this article, it is my intention to do two things. In the first instance, I wish to provide the reader with some background information regarding the Frankfurt Rockmobil, a highly innovative music-making project which caters primarily for young people living in areas targeted by the local authority as 'high risk' due to social problems such drug abuse, juvenile crime and racial exclusion. Secondly, I want to discuss some of the new insights which the work of the Rockmobil project provides into the value of music-making activities for young people. This will be done in two stages. Initially, I will consider the role of the Rockmobil as a resource for the personal and social development of those young people who make use of the project's facilities. Subsequently, with reference to practical examples, I will examine the Rockmobil's highly effective work with female users (Mädchen and Frauenarbeit) and ethnic minority groups and the success of the project in helping to promote non-sexist and non-racist attitudes among young people. The article is based in part upon my own experience of working with the Frankfurt Rockmobil project over a two and a half year period between 1990 and 1993.

The Frankfurt Rockmobil

As its name suggests, the Frankfurt Rockmobil, also known as the 'Rollende Musikschule' ('rolling music school') is based in the city of Frankfurt am Main, Germany. However, the project's work is not unique to the city, the Frankfurt Rockmobil forming part of a network which exists throughout the county of Hessen, of which Frankfurt is the principle city. The first Rockmobil project was established in the city of Kassel in 1986, the Frankfurt project following three years later. The head and founder of the Frankfurt Rockmobil, Thomas Müller is both a qualified social worker and an experienced musician, having played drums and percussion in a number of local groups over a period of 15 years. The Rockmobil project is financed by the Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft (LAG) Hessen e.V. (LAG: 1993). Founded in 1974, the LAG aims to improve the quality of life in what are termed 'Soziale Brennpunkte' - areas targeted as 'high risk' due to the incidence of

crime, delinquency, racial exclusion and inter-racial violence (Hill: 1994). This is achieved via the initiation and funding of projects designed to improve both the physical appearance of such areas and the resources and amenities available to residents.

Using local youth clubs as a base, the Rockmobil travels out to particular areas of a city and/or region on a once weekly basis. In the early stages of a new project, the Rockmobil will provide all the necessary musical instruments while the youth club is expected to provide a rehearsal space (usually a designated room which the club's staff and users will have soundproofed and decorated with music posters, stickers, original artwork and so on). If the project proves to be a success, then the youth centre will be expected, over a period of time, to buy its own musical instruments. New projects are usually initiated by youth workers, who, having a knowledge of club users' interests, may feel that there is a demand for the facilities offered by the Rockmobil. There then follows a short period of liaison and consultation between the youth workers, club users and members of the Rockmobil staff in order to assess more fully the demand for music-making workshops within the youth club. If, after this period of liaison has been completed, there is felt to be sufficient demand, Rockmobil staff will begin working in the club, usually for a trial period of six weeks in the first instance.

Throughout the lifetime of a Rockmobil band project, typically two to three years, heavy emphasis is laid on the importance of teamwork. From the early stages of a band's music-making career, the members of the band are continually informed by the 'Teamer' assigned to work with them that success or failure in everything - from successfully playing the first song, to performing the first concert, to recording the first cassette or CD - is down to the combined effort of all the individuals involved in the band. The Rockmobil organises two to three 'showcase' concerts a year at which bands involved with the project are encouraged to perform. Additionally, bands are invited to spend weekends at the Rockmobil recording studio, a specially converted bungalow in Giefen, another Hessen city which is approximately 30 miles north of Frankfurt. Here the bands gain experience of recording their music in preparation for a more strenuous recording session at a professional studio, the results of which are put onto a compilation CD and given free of charge to band members, family and friends.

As well as employing a small number of permanent staff, each Rockmobil project offers paid, practical placements, or part-time work, to students studying social work at the local Fachhochschule (polytechnic).¹ While ostensibly a music-making project, the Rockmobil effectively combines musical tuition with 'Jugendarbeit'. Literally translated, Jugendarbeit means 'youthwork', however, this is misleading as, unlike the British definition of youthwork, Jugendarbeit denotes an aspect of German social work provision focussing exclusively on the needs of young people. German Jugendarbeiter ('youthworkers') are actually qualified social workers. In

contrast to Britain, where social work training programmes are essentially generic in form and content, German social work students are offered a wide range of options allowing them to specialise in the specific area of social work which they hope to pursue once qualified. Among the many options or 'modules' offered on German social work training programmes are a number focussing on arts related activities - such as music, drama, video production, film-making and animation. Thus, for those social work students who possess skills in one or more of the creative arts and wish to learn how to utilise such skills in their professional careers, there are ample opportunities to do this within the German social work education system. It is this flexibility within the German system which provided the impetus for the Rockmobil project. Indeed, Tom Müller, the leader to the Frankfurt Rockmobil project, studied both music therapy and musical improvisation during his social work training course at the Frankfurter Fachhochschule.

Working with the Rockmobil

Like many other Rockmobil 'Teamers', my own introduction to the project took the form of a practical placement which I undertook while studying as an exchange student at the Frankfurt Fachhochschule during the Winter semester 1990-91. The exchange programme was a 'European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students' (Erasmus) funded initiative established between the Frankfurt Fachhochschule and Hull University where I was studying for an MA in Social Work.² Shortly before my placement with the Rockmobil was due to end, I was asked by Tom Müller if I would like to work on a more regular basis with the project. Thus, having completed my studies at Hull University in the summer of 1991, I subsequently returned to Frankfurt. For the next two years, I led regular weekly music workshops at a number of youth clubs around the city as well as helping to facilitate several five day 'block workshops' in local schools. In addition to drawing upon rock and pop standards, such as 'Stand By Me' and 'Knocking On Heaven's Door', my work with the Rockmobil involved helping young bands to write and record original material. I also became involved in some highly interesting and challenging attempts to fuse aspects of traditional Turkish and Moroccan music with Afro-American hip hop. I will return to this aspect of my work with the Rockmobil in the final part of the article. Firstly, however, I want to offer a more detailed account of how the pedagogic principles underlying the Rockmobil's work open up new avenues for our understanding of the value of music-making people.

Music-making and young people

Until quite recently studies of youth and popular music were concerned primarily with the role of youth as music consumers (see, for example, Frith: 1983 and Chambers: 1985). Through the consumption of music and its attendant forms of visual style, it has generally been argued, young people are able to construct alternative forms of social identity, thus 'moving beyond the colourless walls of routine into the bright

environs of an imaginary state' (Chambers: 1985, p.17). More recently, however, a number of researchers have begun to consider the issue of music-making among young people and the ways in which this too gives rise to new forms of collective social identity. For the most part such work uses as its touchstone the existence of what Cohen (1991) refers to as a 'rock culture'. According to Cohen, one of the centrally defining characteristics of the 'rock culture' is the 'collective creativity' which develops between the members of a pop or rock band as they strive to produce a distinctive group sound (pp. 21-46). At the same time, however, it is also commonly acknowledged by researchers in this field that the 'rock culture' does not simply encompass the musical aspirations of a particular group or groups. Rather, it suggests a particular form of sensibility or way of being in the world. Those involved in music-making, it is argued, construct their own cultural territory, one which is removed from that occupied by 'significant' others, most typically their parents, siblings and non-music-making peers. Thus, for example, in a recent study of three young rock groups in Sweden, Fornäs, Lindberg and Sernhede (1995), suggest that playing in a band serves as an important form of escapism from the more mundane aspects of everyday life. Fornäs et al. argue that, through their musical activities, young bands are able to mark themselves off from both the parent culture and the school culture and the kinds of demands which the latter impose upon young people. Playing in a group, it is suggested, gives young people a chance to distance themselves from those aspects of life which they least like and to envisage a different kind of life for themselves, one which is based not upon schoolwork and subsequently a job or career, but rather upon musical creativity and artistic expression (p.203). Similarly, H. Stith Bennett's (1980) US study of local bands and the rehearsal process revealed a strong feeling among certain of the young musicians who took part in the study that complete dedication to the music was the thing which ultimately separated out the 'musicians' from the 'non-musicians', i.e. those who were prepared to compromise their time spent with a band because of other commitments.

While the current body of work dealing with young people and music-making clearly adds an important dimension to our understanding of the relationship between music and youth, its reliance upon the notion of a 'rock culture' is also severely limiting. Music-making cannot and, more importantly, should not be regarded simply as a form of cultural capital through which certain groups of young people are able to mark themselves off from their parents, family and peer group. Nor is music-making uniformly considered by young people as a long-term commitment, as a way to achieve fame and popularity. For many young people, music-making is regarded most importantly as a source of fun. Similarly, there is a clear sense in which the experience of music-making can also equip young people with a range of skills which are of use across a broad range of situations and circumstances encountered in everyday life. In this respect, I would argue, projects such as the Rockmobil throw new light on the significance of music-making for young people. Obviously, at one level the nature of the Rockmobil's work is such that the hopes

and expectations of those young people who become involved with the project are, in any case, different from young bands who have invested long hours of practice both in order to master their individual instruments and to create a distinctive group sound. A central principle of the Rockmobil is that no-one should be excluded from the project's workshops and other music-making activities. Any young person who has an interest in music, irrespective of whether or not they have ability on a musical instrument, is encouraged to become involved with the Rockmobil. Such a policy automatically removes the barriers of expertise and exclusivity which often serve to mark off those involved in music-making from their non-music-making peers.

There are, however, other noticeable differences between the function of music in the context of a Rockmobil rehearsal session and the types of 'local' music-making scenarios described in the work of Cohen et al.. In a recent pedagogically grounded study of youth-based music projects, German youth researchers Hering, Hill and Pleiner suggest that the experience of making-music together results in 'a form of "positive feedback" ...as (the young people) learn to co-ordinate their individual performances into an overall group performance and sound. The individual band members have to learn to work together, to give their best in group performances and learn how to resolve or "cover up" mistakes which occur during the course of a live performance' (1993, p.53). Hering et al. further argue that, rather than becoming an end in itself, the experience of collective music-making can have a series of beneficial effects upon the overall personal and social and development of young people. A similar view is expressed by Kratz (1994) who argues that the availability of 'hands-on' music-making experiences to young people opens up new avenues for personal expression and for communication with peers (p.127).

Such aspects of the music-making process became obvious to me during the time I spent working with the Rockmobil. A number of the young people who, on first coming to Rockmobil sessions, exhibited aggressive behaviour and/or had a very negative self-image of themselves, underwent a considerable transformation during the time they were involved with the project. Clearly, such a transformation cannot be attributed solely, or even perhaps most importantly, to the Rockmobil. Many of the young people I worked with were receiving counselling for particular problems - most typically in relation to drug use, racial prejudice or the experience of living in a broken home. Similarly, many of the Rockmobil users were adolescents going through, what is in any case, a very difficult stage in life. Nevertheless, having worked with these young people on a regular basis over a two year period, I would suggest that their involvement with the project did have some form of positive effect both on their self-image and on their interactions with others.

A good case in point here is Paul, who played drums for one of the groups I worked with in Jugendhaus Eckenheim, Eckenheim being a district in the northeast of Frankfurt with a high percentage of foreign immigrants. Paul was the youngest

son of a Yugoslavian 'Gastarbeiter' family. When he first became involved with the Rockmobil, he was extremely self-conscious of his weight and also of his appearance which, despite his age of eighteen, gave the impression that he was much younger. Early rehearsal sessions were marred by fights as the other members of the band teased and ridiculed Paul. However, as the membership of the band kept changing, Paul soon found himself in the position of having to teach the group's songs to new members. Similarly, when the band performed live, other members would rely upon Paul's knowledge of the group's material to guide them through the performance. Thus, through both his drumming ability and his acquired role of mentor to the group, Paul achieved a level of respect from his peers which was absent during his early attendance at rehearsal sessions.

Towards the end of my time with the Rockmobil project, it became clear that the individual members of the Eckenheim group were beginning to lose interest in music-making as they found other leisure pursuits. I left Frankfurt in the Autumn of 1993 but I returned to the city a year later to carry out some fieldwork on the Frankfurt hip hop scene. I learned during this visit that Paul now worked on a part-time basis in the youth club at Eckenheim. He had been asked if he wanted to try and start a new group but had decided against it, on the grounds that he was getting 'too old' and that it was in any case 'a lot of work'. However, Paul's time spent playing with the group had given him a level of personal confidence which he wholly lacked when he first began coming to the Rockmobil sessions. I was also informed by social workers at the youth club that Paul now took charge of the club's shop and TV/Pool room on several evenings a week and also 'helped out' with the Rockmobil by giving occasional drumming lessons to other younger club members.

Thus far, I have begun to consider how the work of projects such as the Frankfurt Rockmobil allows us a new insight into the forms of significance which music-making can assume for young people. As I have illustrated, the Rockmobil's 'open door' policy is designed to attract young people who, under normal circumstances, would be denied the opportunity to become involved in music-making. Moreover, rather than promoting music-making as an end in itself, the Rockmobil's emphasis on 'Gruppenarbeit' (groupwork) in the rehearsal room situation provides a forum for debate and discussion not merely about music but about a whole range of issues involved in successful teamwork - issues such as self-control, the ability to communicate one's point of view clearly and succinctly and, most importantly, the ability to work for the good of the team as a whole. Clearly then, the Rockmobil is not simply a 'music-making' project. Rather, it endeavours to use the medium of music-making as a way of helping young people to gain new personal and social skills and to construct new-self images. There are, however, a number of other ways in which the ethical and practical agendas inscribed within the Rockmobil's work with young people also raises it well beyond the remit of more orthodox

music-training initiatives. I am referring here to the Rockmobil's highly constructive work with female users and with young people from Frankfurt's many ethnic minority groups.

Mädchen and Frauenrockbands

The problems encountered by women and girls wishing to become involved in music-making are well documented in the existing literature. Thus, for example, in her study *Rock Culture in Liverpool* (1991) Cohen draws attention to the absence of women on the local Liverpool music scene, suggesting that this is due largely to the amount of resistance, not only on the part of male musicians but men in general, against women becoming involved in music-making. There is, suggests Cohen, a dominant feeling among men that women should be at home doing housework looking after the children. Cohen then goes on to relate the experiences of a female Community Arts apprentice who attempted to establish a music-making workshop for girls in a community centre in St. Helens. According to Cohen, the Apprentice

...found that the music workshops she was involved with were all male. Girls from the local community told her that they didn't participate in the workshops because they were criticized and called 'slags' for wanting to do something that was mainly a boy's activity and received verbal and physical abuse from the boys. She consequently set up an 'all-girls' night at the community centre, but the boys objected, threw bricks through the windows, waited for the girls outside and threatened them with violence (p.204).

Another female researcher, Bayton (1988), similarly notes in her study of several all-female pop and rock groups in Britain the problems experienced by these groups. Such problems, argues Bayton, stem from the basic lack of music-making opportunities available to women in this country. As Bayton goes on to explain, the women musicians who took part in her study complained that women groups, in addition to relying upon a much smaller 'pool' of musicians than their male counterparts, frequently had to start from scratch. Women musicians, Bayton points out, simply do not have the opportunity to serve out a musical apprenticeship through playing in a series of 'garage bands' in the way that male musicians do. According to Bayton: 'This goes back to the fact that young girls do not see rock musician as a role to which they can aspire' (p.239). Bayton's argument is developed by Gottlieb and Wald who contend that even those female artists/groups who have achieved success in the world of popular music must continually contend with the male-dominated nature of this world. Thus, argue Gottlieb and Wald:

Women performers go through complicated contortions as they both appropriate and repudiate a traditionally masculine rock performance position which is itself premised on the repression of femininity, while they

simultaneously contend with a feminine performance position defined primarily as the erotic object-to-be-looked-at (1994, p.260).

Having had first-hand experience of the male-dominated nature of the English music scene, particularly in northern England where I grew up, attended university and played with a number of bands, I was initially surprised to find when I first began working with the Rockmobil how many girls and women were making use of the project's facilities. Moreover, the presence of girls and women met with no resistance whatsoever from male project users, even when many of them decided that they wanted to form all-female groups. Indeed, such was the demand to play in all-female groups, that the Rockmobil had decided to hire in female 'Teamers' to take charge of the growing number of 'Frauen' and 'Mädchenbands' (all-woman/girl bands). This said, however, working with Frauen and Mädchenbands was not solely the responsibility of female Teamers and during my time with the Rockmobil I worked on a regular basis with both an all-female group as well as several mixed groups.

It is clear from the respective accounts of Cohen and Bayton that one of the main problems facing women who wish to become involved in music-making is one of access. Indeed, my own experience of working as a pub and club musician support this view. Thus, women were generally discouraged by male musicians who saw them as either lacking the basic skills needed to master an instrument and play with a band or a threat to the unity of the group on the grounds that they may form a relationship with a male band member thus promoting jealousy and/or resentment on the part of other members. If women were allowed to join groups at all, then it was generally as singers, a role to which they were considered to be well suited in view of the fact that they had little control over the musical direction of a band and were performing a functional role as something for the audience to look at. This observation is supported by Frith and McRobbie who have suggested that: 'The subordination of women in rock is little different from their subordination in other occupations; as unskilled rock workers women are a source of cheap labor, a pool of talent from which the successes are chosen more for their appearance than for their musical talents' (1978, pp. 377-378).

Certainly, such a situation is by no means unique to Britain. Fokken (1993) in a paper detailing her own experiences of working with an all-girl group in Kassel, the Rockmobil project's city of origin, illustrates how even in Germany, where women musicians and all-female groups are much more common than in Britain, 'rock music is (still) undoubtedly a male domain' (p. 83). Nevertheless, in its work with female users, the Rockmobil project employs a number of interesting strategies in its attempt to give women and girls access to music-making opportunities while at the same time avoiding the typical stereotypes used by male musicians in an attempt to discourage women and girls from getting involved in music-making. Most importantly, the use of all-female workshops offers women and girls a 'protected

space' within which to gain confidence both as individual musicians and as a band. As Fokken points out, women and girls typically adopt an entirely different approach to music-making (ibid., pp. 83-84). For example, they will often spend a long time exploring the different 'sound' possibilities offered by electronic instruments rather than simply opting for maximum volume - a uniform aspect of male user sessions and one that can result in much conflict especially when several members of a group are discussing a particular aspect of the song in progress between themselves or with the 'Teamer'! Similarly, the all-female workshop situation offers users scope to experiment with different instruments. Thus, as Fokken observes, all-female bands will often swap instruments for different songs or pieces of music. Again, this is borne out by my own experience of working with all-female bands. Indeed, such a tendency among all-female bands is another factor which importantly separates them from male groups where arguments would often ensue if band members were asked to swap instruments to accommodate the wishes of other members. While arguments of this kind were often peacefully resolved, they were highly disruptive. However, from the point of view of all-female groups who occasionally witnessed such disputes or heard about them afterwards, they were regarded as 'stupid' and 'a waste of time'. Many female users also said that they would never join a band where most or all of the members were male because of such arguments and felt that they were the product of immaturity among their male peers.

All-female workshops, then, provide women and girl users of the Rockmobil project with an important resource whereby they can become proficient in their craft without having to suffer the discouraging remarks of male users or put up with the fights and conflicts of interest which often occur between male musicians. Significantly, once all-female groups have passed the initial learning stage and begun to perform their first concerts, such hostility and prejudice on the part of male users appears to decrease. In my own experience, all-female bands at Rockmobil Showcase events were often as warmly received as male bands. That the provision of all-female music workshops facilitates greater access to and support for music-making among women and girls is evidenced by the number of workshops which are now organised independently of the Rockmobil project in youth clubs around Frankfurt and other Hessen cities. In September 1995 the daily Frankfurt newspaper *Frankfurter Rundschau* featured an article dealing with the increasing popularity of Frauen and Mädchen music workshops in the Frankfurt area. A female youth worker interviewed for the article expressed the view that such workshops were an invaluable addition to the facilities offered by youth clubs in the city in that they offered women and girls a 'way in' to an activity that is currently male-dominated and also helped to 'balance out' some of the more problematic issues associated with all-male music workshops (Riedel: 1995, pp. 25-26).

Another common problem often faced by younger females who wish to become involved in music-making is a negative parental reaction. As Meinig points out,

'younger girls must often engage in a bitter conflict with their parents before they are finally given consent to play in a band. In some cases a mother will ask to see a practice room and meet the other band members and the workshop organiser before they will agree to their daughter taking part' (1993, p.82). Again, the use of all-female workshops can prove very important in winning the support and approval of parents who are initially antipathetic to the idea of their daughter playing in a band. Indeed, this may be particularly the case with younger girls from Turkish and Moroccan Gastarbeiter families whose cultural and religious practices may prevent girls from mixing with their male peers. Such provision has proved particularly important in Frankfurt where there is a high concentration of Turkish and Moroccan Gastarbeiter families. The Frankfurt Rockmobil has played a crucial role in enabling young females from such families to find new avenues of expression and creativity through music-making. This, however, is simply one aspect of the project's work with the youth of ethnic minority groups in Frankfurt. On a broader level, the project's facilities have also allowed such young people new scope for addressing the related issues of race, racism and ethnic identity in a city where roughly a quarter of the population are first or second generation immigrants.

Music-making and ethnic identity

Frankfurt is, in every respect, an international centre. The Frankfurter Flohmarkt ('flea market') which is held each Saturday on the banks of the river Main clearly illustrates the mix of cultures which exist in the city. To visit the Flohmarkt is to experience at first hand the multicultural character of Frankfurt. However, as with many other 'international' cities, there are increasing incidences of racism and racial exclusion in Frankfurt. Attempts to promote ethnic integration through multi-cultural events such as carnivals and world music performances are often overshadowed by racist attacks, support for far right politics and the rise of neo-facism.

When I first began to work with the Rockmobil project, the gravity of this problem quickly became clear to me. The racism and racial exclusion suffered by project users from ethnic minority backgrounds, especially Turks and Moroccans whose ethnic difference was most apparent, was a constant theme of conversation at Rockmobil workshops. Inevitably perhaps, these young people sought ways to express their views and vent their frustrations concerning racism through music. Particularly significant in this respect was the interest among a number of young Turkish and Moroccan users in rap music. Although rap music and hip hop - the street culture form of which rap, along with graffiti and break-dancing is a composite part - have their origins in the Afro-American ghetto, a number of writers and researchers are now beginning to acknowledge their global significance as a form of expression for 'aggrieved communities' in many different parts of the world (Lipsitz: 1993, p.7) (see also Mitchell (1996) and Bennett (forthcoming)).

Also important in this respect is the essentially 'always incomplete' nature of the rap text. Rap originates in part from a tradition of African tribal stories which are

always left open in such a way that the story-teller is able to add in new details to give the story relevance in a particular context or situation (Keyes: 1991, Levine: 1978). At the same time the commercialisation of rap music has been facilitated by a new digital revolution in popular music production which, in contesting issues of ownership, introduces similar possibilities for textual interpretation into the sphere of contemporary popular music composition and production. Thus, as Frith points out, one of the crucial issues relating to the contemporary popular music scene is 'not who "wrote" a record but at what digital moment it was *finished* ...the development of computer sampling instruments like the Fairlight ...enables players to quote an aspect of someone else's music - their sound' (1988, p.122).

While the young people who worked with the Rockmobil did not have access to such forms of sampling equipment - the cost alone pushing such purchases well beyond the remit of the Rockmobil's 'instrument buying' budget - they nevertheless understood the basic logic underlying the production of rap songs. To this end, they would often bring tapes or CDs of favourite tracks to the workshop and ask me or another Rockmobil Teamer to transpose particular instrumental parts - typically parts for electric guitar or bass, keyboards and drums. From here, the various song parts which had been transposed would be re-assembled into a new track which would provide the basic rhythm for an original rap lyric. The rap lyrics produced by Rockmobil users invariably focussed upon the issue of racism and/or racial exclusion in Frankfurt and the wider German context. Indeed, for a number of users the proximity between their 'home-grown' version of the rap text and the need to speak out about the racism to which they were subjected became such that they began to see themselves as the authentic expression of hip hop culture within Frankfurt while those who attempted to copy the style of US rappers such as Ice T and Ice Cube were collectively frowned upon. Thus as a member of rap group United Energy, formed as a result of their participation in Rockmobil sessions, explained to me:

There are people who don't understand a word of English - but they like the music so they pretend that they understand what they're listening to - and I personally have a problem with that. For a lot of people, the image and the clothes are more important than the music and I find that ridiculous - they pretend to be gangster rappers from the USA and yet we've got enough social problems here which need to be addressed.

The rap sessions and workshops organised by the Rockmobil also led to a great deal of experimentation with different genres of music among the young hip hop enthusiasts involved in the project. In two important social-anthropological studies of local music-making, Ruth Finnegan (1989) and Sara Cohen (1991) emphasise the importance of the local as a place in which musicians and singers are free to experiment and develop new musical styles without having to adhere to the commercial concerns of the global music industry in the way that artists who are

signed to major recording labels do. Arguably, the Rockmobil, due to its 'open door' policy adds a new dimension to the spontaneous musical creativity identified by Finnegan and Cohen at the grass-roots level. Thus, in the context of Rockmobil workshops and sessions it would often be the case that young people from a variety of different ethnic backgrounds would find themselves working together in the same rap project. Moreover, because of the hip hop enthusiasts' agreement that their raps should address the various racisms experienced by ethnic minority groups in Frankfurt, rap workshops became a forum for multi-cultural forms expression, from the language in which the performers rapped (a rap song would often feature verses rapped in different languages depending upon the ethnicity of the group's members) to the musical content of the backing track. During the course of their involvement with the Rockmobil, hip hop enthusiasts would often bring cassettes to sessions containing traditional musics of their parent cultures. Using rhythms and melodies 'lifted' (i.e. borrowed) from such cassettes, traditional Moroccan and Turkish musical styles were successfully blended together with Afro-American rap tracks to produce highly distinctive, multi-cultural hybridisations of the Afro-American rap style.

Such forms of experimentation with rap music were particularly effective during Rockmobil showcase events where the multi-cultural character of rap groups' performances supplied a powerful edge to the themes and issues which they explored in their songs. Moreover, such events also allowed for the political dimensions of the music to be addressed at a deeper level via on-stage speeches and monologues given by band members in between performing their songs. A common criticism of the 'Rock gegen Rechts' ('Rock Against Racism') movement in Germany is that the issue of racism is never directly addressed and that 'Rock gegen Rechts' events rarely feature bands or musicians from Germany's ethnic minority groups.⁴ In contrast, Rockmobile showcase events provide a much needed avenue for members of the many different ethnic minority groups present in Frankfurt - and in the wider German context - to address the problems of racism and racial exclusion as seen from their own particular perspective. Indeed, it is significant in this respect that Rockmobil showcases attract much interest from the local media who, rather than viewing them simply as musical events, are apt to report on the way these events encapsulate the multi-cultural character of Frankfurt and demonstrate, by virtue of the many different races and cultures taking part, that inter-racial tolerance is both possible and highly desirable.

Conclusion

In this article I have considered several ways in which the Frankfurt Rockmobil, in addition to being a highly innovative project, provides a series of new insights into the cultural significance of music-making activities for young people. Taking issue with existing work on young people and music-making and the centrality to this work of the notion of a 'rock culture', I have suggested that projects such as the

Rockmobil allow us to explore alternative dimensions of the relationship between youth and music-making, a relationship which goes beyond the remit of identity politics to embrace issues of personal development and gender/ethnic relations in adolescence and early adulthood. Clearly, I do not pretend that this article provides an analysis which is in any way exhaustive; much research still needs to be done in this area. Nevertheless, I hope that the case study presented here and the conclusions drawn from it will serve as a basis upon which future work dealing with the issue of young people and music-making might be conducted.

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Notes

- 1 There is currently no provision for social work/youthwork training in German universities. Students wishing to enter these professions must attend a Fachhochschule, the German equivalent of the former British polytechnics.
- 2 For an account of the Erasmus programme's facilitation of student exchanges between European social work training programmes, see Jervis (1990).
- 3 'Gastarbeiter' or 'guest worker', to use the English translation, is the term applied to those individual foreign nationals, typically from Turkey, Morocco and parts of Eastern Europe, who have been granted special permission to enter Germany in order to meet the country's demand for unskilled manual labour.
- 4 For an account of the German 'Rock gegen Rechts' movement, see de Cologne (1980) (German language).

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LEARNING, UNDERSTANDING AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL PRACTICE

JOHN BAMBER

Introduction

Based mainly upon my experience of training fieldwork supervisors, this paper offers a view as to how educators, that is anyone with a brief for education, training or staff development, might assist community education practitioners and trainees to develop a genuinely critical practice. I believe that the ideas expounded below, since they are concerned with the fundamentals of learning, will be relevant to a wider audience and that there is scope for extending the implications of my argument, though space precludes it here, to any structured programme of college or in-service based professional training. In writing for a range of readers: academics, trainers, fieldworkers and students, I do not stop at laying out broad principles but illustrate the implications of these in a practice-based example. In this I hope to be true to the contention of Usher and Bryant (1989) and Anyon (1994) that theorising should be rooted in the practice experience.

Being critical, in the full sense, is about developing a critique which challenges the status quo. Critical practice is something more, therefore, than Boud's:

...allowing one's ideas to be criticised by others, exploring one's appreciation of the limitations placed on one's consciousness by historical and social circumstances, and being prepared to change one's approach as such awareness creates a new framework within which to act. (in Weil and McGill:1989:42)

It is not a neutral endeavour, a forlorn attempt to emulate the disinterest of Mr Spock, but one which seeks to counter oppression. This position may seem too partisan for some, yet there is nothing in it that cannot be found in many formulations of the aims of Community Education. Neither is it fanciful to write that teaching and learning can support the development of such a critique as a basis for practice. As Benett (1994:105-106) makes plain, there is an inherently subversive quality in encouraging learners to cast a critical eye over the views of others on route to affirming, albeit conditionally, one of their own. I argue, in common with many others (see for example Usher and Bryant, 1989, for a general treatment and Bloxham and Heathfield, 1995, for a specific reference to community education), that the key to critical practice lies in collapsing false distinctions between theory and practice. This dichotomy and others, such as subjective-objective, internal-external, emotional-rational, personal-structural, loses meaning when learning is treated holistically and when understanding, as distinct from knowledge and competence, takes centre stage.

In drawing on my work, I recast Kolb's (1976) four stage cycle of learning and apply it to community education practice. The result is not isomorphic, a literal representation of reality, but instrumental and illustrative of how practitioners make sense of their world as actors within it. I do not treat the four elements as sequential and cyclical since this obscures learning's essentially kaleidoscopic nature. Smith's (1994:181) metaphor of 'zigzagging' through 'a force-field in constant movement' captures something of the symbiotic dynamism involved but needs further clarification. According to Smith (1994:142), practitioners respond to situations with particular combinations of the elements or, as he terms them, 'frames of reference' (FOR's). At one end of the spectrum these can consist of just one part of one element and at the other, draw from them all in a complex, multi-layered way. Responses are not random, however, but come, as Smith (1994:143-144) notes, from a favoured repertoire. In my model this repertoire is synonymous with the learner's understanding and I argue that educators need to appreciate the centrality of the learner's understanding and, in particular, the significance of the 'under' in this concept. Understanding consists not only of conscious, systematic thought but also of deeper, unconscious and tacit knowledge at the level of taken-for-granted assumptions and of feelings. Moreover, as Salmon (1993) discusses in connection with the idea of 'stance', understanding underpins the learner's fundamental position towards life in general, and more specifically, towards political, social or professional matters. It is important to escape, therefore, from the idea of understanding as a higher, more integrated level of knowledge. It can of course be this but the actuality of a learner's understanding may be mundane, limited, incoherent and contain contradictory tendencies.

Whatever the case, learning is about extending the favoured repertoire as the encounter with the unfamiliar reveals its inadequacies. In my account of how learning might lead in the direction of critical forms of practice, I replace Kolb's stages with: Seeing, Feeling, Thinking and Acting. The first of these elements concerns the perceptions of the worker as they encounter social reality in practice settings that are always bounded by organisational and socially constructed conceptions of role. The second involves values and internal theory, which often exist at an emotional, tacit and taken-for-granted level, and I explore these in relation to culturally determined notions of 'common-sense'. I also consider under this heading the importance of the creative capacities of the imagination. The third refers to considered thought and the dialectic between this and public forms of knowledge such as text-based theory, policy, notions of best-practice and ideology. Here I pay particular attention to the theory-practice relationship and suggest that whilst theorising, as conventionally understood, is essential it is not by itself sufficient for the development of critical practice. I argue that being critical has emotional, behavioural and existential aspects; in short, how people practice, as Usher and Bryant (1989:76) say about teachers, depends to a crucial degree on the kind of people they are. The fourth concerns the preferences of practitioners for certain forms of action, and I consider

these in relation to the dominant 'rational-scientific' approach to the resolution of practice problems. Each element of the model, therefore, has both personal and social reference points which, in effect, describe the boundary between the practitioner and their operational world.

Educators also need to know that people have preferred learning styles whereby they favour one or other of these elements when they construct their frames of reference. Some learn best, for example, through consideration of theoretical, text-based material. Others when ideas and events connect with their own process of inner reflection. Some learn best through active, hands-on experimentation, or having something demonstrated in practice. It is important to play to people's strengths but also to help learners to develop and draw from the aspects that they underuse. In illustrating how an educator might do this in the case study below, I echo Usher and Bryant's (1989:91) view that theorists should take as their starting point the actual situations and concerns of practitioners. The fruits of such an approach can be seen in the development of understanding, what Anyon (1994) calls 'socially useful theory' that is deeply rooted in the practice experience. As has been argued, for example by Carr and Kemmis (1994) and Brookfield (1994), it is possible for practitioners to value their experience without uncritically basing their views upon it. Indeed how practitioners learn from experience can make the difference between moribund and critical practice. To support this claim I turn now to a more detailed explanation of my model, starting with the aspect of experience that I call 'seeing'.

Seeing - The Selective And Situated Nature of Experience

Though often treated as straightforward and individual, experience is a complex, multi-faceted matter which has internal and external as well as past, present and future reference points. In this case there are a number of important factors to take into account. Firstly, practitioners do not just perceive, or 'see', the world but pre-select the object of their attention in the first place. Secondly there is an intricate relationship between the micro world of individual experience and the macro world of social structures and issues. Unemployment is an example of something which may be experienced as a personal failure but, in macro terms, is clearly also a structural issue. Thirdly, it is not possible to conceive of individual experience without immediately positing a collective dimension. What person is not male or female, of this or that race and ethnicity, of this or that class, and so on? The concept of role helps to clarify how these three different dimensions relate to one another for it is through culturally determined roles that people are channelled into ways of thinking and behaving.

In focussing on how people gather and use data about the external world, what Mulligan (in Boud, Cohen and Walker: 1993:55-56) calls 'sensing', it is necessary to appreciate the function of perception. If I take my own response to situations as an example, the active principle seems to be the extent to which something concerns

'me' as distinct from something or someone else. If I judge that it does concern me, in other words that it is 'worthy' of my attention, my reaction can range from a raised eyebrow to high levels of fear or pleasure. I may also make a related but more sophisticated calculation as to whether it is of local or wider socio-economic, political or cultural significance. This basic process of selectivity is much in evidence during a training exercise that I use with supervisors who are asked to give their response to the first fifteen minutes of Terence Davis' film, *Distant Voices-Still Lives*. Set in Liverpool during the early 50s, this film graphically and movingly depicts aspects of the personal and communal life of a working-class family. Although some interpretations overlap there is always a variety in the significance that the supervisors ascribe to what they have seen. Some focus on personal issues such as grieving, some on the personalities of the characters portrayed, others on gender issues, still others on class issues, and some on male violence. Though the educational experience gains from consciously moving between the different views, still greater learning comes from the realisation that people are predisposed to see what is ostensibly the same situation in different ways. In other words, perception acts as a lens through which 'reality' is filtered and which triggers FOR's from their favoured repertoires. From this can be seen the force of Kelly's (1995) dictum that, "We do not simply perceive the world, we construe it".

Sense-making, however, is both active and reactive. For although we perceive the world on the basis of previous experiences, our perceptions can change in the light of new ones. The fact that, as Mills (1959:196) observes, our past plays into and affects our present understanding without us necessarily being aware of it is one reason why, in response to new ideas, situations or criticisms of performance, practitioners can find themselves inexplicably struggling with powerful emotions such as anger, fear or more general anxiety. The result can be deeply disturbing, even immobilising; a state of affairs usually accompanied by rather desperate and unproductive attempts to rationalise the threat away which, of course, is the antithesis of learning. My own reaction when first confronted by feminism is a case in point. Only over time did I come to accept the ugly but fundamental truths about the social construction of male domination. On one level I felt threatened by ideas that challenged deep-seated conceptions of myself as a man, and the privileges I was party to, whilst on another I thought that I was committed to notions of equality and justice. Making this contradiction explicit was crucial to my development as a practitioner but, more fundamentally, as a human being.

Perception also involves the impulse to act which is essentially a forward looking, future-oriented process. Whether the intentions are short, medium or long term, the idea is to bring about a state of affairs which does not yet exist. The future desired state, however, also comes to affect the present since the process of shaping the future involves taking steps in the present to secure the intended outcomes. Experience, paradoxically, may then be said to contain the future, or, more accurately,

an anticipated future. In more prosaic terms, what a practitioner thinks is going to happen can exercise a powerful influence over what they do in the present.

As Smith (1994: 143) notes, however, our role at any one time has a strong bearing on seeing and therefore on which FOR's are activated. I am likely to respond to a situation in one way as a worker, for example, and quite another as a father although the boundaries between this and other roles may be confused in practice. The situation is further complicated if the focus widens to include other socially constructed dimensions of role such as age, race, gender, class, and disability. I may be John, a unique, idiosyncratic individual like any other, but I am also white, male, English, professional, able-bodied and so on, all of which carry many layers of meaning for me but are also socially determined and place me in relations of power to others. Neither does it presuppose an orderly, one dimensional state. Experience can be problematic and contradictory which is why everyone knows what it is like to be confused or in turmoil! The fact that experience is multi-layered, complex and 'messy' in this way is perhaps one reason why practitioners may give insufficient weight to learning from it. In the resultant confusion, one important consequence may be the obscuring of the relations of power in which people are sorted and placed in positions of relative privilege.

This tendency is compounded where institutional systems constrain role in line with taken-for-granted ways of operating. A failure to question these is a feature of Argyris and Schon's (1974) 'single-loop learning', with its attendant myopic emphasis on technique and efficiency. In contrast, they argue, 'double loop learning' exposes the ideological and value-laden frameworks underlying goals and strategies implicit in any construction of role. Locating ideas which lock practitioners into particular conceptions and ways of being, seeing them for the culturally produced implants that they often are, and taking action to change them is, according to Habermas (in Carr and Kemmis: 1986: 134-144) the crowning achievement of becoming critical. Critical practice depends, therefore, upon being prepared to open up and question the basis of perception which means challenging the roots of a person's sense making. At this level the consideration of issues is not abstract but existential and educators should not be surprised, therefore, if they meet with resistance. Being aware of what is involved in our feelings, as I now go on to argue, is crucial in revealing the extent and nature of such personal, organisational and societal frameworks.

Feeling - Emotion as Disposition

Reflecting inwardly, as part of a total reaction to making sense of a situation, has an immediate quality. It is the territory of 'tacit personal knowledge' (Polyanyi cited in Brookfield: 1987:44) where learning involves delving into one's own starting points, a priori assumptions. It is the domain of emotion which, if seen as thought at a pre-articulate level (see Mulligan in Boud, Cohen and Walker:1993:46-58), is

also a form of knowledge. Given space for reflection the language of emotion can be deciphered but the speed of people's interactions with the external world means that this is seldom the case. It is, nevertheless, still a reality that responses occur on an emotional level and that the intensity and nature of these feelings exert a profound effect upon the way practitioners deal with situations. It is not uncommon for practitioners to take a stand on an issue, for example, without knowing that it is based upon an undeclared position related to personal values and internal theory. This, in part, is the origin of Schon's (1983) split between espoused theory and theory-in-use, in which connection it is interesting to note the way that values are often referred to as 'good', whereas in reality values held, often unacknowledged, may be 'bad'. Though practitioners may espouse commitment to certain 'good' professional values, they may act on the basis of other 'bad' ones; their 'theory-in-use'. As such, one who believes that they work democratically may, in fact, behave autocratically. This is of some importance since the reflex response of practitioners when confronted with problems, especially the requirement to justify practice, is to refer back to their value-base. If all that is happening is a reference back to espoused theory, this may serve to cloud rather than clarify matters.

For this reason, practitioners need to explore their underlying value base because of the fundamental part this plays in shaping perspectives and especially in the construction of vision and understandings of purpose. The notion of contradiction is important here for it is not immediately obvious how 'collective responsibility', for instance, is consistent with 'individual autonomy', yet both may be cited in the same breath and are frequently inscribed in policy documents in an unproblematic way. Over-activity may be one product of such naivety with practice careering between incompatible approaches in a vain attempt to somehow honour individual values. Conversely workers may also find themselves immobilised as, unknowingly caught between two contradictory intentions, they feel unable to move in one direction or another. A more sophisticated approach is to appreciate that decisions about practice may rest on posing one value against another as a means of problematising situations and refining understanding.

'Theory-in-use' derives in part from internal theory; a collection, often contradictory and jumbled, of large and small explanations of concepts, such as 'empowerment', which bear upon the why's and should's not just of work but of life in general. A danger here is that such ideas may well have developed at an age, or in a state of mind, when we were not yet ready to or failed to exercise any rational scrutiny. Moreover, together with values, internal theory may also encompass nothing more than the 'common sense' of our times; the culturally determined ways of thinking whose power is a function of their all-pervasiveness. My own thinking concerning the taken-for-granted idea of male superiority, which I referred to above, is an apt example. Acquiring over time such 'common sense' also includes ingrained, automatic ways of dealing with situations. Because responses may have outlived their usefulness,

or may contradict, for example, the stated intentions of policy, it is important for practitioners to be able to delve beneath the conscious aspects of their favoured repertoire.

Because much of what is involved in this tacit knowledge is implicit and sub-conscious, however, it can be hard to uncover and 'self-understand' and, as such, appears to be unavailable as a conceptual platform for deliberate practice. Also, because by its nature it is unique to practitioners, it can make for difficulties when it comes to dialogue about practice issues. Nevertheless, since practitioners can feel threatened by an idea which directly challenges their own underlying understanding of a situation, and as a consequence block a rational examination of the issue, educators need to both acknowledge and work with this reality. Subjecting it to critical scrutiny requires a willingness to open up and let go of habitual ways of seeing and doing and some may prefer to be stuck than to develop.

Giving rein to the imagination is an important means of achieving this extension for imagining uses the past but goes beyond it to the future. It is, according to Mulligan (in Boud, Cohen and Walker: 1993:55), the art of the possible, the beginnings of giving form to the possible, and to latent potential. It can help generate possible choices, as in brainstorming, which in turn allows pretending; the important function of acting 'as if' or rehearsing moves (Smith: 1994:144–45). The case study below contains an example of how attending to the ostensibly 'wild' contents of the imagination is a sensible thing to do. Perhaps more fundamentally, however, from imagination comes creativity; the ability to think of new ways of doing things, of making links between hitherto separate entities, of conceiving of a better state of affairs. Such images serve to bridge the gap between situated experience and the visions that practitioners are trying to realise. Creating an inspiring vision not just for oneself, but one which others can shape and share, is a vital ingredient in practice. What I now describe as considered thought may also hold another key to this opening up but only, and this is an important caveat, if it is accessed in the right way.

Thinking - The Dialectics of Considered Thought

Considered thought refers to that aspect of the sense-making process which makes deliberate use of one's own ideas in relation to the knowledge and information located in the public domain in policy documents, the formal theory of academic literature, or ideological doctrines. Pre-eminent amongst these, according to a majority of the eighty or so practitioners I have worked with on supervision courses over the past two years, is not formal theory but the demands of policy and notions of 'best-practice' learned, in the main, on the job. This raises sharp questions about the impact of initial training, as many professional workers, even those recently qualified, testify to the fact that they make little or no deliberate reference to formal theory or, to put this in more specific terms, to college-based curriculum. Many evidence difficulty in recalling subject areas let alone being able to reference particular

authors or specific concepts. When asked to lay out the formal theory which informs their practice many appear to find this not only a difficult question to answer but in some profound way threatening.

Similarly, they are more likely to refer to an ideological commitment as an explanatory basis for action. "As a Christian, Marxist, Buddhist, Feminist..." are common enough beginnings to discussions about practice and even if not overt, they are clearly there in the sub-text. This dimension is potentially powerful in its connection to personal values and in the important part it plays in forming the intentions of the practitioner. When ideology and personal values are closely connected there is an obvious strength in the coherence and motivation it provides. On the other hand there is a danger that it becomes a closed system of thought and practice can become little more than an opportunity to make converts. Formal theory is one of the principal safeguards against this kind of closed thinking because its proper use can enable practitioners to criticise, better understand, open up and reformulate their ideas. One wonders what is going wrong when graduates, who after all have spent a minimum of three years studying, are unable to articulate a theoretical basis for their practice. Against this rather bleak account, some would argue, as do Usher and Bryant (1989:74–7), that the ideas which underlie routine and habitual modes of working are, in reality and at the very least, internalised formal theory. In other words, it is there but has gone underground as practitioners absorb what were once perhaps strange and difficult ideas into their usual way of thinking and going about work. I think there is some truth in this and also in their claim that formal theory is always already present because it is knowledge constituted by a powerful discourse which regulates practice. Standard Adult Education practice, for example, involves pedagogies intimately connected with psychological theory.

Perhaps one reason for the apparent resistance to the conscious and systematic reference to formal theory is the status claimed for it. As Usher and Bryant argue (1989:72), over-privileging formal theory as theoretical knowledge deemed to be superior to and indeed the only certainty of rigour in practice, is to devalue other aspects of the learning process, and this, I believe, is resented by practitioners and students alike. In its crudest form the assumption is that theory tells practitioners what to do, what Schon (1983) has described as the 'technical-rationality' model. At a higher level comes the idea that practice ought to be based on general principles which can be applied to particular problems. Since practice is full of complexity and uncertainty, however, practitioners could not apply a general set of precepts even if they tried. Still more sophisticated is the notion that practice ought to be 'theorised' and here it is useful to make a distinction between weak and strong versions of this view.

In the former, theorising is equated solely with the use of formal theory, in other words, something to be located in published sources. This text-based theory is used to deconstruct practice situations in what is meant to be a critical, problematising

way. The resultant learning, so the argument goes, changes the theoriser which, in turn, has a knock-on effect on how they go about their practice. This is weak because there is no necessary connection between a change in thinking and an alteration in behaviour. Freire, according to Kilian (1988:117), was well aware of this in admitting to the mistaken belief that, 'in the process of conscientisation, the moment of revealing a social reality is a kind of psychological motivation for its change'. Indeed, as argued above, there may be a deep-seated resistance to this process. In other words, theorising in this 'weak' sense may alter only one aspect of the learner's understanding. It may change the way a practitioner sees a situation, but the full potential of the new learning may be undermined by opposing feelings or the failure to test it out through a course of action. All that may be happening is to change the way that practitioners talk about practice as opposed to the way they actually do it.

A stronger view of theorising accepts that formal theory can be an important element in criticising and justifying practical judgments, in particular in making explicit that which is implicit in personal knowledge. But a judgment always has to be made as to which bits of theoretical knowledge are relevant to particular situations. This is especially so where there are conflicting views both in and between different academic disciplines. As Usher and Bryant (1989:78) argue:

No single theory can determine the ends, purpose and goals of education since theory only makes sense within a given set of values. Since these are contested, choices have to be made. It is not theory, therefore, which influences the making of choices but the choices which influence the relevance of theory.

If this view is correct, the impact and status of formal theory can be exaggerated. As such, it can obscure and devalue other ways in which practitioners theorise their work; by reexamining their value base or through the development of 'best practice', for example, when workers form groups to develop policy guidelines or put together a manual of activities. Theorising in the strong sense would closely conform to the characteristics of Anyon's (1994:129-130) 'socially useful theory'. In this view theoretical understandings are not primarily derived from reference to other theories but from the dialogue between goals and current activities. Such understandings are neither totalising and seamless, nor ad hoc and only applicable to one locale, but connect local activity to wider societal constraints without suppressing the possibility for individual agency. They identify the direct action to be taken and the primary goal of activity is not the refinement of concepts but successful action. With respect to the development of critical practice, however, it is useful to appreciate that the notion of 'action' is also problematic for practitioners may seek to resolve practice problems in narrow, habitual and uncritical ways.

Acting as Preferred Response

Action, which is often mistakenly equated with 'practice' is usually dealt with in a simplistic way which assumes an analysis of a problem in need of solving and

attendant actions designed to achieve this. This is the territory of the classic, rational–scientific approach to problem–solving represented in Management Theory by Management By Objectives (Mullins: 1993: 414–418), and in countless training manuals as a systematic approach. The strength of this model is precisely in the rigour it brings to the application of thought to action and especially in its commitment to experiment and evaluation. This in–built requirement makes it developmental because it ‘forces’ the issue of learning. In reality, however, practitioners are likely to operate a reduced version based on their actual understanding in which one or more stages are missed out. As a counter–balance to this rational–scientific approach, it is important to appreciate that actions can also be ‘tacit, spontaneous and automatic’ (Schon: 1983:60). As such they are an intrinsic part of a FOR and not some kind of ‘action–selection’ to a prior process of thought. I suggest, therefore, that practitioners may have an unconscious preference for acting in one or more of a number of ways with reference to: self, relationships, systems, structures and curriculum.

In relation to self, for example, a practitioner might resolve to deal with a situation in a less confrontational manner. Alternatively they may see the need to improve relationships with colleagues and embark on a programme of team–building. On the other hand, they might consider that a particular type of system requires attention, such as improving a petty–cash accounting system or, on a grander scale, developing a staff development policy. At another level still a practitioner might see the need for action in relation to structural issues; altering the composition of a management committee, for example, at a local level. Structure also relates to the socio–political factors which govern practice and what could be uppermost in a practitioners mind might be action which seeks change in their own wider organisation or in some apparatus or functioning of state institutions. There again the focus might be on matters of curriculum as they seek to improve the materials and processes designed to enhance the learning of others. The key point is that a practitioner may have a marked preference for action in one or other of these ways. A youth worker might feel that they need to work harder at ‘getting through’ to someone they perceive as a truculent young person although it might well be the case, that the nature of the youth club programme is of more significance. The value of locating action in this way lies in drawing attention to a greater range of possibilities that are being passed over. To open these up, however, as Smith briefly acknowledges (1994: 76–77), may require a fundamental shift in the disposition and intentions of the practitioner. Ultimately this entails a change in understanding and it is to this fundamental idea that I now turn.

Learning and Understanding

Understanding consists of the actual, as distinct from espoused, sense that practitioners make of their world as actors within it. It is the ultimate product of a learning process which involves seeing, feeling, thinking and acting, in a symbiotic relationship. Although the potential combinations of these elements, or frames of reference, are

infinite, practitioners have a repertoire of favoured responses which is both the result of previous learning and the platform for the modification or creation of new FOR's. The attempt to gain understanding is not random, however, but purposeful as the practitioner engages with the social forces which shape his or her role options. 'Understanding' is not, therefore, derived from abstract theory in a simplistic way but is situated, action-oriented and contextual, incorporating the implicit and explicit knowledge that both shapes and is shaped by actions taken and the resulting changes. Through this process new knowledge is constantly being generated and builds into a repertoire which enables the new and unfamiliar to be related to similar, but also different, situations handled in the past. Thus, what Usher and Bryant refer to as 'theory', but which I think is more comprehensively described as understanding, underpins and both enters into and emerges from practice. What follows is my own representation of the learning process from which understanding derives:

- *It begins with perception; the assessment and assignation of significance to events in the practice situation.*
- *This triggers responses, frames of reference, consisting of combinations of the elements of seeing, feeling, thinking and acting.*
- *The initial response involves established or habitual frames of reference which are ingrained and come into play automatically. In learning terms, if left at this, there may be some reinforcement to these but no development.*
- *A further response requires either the extension of a FOR or when it is recognised that an existing FOR is no longer adequate, the creation of a new one. This may mean paying more attention to an element which has been under-valued and under-developed.*
- *Action is taken in one of a number of ways associated with a FOR but takes on a more experimental hue when extending a FOR or developing new ones.*
- *The action taken has some impact on the situation and the process starts again.*

As previously noted, however, the development of understanding is not random but has at its core the activity of what Mulligan (in Boud, Cohen and Walker:1994:54) describes as the will which, '... enables the individual's centre of consciousness to deliberate what is a worthwhile or realistic goal.... It is the function through which choice is mediated, decided and acted upon' and which seeks, '... a harmonious orchestration of all aspects of personality and internal processes both conscious and unconscious'. Most professionals can recall when a 'supreme effort of will' was required. But this masks the fact that the will is in constant operation and, moreover, is working towards certain more or less coherent ends produced in the dynamic between individual agency and social forces. The insidious nature of these latter, as argued by Carr and Kemmis (1986:135-139), can mean that people's ideas are distorted and shaped without them being aware that this has happened. One consequence is that ends, as noted above in connection with Schon, can run

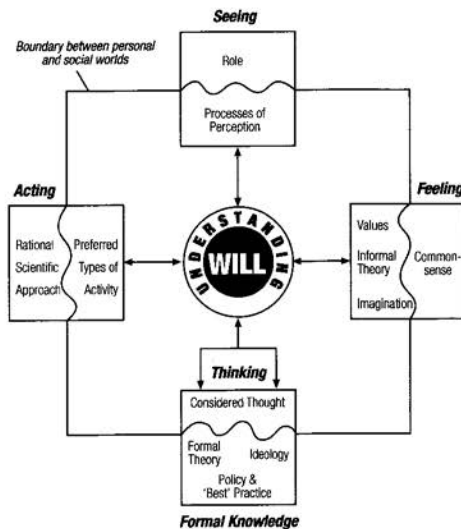
counter to espoused values or what may be taken from cooler, more rational, considerations. The will, shaped by and seeking to shape a given context, is therefore central and key to all aspects of practitioners' learning. It determines the approach to learning, passive, pro-active or resistant, and what is worthy or unworthy of consideration in the first place.

According to Kelly (1955) certain fundamental 'super ordinate' constructs lie at the root of the way people operate in the world. I speculate that it is the particular combination of these constructs which make up the personality. It would be interesting to explore the relationship between these and the social construction of knowledge but it is not the place here to pursue this line of thought. I recognise the need to consider this area further with reference to the ideas of Lukes (1974), in relation to power, and Gramsci (in Williams:1977:108-114), in relation to hegemony. An important part of the learning project, therefore, must be to make explicit what may be implicit in the fundamental understanding of the practitioner. To the extent that learning is about making conscious consciousness (Freire:1972), it is concerned with being, and to the extent that it is about developing such consciousness it is, as Smith (1994) argues, a process of becoming. Having noted this I now seek to ground the discussion so far by showing its implications for critical practice.

Understanding And The Development Of Critical Practice

What follows is a fictional though realistic account of a practice situation given by a worker to their supervisor. The numbers in brackets indicate points in the narrative that the supervisor might dwell upon were they to use the interpretation of learning and understanding that I have outlined above (see Figure 1 for reference).

Figure 1- Understanding As 'Frames of References' Coordinated by the Will



Worker B's Confrontation with a bully

B recognised that an isolated instance of bullying was taking place which necessitated intervention¹. It ran counter to their value of respect for others but B also knew from personal experience what it was like to be on the receiving end². The incident evoked strong feelings; a mixture of anger and fear and a desire to throttle the bully³. These thoughts were accompanied by an imaginary sequence of unpleasant consequences in which irate parents complained to B's superior⁴. B was convinced that there was something 'twisted' about the bully and thought that if he had been confronted immediately that he would have backed down⁵. Violence was not allowed in the Centre⁶ but as a Christian B was torn between wanting to punish the perpetrator and a sense of the need to be forgiving⁷. B tried to remember something from their psychology studies about aggressive behaviour in young males⁸. B was convinced of the need to change demeanour from 'friend' to authority figure but acknowledged that this would have been a difficult thing to do since it was not their habitual way of working⁹. In the event B resolved to verbally challenge him but was unsure and worried about the effect of this action. Instead B decided to let it pass and do 'something' about it later whilst at the same time making a mental note to give more thought to their social education programme at the local high school¹⁰.

In recognising that B had a starting point, or understanding that was already influencing their thinking about the situation, the supervisor would begin with a number of questions aimed at the interaction between the internal world of the practitioner and social reality in the practice setting:

- *What did you 'see'? (Points 1 and 2)*
- *What did you feel? (Points 3 to 5)*
- *What did you think? (Points 6 to 8)*
- *What did you do? (Points 9 and 10)*

Question and response would lead into a dialogue which, in a more or less structured fashion, would help the practitioner to explore their frames of reference. Together they would be seeking to develop the practitioner's understanding by:

- *Revealing the FOR's in use.*
- *Revealing what is being ignored.*
- *Connecting the personal with the structural through contextualising events*
- *Directing learning to areas of perceived 'gaps'.*
- *Making explicit what is implicit.*
- *Relating matters for formal theory*

Of course it is not possible to predict what the practitioner would have done as a result of such a supervision session, and without this it is not possible to give a complete picture since the ensuing engagement in the situation is an important part of the analysis. Even though my case study breaks down at this point, what is clear is that the analysis of a small incident could lead to a profound change in understanding because such a holistic process allows an exploration in which there is no theory-practice dichotomy, no emotion-thought split, and no divide between the subjective world of the practitioner and the objective world of social reality. Learning mostly involves micro 'cycles' with more significant qualitative 'macro' change occurring over time, of which my experience with feminism is an example. Such learning, though striven for by educators, cannot be programmed or made to order since ultimately it is a matter of stance, but education and training can provide a more or less fertile setting. What is important is the development of the practitioner's capacity to engage with the process to the extent that it becomes not simply a technique but a way of being. Where this happens, learning will lead to the continuous development of understanding. Whilst what has been outlined so far would accord with Boud's notion of being critical, it would not, however, be sufficient for the development of critical practice as I have construed the term. In order to develop this point further I turn now to consider the place of socially critical literature in becoming critical. Here I elaborate on the idea mentioned earlier, that what we are considering essentially is a 'process of becoming'.

Management text books and training manuals are good examples of the type of theory where, for example, readers are introduced to a topic such as 'leadership' by an examination of 'style'; laissez-faire, democratic, autocratic or John Adair's 'Action Centred Leadership' (Adair:1988). What is never discussed is that these concepts are imbued with a philosophy, an ideology, a world view, a position. This is in contrast to critical theory (see Gibson:1986, for a useful introduction) which is explicit about its theoretical ideological underpinnings so that all action is seen in terms of its wider implications and meaning. This lifts analysis and practice out of the merely instrumental mode. It recognises that 'under the rug of technique lies an image of man (sic)' (Eisner:1985:47). Critical theory, therefore, can enable practitioners to engage in wider debates concerning, in particular, relations of power. This is not to say that practitioners have to agree with what critical theory says. Rather that such theory, within which there is plenty of argument in any case, presents a continual challenge to practitioners to develop their own stance. This is a process of making explicit and clear that which is implicit and unclear, and possibly exercising a malign effect. A key thing to consider in this process of revelation is the extent to which actions and thoughts are driven by unconscious forces in ways and to ends unknown or freely chosen. Without a critical awareness practitioners might simply be internalising and acting out the social mores of the day.

Becoming critical oneself, however, let alone assisting others in the process, can be fraught with difficulties. This is most likely to happen when internalised notions

of 'common sense', (Usher and Bryant: 1989:84) are being questioned. It is important to appreciate, therefore, that learning is a process of becoming (Smith: 1994:133) which can easily be derailed or forestalled by educators who, intentionally or otherwise, seek to impose upon what they take to be the deficient views of practitioners. As Brookfield (1993:84) has noted:

All too often renditions of critical practice create, often unwittingly, an unfortunate dichotomy between, on the one hand, the sophisticated critical pedagogue able to penetrate hegemony, dominant cultural values and structural distortions with a single withering glance of pure clarity and, on the other hand, the learner as unquestioning dolt, duped into an uncritical acceptance of distorted meaning perspectives which have made structural oppression, economic inequity, racism, sexism and the silencing of divergent voices seem wholly natural.

Learning should not be about inculcating 'correct' knowledge, according to Freire (1972), but spring from a dialogical interaction between educator and learner. Even where views are hazy, the appropriate response of the educator is not, as it were, to blind learners with the 'brilliance' of their own, but to help clarify and develop understanding. This might mean, as Bion (In Smith:1994:148) so eloquently put it, that 'Where there is a faint or flickering light, it is best revealed by creating darkness.' Should this fail to happen, the capacity for learning, as Freire (1972:97) warns in speaking of leaders who deny praxis to the oppressed, may be not so much impaired as destroyed. One of the purposes of this paper is to help educators avoid this destructive possibility.

Conclusion

What I have outlined above is different from the thrust of Bloxham and Heathfield's (1995) interesting attempt to overcome the theory-practice divide with their undergraduate Youth and Community Work students. In spite of their stated requirement for, '...a taxonomy that evaluates an integrated combination of knowledge, skills, and values, their practical use and critique.' (1995:37-38), the focus was clearly on cognitive development since the project's evaluation rests on what the students said as opposed to what they did. As a result, the discussion (see pp45-46) centres around the putative impact on future practice of the students' learning. Indeed one student is quoted as saying that the learning was interesting but, '...how on earth do I put that into practice?' If this is not the theory-practice split in full cry then I am unsure as to what it actually is.

Nevertheless, Bloxham and Heathfield's work should be of great interest to educators in academic settings since, to my knowledge, and strange as it may seem, I am unsure as to how many actually base their courses and programmes on any explicit theory of learning, whether homegrown or otherwise. What this paper suggests is that a position on how people learn is essential for educators because it provides

an open structure for the educational encounter. Moreover, since the development of critical practice is often stated as an aim, it is important to understand in some detail as to what it means to be critical. Being critical is not the application of critical theory in practice settings, although, as I have argued above, the appreciation of critical theory has its place. It is a process of becoming in which the development of understanding is consciously sought by giving equal weight to the different aspects of learning: seeing, feeling, thinking and acting. In this process new frames of reference emerge as old ones are found to be inadequate, and analysis stops neither at technique nor cognition but moves into fundamental questions of personal stance. Learning is therefore concerned with uncovering basic personal frameworks and exploring the connections between these and relations of power in the wider society.

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SOCIAL ACTION CAN BE AN EMPOWERING PROCESS:

a response to the scepticism of Monica Barry

JENNIE FLEMING, MARK HARRISON AND DAVID WARD

Introduction

In her article 'The Empowering Process' (Youth & Policy, Autumn 1996 pp 1-13) Monica Barry seriously questions the integrity and validity of social action as an approach to working with disadvantaged and alienated young people. From her references, it is clear that she is directing her criticisms to the social action/self directed groupwork approach developed by ourselves and others associated with the Centre for Social Action. In particular, she argues that the problem 'with both social action and participation is that there may be inherent scepticism amongst those currently without power, skills and resources that change could ever be effected from the grass root'. She says social action attracts a 'more upwardly-mobile, eloquent section of the population who are not currently deemed rejected or "dis-empowered"'. She also charges social action with failing 'to tackle fully the need for more fundamental structural changes to the status quo' and with 'promoting action that inadvertently gives more legitimacy to, rather than questions, the existing social order.' (p 7). These are serious charges indeed, which we feel impelled to contest and to answer. Clearly, there are conceptional issues to be revisited, and it is perhaps timely for us to look again at the roots of our own thinking which are based on the work of Paulo Freire, who died in May 1997. More importantly there is documented evidence from social action work with young people, whether it be the Ainsley Teenage Action Group, (Ward (ed) 1982), the Top End Youth Action Group in Paisley (Ballentyne 1993), The Voices Young Homeless Group (Kemp, 1996 and Voices, 1997), or the three Youth Action projects in Bradford (Harris and Harrison, 1995), that these charges collapse when examined in the light of clearly focused and implemented social action practice.

What is Social Action really?

What Monica Barry describes in her article is not action. What is described as social action, is in fact traditional youth work. Social action is different to the participative youth work described in the article. We will begin by outlining our understanding of social action, then address and answer her specific criticisms and finally, look at how to take practice further.

The context within which social action emerged in the late 1970s is one in which traditional youth work and youth social work were stuck in the activity based and compensatory models of youth work practice. (Fleming et al, 1983, Harrison, 1996). The 'healthy body, healthy mind', 'idle hands' and character building philosophies rooted in nineteenth century thinking, underpinned (and to a large

extent still do) much work with young people (Ward, 1982). Youth social work, took this essentially individual and pathological perspective further, arguing that young people at risk and in trouble needed to be 'treated' through group counselling or behaviour modification, (remember the 'correctional curriculum'?) and more recently by cognitive 'what works' forms of practice (Raynor et al, 1994). All the while in the background, expressed by the 'prison works', 'condemn a little more, understand a little less' rhetoric of the Conservative government, has been a view that young people who offend are simply 'bad' and should be dealt with through punishments within or outside the community. In common these approaches fail to grasp the complexity of the problems faced by young people or the causes of offending. All share at root an essentially individualistic view of social problems.

Social action developed from and has been in part sustained by a dissatisfaction with these perspectives and the impact they have had on the practice of youth and social work. It has been developed by practitioners, educators and policy makers to take a different approach to the problems of the people and communities with whom they work focussing on their aspirations and capacities rather than deficits and negative stereotypes. In summary, there are three main points that distinguish social action from traditional work:

- *a recognition that **all** people have the capacity to create social change and should be given the opportunity*
- *professionals work in partnership with people in the community*
- *the agenda is handed over to the people themselves.*

Social action is an approach based on a clear set of principles. As set out by the Centre for Social Action these are:

- *All people have skills and understanding which they can draw on to tackle the problems they face. Professionals should not attach negative labels to service users.*
- *All people have rights, including the right to be heard, the right to define issues facing them, and the right to take action on their own behalf.*
- *People acting collectively can be powerful. People who lack power and influence can gain it through working together in groups. Practice should reflect this understanding.*
- *Individuals in difficulty are often confronted by complex issues rooted in social policy, the environment and the economy. Responses to them should reflect this understanding.*
- *Methods of working must reflect non-elitist principles. Workers do not lead the group but facilitate members in making decisions for themselves and controlling whatever outcome ensues. Though special skills and knowledge are employed, these do not accord privilege and are not solely the province of the workers.*

- *Social action workers will strive to challenge inequality and discrimination in relation to race, gender, sexual orientation, age, class, disability or any other of social differentiation.*

The social action approach stresses that people should be allowed and enabled to set their own agenda. This is a prerequisite for work with alienated groups who are well used to, but disenchanted with, much mainstream practice. They see it as irrelevant and meaningless to their lives. Young people themselves are well placed to know what are the important and significant things in their lives. workers should not assume to know what matters to young people, but listen to what they have to say for themselves. It is important that this is not a passive process and goes beyond ideas, talk and analysis to action and social change. Otherwise, young people will quickly see it as irrelevant and without purpose and lose interest.

To undertake social action means practitioners unlearning what they are taught in their professional training and developing a partnership relationship in which they are responsible for the process while the young people bring the content. By turning the relationship between the worker and young person around in this way the worker is no longer the decision maker, the 'expert' or access point to the important knowledge and resources. As Mullender and Ward (1992, p 11) say.

Practitioners who use the model are challenged to combine their own efforts with those of oppressed groups without colonising them. This is achieved by placing the reins in the hands of the service users organised together in groups and by offering them help in achieving their own goals, in the place of the customary 'we know best' of traditional practice.

The role for the worker develops a process and facilitates people to:

- identify **what** are their interests, concerns and problems
- analyse **why** these exist by exploring the complexity and causes of their issues and concerns
- identify **how** to tackle these causes to create change
- take **action** to achieve change
- **reflect** upon and review what has happened, what has been successful, what has not and so start the cyclical process again.

In this process, asking the question *why* is the keystone. It enables young people to move, by putting the issues in their wider context, towards awareness, raised consciousness, the pursuit of rights and ultimately to forms of social change activity that challenge a status quo in which such rights are denied. Practice is common which jumps straight from *what* questions to *how* questions. Referring to our work, Williamson (1995 p 11) highlights the importance of the 'why?' question when he says,

Yet between the 'what?' and the 'how?' was the crucial question 'why?'... Only through the careful understanding of the reasons 'why' could the question of 'how' to deal with it be tackled.

While we welcome this endorsement, Williamson does, however, misunderstand what we mean by the 'why' question. He says it involves exploring 'why' the issue is important to young people (p 11). In the social action process we are asking 'why does the problem exist, what are its causes?' This process encourages people to pursue the question 'Why?' until the root causes of a problem have been identified. Leaving out this stage and this way of looking at problems is, we believe, to collude with a process in which explanations and responsibilities and the scope of the solutions are sought in the private world around young people and within their existing knowledge and experience. These have been fashioned by their position in the 'pecking order' of society and the processes of socialisation, education and social control which keep this in place. Asking the question 'why?' gives people the opportunity to widen their horizons of what is possible, a chance to break out of the demoralising and self-perpetuating narrowness of vision and introspection created by poverty, lack of opportunity and disadvantage. It enables them to conceive of new explanations in the wider social, political and economic context and to consider how they can identify and engage with these. It turns the spotlight round from the young people as a problem in themselves, to the problem they encounter, and enables young people to see opportunities to develop a much wider range of options for action and change (Mullender and Ward, 1989).

Thus the social action process is bottom up and not top down; the worker is a support person working in partnership with young people. Active participation as represented in the 'what/how' process is a step in the right direction, but if we are serious about letting people have their say then we need to relinquish control, to let them set the agenda, and to go beyond participation to social action. Asking, and re-asking the question 'why?' is crucial to this.

Quite understandably what Monica Barry appears to have discovered from dipping her toe into the water of social action groupwork, if that it is not an easy option. However, rather than going back and analysing critically what she and her colleagues have done she has questioned, prematurely we believe and will argue, the approach itself.

It is immediately clear that the work she is describing is very different in its basic premise to those we have described here. For example, in the case study part of the article she states that,

...there was an additional agency aim within this particular group to influence social workers, the judiciary and lawyers to retain 16 and 17 year olds within the welfare-oriented Childrens Hearing System (CHS)... (p 8)

...Save the Children Fund (SCF) hoped that young people would, through the social action group, help influence such referrals back to the CHS... This aim - which was shared with group members from the outset (and with which they initially concurred) - proved less achievable than expected when young people themselves were being asked to instigate such change... (p 9)

It is no wonder the group did not meet these aims. The starting point for social action is handing the agenda over to the people (in this case young people) you are working with.

This means beginning with a blank sheet, entering into a dialogue with young people in which the professional is the learner and the young people are the experts about their lives, concerns, issues and problems. In this group, as described, the workers or agency agenda dominated proceedings. Rather than social action, this is a 'participation' approach where the workers set the agenda and invite young people to participate but, on the workers', not the young people's terms. So it is no surprise when Monica Barry states:

...it also transpired during the course of the project that the young people's agendas were often far removed from those of the workers. The group members' aims were predominately short-term and small scale...

These, the group members' aims, should have been the starting point for the groupwork process. If this had been so, the end result might have looked very different.

Monica Barry, quite rightly, homes in on the concept of empowerment and participation as central to the notion of partnership in social action. However, rather than drawing the necessary distinction between the two concepts, she links them together (p 6). The problem with the concept of participation is that it suggests that you are inviting people to be involved in somebody else's project or idea. Usually it is more powerful inviting the less powerful, (social workers or youth workers inviting young people) to be involved. In this context, partnership invariably means the most tokenistic of gestures in order to justify what the professionals and organisations were going to do anyway.

Empowerment is also a term which has been used in many ways and with different meanings. When presented interchangeably with participation its essence is removed, thereby making it almost meaningless. When we use the word empowerment we place the emphasis on the process by which power is gained, developed, or seized by people *for themselves*. (Staples, 1990).

In our experience, the people with whom we work, for example those in poverty, unemployed, black people, disabled people, homeless young people, do not feel, and often in reality are not, participants; they are often excluded, discriminated against and blamed for problems which are not of their making. They are becoming

increasingly marginalized. This results in people becoming alienated, often rejecting the society which has failed and rejected them. For them participation does not exist.

If professional workers and policy makers insist on continuing to set the agenda however participatively it is dressed up, they will fail to offer young people anything with which to engage and will push them further away. Marginalized people react against professionals who try to impose their ideas on them whether it is in a participative way or not. If practice is to address the circumstances Monica Barry describes, then we have to develop practices that are distinctively different.

The criticisms of Social Action and our responses

In the previous sections we noted Monica Barry's criticisms of social action as she practiced it, and outlined the social action process that we use in our work with young people. We will now address ourselves directly to the specific criticisms that Barry makes.

Young people are too inexperienced and too sceptical to create change

Monica Barry writes that the young people felt they were 'too inexperienced to organise things for themselves and wanted a more directive role from workers' (p 10). She also says that 'young people from a position of marginalisation and disadvantage cannot effectively achieve change on their own.' (p 9). We challenge this implication that young people do not have skills. All young people have skills, knowledge and experiences. They might not have shared these with Monica Barry because as we have noted she had another agenda or was not trusted. The skills might not be the same as those of professionals, who have often had privileged education and training. However, with the appropriate support and encouragement from each other and workers, young peoples' skills can be validated and enhanced in social action groups.

For example, a group of 'disaffected' Year 10 pupils, who were viewed by their school as having low ability and short concentration spans with the support of each other and the social action in the social action group, used telephone directories, rang social services, found out information from the library, wrote letters to local councillors, invited the press to come and speak with them, and spoke to local people door-to-door to gain the residents' support for their case. Other young people have developed the skills and confidence to speak at public meetings, fill in lottery application forms, run play schemes, keep records of how grants have been spent and make complaints about the standards of service they have received from professionals.

Young people learn from each other, and this is often a dominant theme in social action groups, as the following comment from a young homeless person shows,

At the group we all learn off each other. People who have flats help those of us who are moving in. They talk about bills, budgeting and the mess ups they have had. How you must not give in, you must keep your place, how to keep on at people to get what you ought to have.

Social Action starts from recognising and valuing the skills young people already have to survive, organise and achieve results, against the odds, in the very unhelpful circumstances that many find themselves. It is not about retaining or re-educating young people. Arguably, in many such situations young people are more capable and skilled than those whose skills are achieved in the context of relative advantage and are formally given recognition as successful. However, it is in the use of such survival skills that problems can arise in the face of the forces of the State, law and order and definitions of what is acceptable and unacceptable. These capacities can be applied to activities that rebound on themselves and the young people enter a downward spiral of rejection and alienation. Social Action recognises that young people can not take on and redefine the dominant culture and norms, that direct confrontation is unrealistic and potentially self destructive. However, by the exploration of the question 'why?' it is possible to achieve a measure of critical understanding and agreement which, rather than modifying behaviour and domesticating (Kidd and Kumar, 1982) is directed towards a movement for change. In this, longer term aspirations and objectives are set consistently within action which will achieve tangible benefits for here and now.

Like Monica Barry, we know that oppressed groups are often sceptical and cynical about the possibilities for change. However, what she reveals is her own pessimistic view of the young people she is working with, not their incapacity to change things. She says the young people 'wanted a more directive role from workers' (p 10). In our work we have found that initially young people may, indeed, doubt their ability to achieve their goals for themselves. They are well used to being told and shown that they are not capable or competent. However, our experience is that with consistent support from workers committed to social action, workers who actually do what they say, young people quickly come to realise and value their ability to take control.

They are not normal adults here. Normal adults don't listen and they say, 'You've got to do this!' Here they will listen, they will advise you, but not tell you, you have to make your own decisions... No one picks faults or pulls you down. (Fleming, 1996)

In social action work, workers can have a role to motivate and encourage young people, but they do not *direct* the group. In fact, in our experience, when young people are working on issues and problems that *they* have identified as important and relevant for themselves, motivation is not an issue. They are self motivated and generate their own impetus and enthusiasm. We have worked with groups of young people, all responsible in the summer holidays for younger brothers, sisters and cousins. They have arranged summer play schemes for these children on the estate where they lived. This has involved applying for grants, managing budgets, booking rooms, organising equipment and resources and maintaining their enthusiasm and commitment for the two weeks of the scheme and for the many months of planning, so much so, that they did it again the next summer.

Young people may need some encouragement when, for example, they do not receive a reply to a letter, or get a negative response or a put down from adults, but their desire to achieve the goals that they have set themselves keeps them going. Another group of young people kept on working towards their goal of their own youth club on their estate, despite numerous set backs. They worked on this project for four years.

Instead of encouraging the young people to realise their full potential as a group capable of achieving their own goals, the role Monica Barry appears to be advocating is that of the professional as a go between or intermediary - between those in power and those without. This is dressed up as partnership. It is a consensus model, in which people are looking to minimise difference and conflict. The professional acts as a buffer or filter between young people and agencies and those in power. The professionals re-interpret what the young people are saying in an attempt to make it more palatable to those in power. In their efforts to keep everyone happy, they in fact satisfy no one. It does not work for policy makers or agencies as they are not actually hearing the voice of the people, and this quickly becomes apparent, as any plans they might put forward do not satisfy the young people. In parallel, the young people are not happy as they see their issues and concerns being watered down, altered or hi-jacked by those who do not really understand. If the 'go-between' ever was effective, it became redundant with the break up of consensus politics. Today, the goals of politicians (of all parties), policy makers and agencies responsible for implementing youth policy are, with a few notable exceptions, moving in the opposite direction, towards a system based on authoritarianism, and punishment. Young people are increasingly seen as in need of containment and control, the talk is on the need to be tough on crime, but there is in reality little attention given to the causes of crime. The consequence is that acting as a go between is no longer viable; workers can no longer deliver direct gains for young people. Young people are for the most part sufficiently aware of the hostile, institutional context towards them that they no longer have expectations that workers can gain much on their behalf. The consequence is to reaffirm the importance of the enabling and facilitating roles of the worker (Mullender and Ward, 1991a) and of focusing on this.

Alongside questioning the ability of young people to create change by themselves, Barry discusses the possibility of working in partnership with those currently holding power to effect change (p 7). This assumes that those with power are willing and eager to give it up. Staples (1990) argues that, 'power is not likely to be handed to "have not" groups in our society. Power must be developed or taken by the powerless themselves'. Partnerships with the powerful, who do not want to give up power, cannot be a means of achieving change. Other struggles have continually proved this to be untrue. These would include women's struggles (Dominelli and McCleod, 1989), the disability movement (Oliver, 1990), the black consciousness and civil rights movement (Davis, 1982, Carson et al, 1991). These struggles have achieved

some fundamental changes in the status quo. There is a whole wealth of experience showing that people without power can and do take on those with power and achieve the desired change. Tony Gibson's (1996) book is full of examples of people from all around the world doing just that. His examples range through people forming housing co-operatives and renovating housing for low rent letting in Hull to 'Planning for Real' in an Indian village.

Social action fails to engage with 'disaffected' young people

In her article Monica Barry questions the ability of social action work to engage with the most disaffected young people. She sees it more as attracting a 'more upwardly mobile, eloquent section of the population'. We believe we have evidence to show this is not true. We have documented accounts of projects that show action groups do attract and engage with very alienated young people, engaging with young offenders (both in the community and in penal institutions), young homeless people, non-attenders at school, young women (under 16) with children, young people with mental health problems. Social action can and does engage with the most disaffected and alienated young people who are often written off by other agencies and professions and is often the only approach which can do this.

To substantiate this, there are numerous examples of young people themselves speaking of how social action is the way of working that they find meaningful for themselves and want to engage with.

The project is different to youth clubs, 'cos you go down and you get told what to do. At the project you go and you can put your ideas forward. If we weren't involved in the project we'd be stealing cars, hanging round street corners. (Allerton Young People's Project, 1996).

In the words of a young woman who had been excluded from school, but returned there with the social action project to ask the views of young people about services in the area:

When we were at school, we left with nothing, they classified us as problem children, they couldn't find a solution, but then when they found out what we were doing at the project they were really impressed. They couldn't understand why we work in the project but not in school.

Working in the groups is what I want to do, so I want to work hard. At school they tell you to do it and don't ask questions. (Allerton Young People's Project, 1996).

Young people in Social Action groups do not create change and social action does not question the existing social order

Young people working in partnership with professionals where the professionals respect the young people, let them set the agenda, can and do often create social changes and in so doing develop their own skills, knowledge and capacities which

remain with them and inform their contact with authority and the social systems way beyond the group itself.

Once again, we will let the words of young people speak for themselves to show how they value the different relationships with social action workers and what they believe they have learnt and achieved from their involvement in social action groupwork.

Social action is young people taking action and doing things for themselves so they get ahead. (Allerton Young People's Project, 1996).

It is our group. The staff do not tell us what to do, they may comment, but the group is run by young people, not staff. It's been like that all the way along. We made the rules and we stick to them. (Fleming, 1993).

The group of young people in Allerton in Bradford, have successfully applied for lottery funding for a cafe to be run by young people in Bradford. It will provide young people with training and real jobs, as well as providing a service in a community where there is very little. Other groups in Bradford had a major impact on the plans for regeneration of the estate they lived on. Through the work of the social action group the single person flats (which were to all to be removed) were retained as accommodation for young people.

The young people in one of the first social action groups in Nottingham succeeded in arguing their case with the police and got an officer moved from their estate and policing patterns changed. Young people at a project for homeless young people have achieved representation on the management of that project and are included in decision making about the project and its development.

A group of young homeless people in Birmingham have recently successfully applied to the Birmingham City Council for money (£5,000) for a fund that will be administered by themselves. They were one of 200 applicants. This fund will enable other young homeless people to purchase essential household items. It is open to young people moving to live independently who have received a payment of less than £200 from the Dept of Social Security or who earn less than £75 per week. They hope to match this £5,000 with money from other sources and have won an award from the Midland Branch of the Chartered Institute of Housing for the scheme.

The Voices Group, made up of young homeless people, reported to the CHAR committee for the Inquiry into Youth Homelessness. As well as reporting to the Inquiry, they

have spoken at all parliamentary groups on homeless, a group made up of representatives of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The feedback from politicians on the impact of the hearing about homeless issues from people affected was excellent. Positive proof of the theory that young people are their own best advocates. (Kemp, 1996, p 31).

The Voices group is run to social action principles and supported by social action workers. The young people say of their experience in the group:

We now have a better understanding of ourselves and our positions in society. We become more politically and socially aware, and as a result, we learnt to run the gauntlet and play the system. (VOICES, 1997).

Young men in a young offender institution invited the governor to come and answer questions and brought up the issue of the temporary release and parole system, which they perceived as working unfairly, with visitors from the Parole Board. (Badham, 1989)

In society in general, young people are no longer seen as 'the hope for the future', but are increasingly demonised. As Roker and Player (1997, p10) point out, 'Reporting on young people today almost always focuses on negative topics, such as young offenders, violence, gangs and disaffected youth.' They go on to show how wrong this view of young people is, and how young people are 'making a difference, taking the initiative, and getting things changed.'

Not all groups have such a significant impact. However, in the process of being involved in the groups, young people learn skills and gain knowledge that they can go on to take into other situations. They learn that things can be changed, that people with power can be challenged, they learn how power is concentrated in the hands of a few and how they use it, they learn to take responsibility for their own actions. They also challenge the predominant negative view of young people.

Arguably, the space and opportunities for achieving such changes are getting better as the field of social change activity 'is no longer an organised area of disciplinary power, but a space of chaos and indeterminacy' (Giddens, 1992, p 21). Single issue campaigns which are accessible and achievable by young people are consistent with the post modern political and social agenda. Of course, this leads to dilemmas and contradictions. The short/long term balance is a difficult one for young people to manoeuvre and navigate for themselves - but so it is for all groups which come to understand the interrelationship of wider 'public issues' and their own personal and immediate predicaments (Wright and Mills, 1970). Yes, they may take any available short term gains and abandon longer term goals. But to characterise this as complying with the status quo flies in the face of what we are coming to understand about the fragmented, incremental, contingent and plural nature of change in post modern society (Bauman, 1991). Groups vary in the ways they manage the short term/long term pulls, but our experience is that purposeful social action practice and, in particular, asking the 'why?' question are important and effective in enabling the choice to be made in ways that are explicit, open, realistic and productive.

The limits on what young people can achieve are often those of the adults, professionals or organisations working with them, not the young people themselves. It is very easy to blame young people, it is far harder to be self critical. The quotes earlier in

this section from young people highlight how they recognise themselves that what they achieve can be limited by the attitudes of others (not least teachers, youth and social workers). If they are not expected to be able to do things they will not be able, but given a different style of work and relationships, things can be very different.

The work Monica Barry describes in her article is, in fact, an example of how workers can constrain the achievements of young people, but put the blame on the young people themselves (p 7). Where people are not sceptical but believe in the possibility of being able to influence things, change can happen. As we have already said, Monica Barry herself points out that young people did not set the part of the agenda to influence social workers, the judiciary and lawyers. In fact, she found that they perceived advantages in staying within the adult system. Rather than 'blaming' the young people for not achieving this goal, it would be better to look at the workers motivations for imposing this goal on the young people.

We note the difference in enthusiasm and tone between Monica Barry's chapter in the Save the Children book on social action (Williamson, 1995, p 24-31) and her much more pessimistic tone in the article, as the contradictions inherent in her approach make themselves clear in her practice. We believe this reflects her misunderstanding of what the social action process is really about.

Taking practice further

The project Monica Barry describes was under the wing of Save the Children Fund. The misinterpretation of social action by Save the Children Fund goes back a long way. Social action was adopted by SCF alongside a personal development model as the way forward for their youth policy. Despite many approaches by those involved with the development of social action in Nottingham, Save the Children Fund chose to 'plough its own furrow' rather than work with those others actively developing the approach. The hierarchy in Save the Children Fund has looked to the proponents of traditional youth work for its consultancy on social action. Monica's project and those described in the book 'Social Action for Young People' (Williamson, 1995), show the continued mis-interpretation by SCF of social action work. The projects they described are not social action projects, but participative youth work where young people are invited to engage with the workers' agenda. The concepts of participation and partnership must not be confused. Partnership is central to the social action approach. The methods adopted in social action are participative but the approach is distinctive.

Barry defines empowerment as a gain for 'each participant' (p 3) and she questions the value of collective action (p 7). However, we believe that though social problems are experienced individually they remain social problems. Their roots are in the social, political and economic contexts. Therefore, the challenge is to develop a practice that reflects an understanding of the collective, rather than the private and individual, understanding oppression and, therefore, empowerment. (Ward and Mullender, 1991)

In our article, 'Action Speaks Louder than Words' (Fleming et al, 1983/4), we argued that the challenge was to develop a practice that addressed itself to the limitations of conventional work with young people to address the real problems they faced: hopelessness, low income, no access to welfare benefits, unemployment and lack of status to name a few. Other practitioners and academics shared our critique. Some, rather than moving to develop a practice based on a new paradigm opted for traditional liberal education values and forms of social education (Corrigan, 1983; Davies, 1979). Others, such as Dearling and Sinclair (1983) searched for new models but ended up doing what Monica Barry describes as 'textbook' social action where '...workers themselves set the political agenda for change whilst encouraging young people to front the exercise'. This is not social action at all.

For our theoretical and practical inspiration we turned to Paulo Freire. In practice we learnt lessons from community work and the experience of Community Development Projects (CDPs) and adapted methods from social education and social skills, for example, their exercises and games for the exploration of issues. We were influenced by the work and struggles of black writers and activists notably Walter Rodney, George Jackson and Steve Biko. We were inspired by movements in youth culture and music, particularly Reggae, Punk and Two Tone and drew strength and encouragement from the Women's Movements challenge of (male) authority and professionalism over their lives. More recently the emergence of the disability rights movement, the Direct Action Network (DAN) and the writings of Mike Oliver (1990) and others have reaffirmed and deepened our commitment to challenging current orthodoxies.

From this critique, analysis and theoretical base we began to develop the framework for changing our practice. We recognised the need for a theoretically guided practice. This comes together in our statement of principles which sets practice in a clear value and ethical framework. There is an interconnectedness of values, methods and skills in all aspects of our practice. However, it is essential to adopt theoretical concepts that are rooted in and informed by practice. The challenge was to adapt Freire for the situation in the UK.

There are three parts to Freire's philosophy. First, it incorporates the notion that *praxis* is dialogue which simultaneously consists of both action and reflection, or action reflection and reflection action, in an equal or balanced relationship. This dialogue breaks down the traditional relationship between teacher - student and the 'banking' concept of education and replaces it with a partnership where roles interchange and the teacher - student and student - teacher are co-investigators each reforming their thinking through reflecting with each other. Knowledge is creating or recreating through critical reasoning.

The second part of Freire's approach is *problematization*. This is a process of drawing attention to situations that require action or change. The possibility of change is indicated by posing questions. Problem posing is a process of questioning

deeper structures; of challenging commonly accepted ideas by posing more and more questions to dig beneath conventional or commonsense explanations of reality; of raising and analysing contradictions (Kidd and Kumar, 1982). Hence the importance of the question 'why?'.

The final component is *conscientisation*. This, Freire describes as a permanent critical approach to reality in order to discover it and discover the myths that deceive us and help to maintain the oppressing dehumanising structures; it leaves nobody inactive (Freire, 1972). Therefore, conscientisation goes beyond consciousness raising or an awareness of reality and involves critical development of strategies from experience.

Staples (1990, p 30) talks of a key theme in empowerment being 'participation of people in their own empowerment', the 'importance of recognising existing competences', and 'building on individual and collective strengths'. Empowerment for us is the process by which power is developed or taken by the powerless themselves; we believe social action is a means by which this can begin.

Conclusions

We agree with the final part of Barry's article where she talks of the need for the powerful voice of young people to be heard (p 11). We believe that the social action process as we have set out in this article is a very powerful means of young people, community members and service users getting their voices heard and an effective way of them creating social change. It is an approach which we have used in many and varied settings with visible and identifiable outcomes and achievements.

The Centre for Social Action does not have the monopoly of this approach, does not claim it, and it has not yet finished its development. It has been a dynamic process for over 20 years and it continues to be refined and developed in the light of new learning. The approach has been used in practice, consultancy, training and research.

At this moment we are in contact with youth projects in Senegal (ENDA), where the workers have used the writings of Freire and developed a theory and practice very similar to social action. There, they work with young street workers who have set up their own organisation to secure their working rights and living conditions. Examples of practice closer to home have already been discussed in this article.

We have used the social action process in undertaking training for youth social workers in Moscow and Ukraine. They have looked at the issues that confront young people in their countries, examined in detail why they exist and begun to think about how action can be taken to create change. They have reflected on their achievements and moved on to further action. As a result of this, services using social action theory and practice have been developed, for example for young homeless people, disabled young people and for children who are dying of cancer and their families.

We have used the social action approach in research and evaluation. We have undertaken an evaluation of detached youth work in Knowsley on Merseyside. Our task was to gauge the impact of an ambitious, short-term street work programme in certain neighbourhoods on its younger community members. Social action evaluation methods and good detached work practice are a natural partnership, the young people themselves setting and controlling the work agenda. The case made by the young people for the continuance of the programme was a major factor in persuading the authority to invest heavily in this style of youth work this year.

Sometimes we have been involved in a project or piece of work through many different phases. Workers from the Centre for Social Action have developed a support project for young homeless people, we have trained all the workers and offered regular consultancy and undertaken an evaluation of the service from the young people's point of view, which has informed the development of the project's work.

Monica Barry seriously questions the validity and integrity of social action. Far from being the con she implies, there are examples of a wide range of practice carried out over the past 15 years, that show this to be untrue. Through these, social action can be shown, if carried out consistently with the principles and practice which have been amply articulated, to be a process capable of engaging with the powerless and through supporting their own initiatives can enable them to acquire power and achieve significant change.

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COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT;

Implications for Community and Youth Work Education and Training

JEAN ANASTACIO,
MARJORIE MAYO AND ALAN TURKIE

Introduction

Recent issues of *Youth & Policy* have developed debates on three themes of particular contemporary relevance: the concept of empowerment and its usurpation; education and competency-based approaches to training; and dilemmas of professionalisation or deprofessionalisation in youth and community work (Morley, 1995; McRoberts and Leitch, 1995; Davies and Norton, 1995; Barry, 1996; Banks, 1996). This article starts by exploring the interconnections between these separate strands in current debates. The differing and competing meanings of empowerment have needed to be disentangled, to set the framework for debates on professional education and training for empowerment. The authors share the view that education and training for community and youth workers, as social educators in the making, should be experienced as a genuinely empowering process in its own right, as students are enabled to link theory and practice and to develop skills and confidence by critically reflecting on their own experiences. In practice, however, education and training for empowerment is as problematic as the concept of empowerment itself.

Whilst there has been valuable discussion of these questions, education and training which embraces community participation and empowerment remains relatively fragmented and potentially marginalised (Stevenson and Parsloe, 1993; Stevenson 1994). Although there are a number of initiatives in progress at the present time, there are also a number of dilemmas which relate to their development. In the current context, professional education and training programmes have themselves been, and continue to be, subjected to major processes of re-organisation and change, as recent debates in *Youth & Policy* have illustrated.

Before focusing on these initiatives and the dilemmas associated with them, this article starts by summarising the earlier history of education and training in community work within the context of both youth work and social work training, and the suggested debate associated with the competency-based approach, which tends to redefine how empowerment and participative approaches to work with others is understood and integrated. By looking at the relevant background, the article aims to set the scene for the subsequent debate. Having explored some of the contemporary dilemmas, it concludes by raising some of the implications and possibilities for alternative futures. In spite of the danger of empowerment becoming an overused cliché, our aim is to see it remain central to community and youth work education and training, safeguarded alongside participative action research and experiential learning.

Background and definitions

So how can the background structures of education and training for community work be summarised? Broadly, the framework for England and Wales, over the past two and a half decades or so, has been significantly influenced by the thinking embedded in the 1968 Gulbenkian Report on *Community Work and Social Change*, and the sequel, *Current Issues in Community Work* (1973). The Gulbenkian approach started from the view that systematic education and training for community work was required for full-time community workers, as well as for those involved in community work as part of related professional concerns (such as some social workers, youth workers, and community educators). In addition, a wider range of professionals, volunteers and community activists would also require 'an intelligent understanding of community processes in the course of their work' (Community Work Group, 1973, p 103)

Although the original Study Group report in 1968 had argued for a coherent approach to meeting these needs, concentrated in a limited number of educational institutions with well developed expertise in both theory and field work practice, the reality had already become far more diffuse when the second Study Group reported in 1973. In particular, community work had developed as part of social work education, as well as part of youth work education (especially with the greater emphasis upon the links between youth work and community work following the Fairbairn-Milson Report in 1969 [Ahmed & Kirby, 1988]). Finally, the Study Group Report in 1973 noted that community work was also seen by some as falling within the remit of adult education; and conversely as being essentially a spontaneous activity, 'incapable of becoming in any sense professional without losing its essence' (Community Work Group, 1973, p 114). This suspicion of professionalism has been a continuing theme in subsequent debates, a point which re-emerges in the discussion of the current context (Banks, 1996).

The point of emphasis here is that community work education and training has been developed in a diverse and fragmented way in England and Wales. The situation has been rather different in Scotland; and the Scottish experience has potential lessons, which will be referred to subsequently. Typically, community work education and training in England and Wales has been bolted on to other professional programmes, rather than being developed as a set of coherent programmes in its own right - with the significant exception of pre-professional training programmes developed in the field, through the Federation of Community Work Training Groups (Pople, 1995). A minority of courses have sought to keep community work at the top of their agenda. As it will be suggested subsequently, community work education and training has been potentially more vulnerable to marginalisation as a result. This has become increasingly significant in a period of restructuring and change which is, of course, precisely the period when community workers are also facing the challenge of a higher public profile and much rhetoric on participation and empowerment.

This brings the discussion on to the varying ways in which participation and empowerment have been defined. Nelson and Wright remind us of Williams' dictum that participation, like community, 'is a warmly persuasive word' (Williams, 1976, p 76). In practice, though, the reality may be more complicated. 'Participation' can, in fact, be used to refer to public consultation exercises, which fail to involve people in making actual decisions at all. Participation can even be experienced negatively - as 'political co-option' (Nelson and Wright, 1995, p 2). Participation can be linked to Structural Adjustment Programmes in the Developing World, accompanying initiatives which are effectively geared towards encouraging communities and families (typically meaning women in families) to take on 'welfare and service responsibilities formerly ascribed to the state' (Nelson and Wright, 1995, p 3). Participation can be used as a smoke screen for cuts. And participation, as set out in the well known 'ladder' of citizen participation, can range from this depressing end of the spectrum - participation as manipulation - through to the more positive end, with real power sharing, and beyond to citizen control (Arnstein, 1969; Barry, 1996), leading to the equally tricky, albeit equally warmly persuasive concept of 'empowerment'.

'Empowerment' can be based upon a 'variable' concept of power in society: there is a variable amount of power around, enough for everyone, to put it crudely, if only everyone can learn how to use it. 'Empowerment' according to this view, involves gaining the skills to participate. This is a relatively limited approach, and one which is quite achievable within the framework of existing (and unequal) social relations. 'Empowerment', according to this view, is essentially about learning the rules of the participation game - a game which all can learn to play, regardless of their starting point, in terms of their class, race, gender, sexuality, age or ability.

The 'zero sum' concept of power, in contrast, rests upon the view that the powerless lack power because the powerful have power concentrated in their hands. 'Empowerment' for the relatively powerless in society, according to this perspective, involves challenging the very structures of power, and the dominant ideologies which legitimise them, in society. But this approach does not simply involve replacing one set of powerful interests with another - in other words, the oppressed becoming the oppressors. On the contrary, according to Freire, for instance, the goal is rather that of social transformation - transforming exploitative and oppressive social relations altogether (Freire, 1972).

Finally, a third concept of power, following the work of Foucault, sees power as 'decentered'. Power, according to this view, is far more diffuse, and subjectless, an 'apparatus consisting of discourse, institutions, actors and a flow of events' (Nelson and Wright, 1995, p 10). This would be consistent with a post-modernist perspective. Whilst there are important reservations to be made about this type of approach, it does raise important questions about the nature of power, and hence of empowerment in the far more fragmented context of the mixed economy of welfare in the 1990s.

These different concepts of power have varying implications for empowerment (Craig and Mayo, 1995; Morley, 1995). These in turn have varying implications for the education and training of community workers who are seeking to promote community participation and empowerment. The first concept requires that the community worker be trained to acquire a particular set of technical skills and competencies, skills such as communication and project management, backed by a sound knowledge of the relevant decision-making structures and their time scales, together with a comprehensive knowledge of how to gain access to any available resources. Armed with this knowledge, and these skills, the community worker can then facilitate community participation and empowerment. This somewhat limited view is consistent with the approach of the New Right.

In contrast, the second and third concepts of power and empowerment require *both* knowledge and technical skills of this type *and* a set of wider analytical skills - a far more sophisticated approach to problematising (to use Freire's term). This, in turn, means that the community worker needs to have a solid grounding in the critical social sciences, together with practical research skills. And the community worker who is drawing upon the second and third concepts of power and empowerment needs formal educational skills too, if they are to enable community organisations and activists to develop their *own* analyses and strategies, drawing upon the techniques of participatory action research (Fals Borda, 1988). This, of course, is not an exhaustive list. The point here is simply to illustrate some of the key implications of the second and third concepts of power and empowerment for community work education and training.

The current context and some of its dilemmas

To be effective promoters of community participation and empowerment, in the current context community and youth workers need to experience critical, analytical, self-reflective, and genuinely participatory forms of education and training themselves. Aspects of these forms of education and training will also be required by a range of other professionals, whose work involves them with communities (as the Gulbenkian Study Group had already identified, nearly three decades ago). Meanwhile, community organisations, volunteers and community activists need access to education and training experiences which are also based upon these principles - to build upon their existing knowledge and skills, through experiential learning. For those who want this access, there needs to be clear progression routes leading from basic training to full professional qualifications, via apprenticeship and similar schemes. These need to be offered in the field as well as via college routes - potentially reducing the gap between community activists and community professionals which has been the subject of on-going debate (Banks, 1996). This would seem to be the minimum requirement even for participation and empowerment of the first type, let alone for the more challenging implications of the second and third concepts.

But are these needs being met and will the proposed changes to community work education and training be the answer? As recent articles in *Youth & Policy* have sug-

gested (eg, McRoberts and Leitch, 1995; Davies and Norton, 1995; Banks, 1996), there are a number of initiatives underway. In summary, these initiatives include the work of the Federation of Community Work Training Groups to open up pathways to professional qualifications through the field (including the development of NVQs in community work, linked in with systems for accrediting prior experiential learning - APEL). They also include initiatives to meet the education and training needs of the range of professionals concerned with community practice (including the development of plans for post qualifying training to meet these particular needs). There are attempts to tackle the current fragmentation of provision through the establishment of the National Standards Body for Community Work Training and Qualification, and there is now the proposed joint National Training Organisation initiative, bringing together youth work, community work and community education.

Before coming to any conclusion about their long term strategic potential in relation to community participation and empowerment, these different initiatives need to be located within the wider context of restructuring and change, including changes being debated within the higher education system. These key changes, offering as they do both opportunities and dilemmas and constraints can be identified, through the following illustrations from education and training for youth work, and education and training for community-based social work.

Opportunities, dilemmas and constraints within the framework of youth work education and training

The establishment of the National Youth Agency (NYA) in 1991, which replaced the National Youth Bureau (NYB) and the Council for Education and Training in Youth and Community Work (CETYCW), has been viewed by some as weakening the links between youth and community work, first emphasised in 'Youth and Community Work in the 70s' (Youth Service Development Council 1969). Agreement established between youth work and community work under CETYCW, the body previously responsible for endorsement, may have become strained since this function moved to the Education and Training Standards Committee of the NYA, '...the youth work focus has sharpened at the expense of a potential broader community work focus' (Russell and Jones, 1995).

The fragmented approach to youth service provision by local authorities in recent years has seen major changes in the way that youth and community work is organised and carried out. It could be argued that such work in its various locations - leisure, community education, community health or as part of Single Regeneration Budget initiatives - has diminished the scope for more generalist practice. The emphasis on privatisation, value for money, and performance indicators, has been accompanied by considerable change in the culture of youth and community work, as well as employer demands and the nature of community participation and empowerment.

The growth of the specialist agency and its impact on more generalist youth and community work is resulting in an increasing number of youth workers and community

workers '...being employed by agencies concerned with specialist functions such as health education, crime prevention and drug abuse' (Banks, 1996). Work with young people is now taking place in a number of diverse fields and locations, within a variety of settings, including community care and the youth justice system, challenging both values and practice. If this is the case then it is likely that more and more community and youth workers will find themselves working in situations where agendas have been set elsewhere - by local or central government, again raising serious questions in relation to notions of empowerment and participation.

Jeffs and Smith (1994) commenting on the impact of changes on youth and community workers and young people are unequivocal:

The landscape of youth policy, informal education and youth work are changing in ways that are often difficult to comprehend. In particular a managerial structure and ethos has been created within little more than a decade which poses no threat and offers no serious impediment to further centralisation and the imposition of highly authoritarian policies directed at young people. The only question mark hangs over the extent to which they have constructed a workforce willing to do their bidding and whether alternative social and political movements will arise capable of pushing welfare and youth policies in more liberal and egalitarian directions before the new orthodoxy becomes embedded.

The negative elements of this shift in the culture of community and youth work is that it has become more bureaucratized and more centralised (Bloxham, 1993). In some instances youth and community services have become privatised, by definition distancing them further from the relative democratic control offered to the work by local government or the voluntary sector.

Many would argue that the single most damaging change over the last twenty years has been the considerable contraction in the quantity of funded community work although comparable statistics are not available to determine this point. And publicly funded community action has become more problematic than ever. Rhetoric about developing participatory mechanisms have been viewed with understandable suspicion.

...in those areas where governments, or local authorities, have been willing to countenance the development of participatory devices, these have been grounds for regarding this as tokenism designed to disguise the retreat of the real locus of power (Hill, 1980).

Opportunities, dilemmas and constraints within the framework of social work education and training

Meanwhile, social work education and training has been restructured, with the introduction and subsequent revision of the Diploma in Social Work (DipSW). This process of restructuring has raised two particular sets of issues, both of which have

parallels with the restructuring of youth work education and training. The first of these is the potentially increasing marginalisation of community work itself.

As the Diploma in Social Work focused more precisely upon learning outcomes, in relation to priority jobs in the field, with more attention to crisis intervention - fire-fighting, rather than longer-term preventative work - so there has been particular focus upon education and training which is geared towards effective social work in the key area of child protection. The Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work's statistics on the specialist placement in 'Areas of Particular Practice' of students awarded the DipSW from 1992 to 1994, provide evidence of this. In 1992, community work provided the setting for the 'Area of Particular Practice' for only 2.5% of students awarded the DipSW, a percentage which had increased slightly, but only to 3.9% in 1994. The percentages for community care were slightly larger (5.9% in 1992 compared with 7.6% in 1994) but still very limited.

Although the figures for the students' 'Primary Client Group' are not directly comparable with the figures for the 'Setting' for the 'Area of Particular Practice', they are potentially of interest too. In 1992, 46% of students specialised in working predominantly with 'Children and Families', by far the largest client group. 'Mental Health' came next at 14.1%. The trend was broadly similar in 1994 (with 46.4% working predominantly with 'Children and Families'. The next largest grouping, in 1994 was 'Probation' at 15.9%, followed by 'Mental Health' at 13.9%. With the increasingly heterogeneous make-up of social services, within the mixed economy of welfare, the voluntary sector has been expanding slightly, as a source of placements (up from 13.7% in 1992 to 15.2% in 1994). But this has evidently not been specifically 'community work' in the voluntary sector, and community work remains somewhat marginal, overall, despite some expansion in community care.

Community work is still on the DipSW agenda. However the focus is on community care, rather than community work. Whilst the revisions to the DipSW involve changes to the previous arrangements for 'Areas of Particular Practice', there does not seem to be any particular reason to suppose that this will be accompanied by any significant increase in the role of community work, per se, as distinct from community care, and user involvement more generally, in the mixed economy of welfare.

Meanwhile, as Stevenson and Parsloe point out, CCETSW's requirements for the DipSW have emphasised the importance of anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice; as such, they argue, this is 'consistent with what can be described as "empowerment" practice in relation to all users and carers' (Stevenson and Parsloe, 1993, p 49) - although there is rather less prominent emphasis on this in the revisions to the DipSW, following considerable controversy on the issue). But as Stevenson and Parsloe also point out, there may be other, less 'empowering' aspects of CCETSW's approach, especially the emphasis of 'what - in the horrible jargon - are called competencies, which students must achieve before they can qualify' (Stevenson and Parsloe, 1993, p49)

In the meantime CCETSW is itself being wound up, which leaves uncertainties for the future, and potentially even greater emphasis upon competency based approaches.

The competency based approach

As with wider debates about competency based approaches, both in general and in relation to community and youth work, there have been supporters as well as critics in relation to social work education and training. Broadly, in summary, supporters have argued that the focus upon competencies results in more targeted and thus more effective professional training programmes, programmes which are inherently more flexible than traditional courses. And supporters also argue that competency based approaches are more open and accessible to a wider range of students, fitting more readily with NVQ systems, and with the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) and credit transfer systems (CATS) more generally.

Conversely, critics have argued that the results are significantly narrower, and more specifically defined by employers' immediate staffing needs, rather than any longer-term strategic perspective. Access is not necessarily opened up anyway (APEL, for example, can be costly, and students may be required to meet all or at least part of the costs). The end result may be less flexible, in practice, with more focus upon job-specific training, with less scope for critical analysis, with a view to development and change. Critics such as Stevenson and Parsloe (1993) have argued that whilst social workers must, of course be competent, social work cannot be reduced to a collection of competencies. The same, we would argue, applies to community work.

The competency-based approach to education and training does include potential opportunities, in relation to community work for participation and empowerment. The critics, however, would place more emphasis upon the dilemmas and constraints.

Possible implications of restructuring in higher education

Meanwhile restructuring processes have been at work, too, within higher education. Higher education has been transformed, as student numbers have soared, without corresponding increases in resources. In the last 10 years, while student numbers have almost doubled to 1.5 million, staff numbers - 115,000 including researchers - have increased by less than 15% (AUT, May 1996). Increasing teaching pressures have been exacerbated by increasing pressures to research and to publish research findings, with research resources dependent upon success in this sphere (as measured by the Research Assessment Exercise). On top of all this, the changing requirements of professional endorsement entail further pressures again.

Given these combined pressures, current proposals to limit these differing responsibilities could be greeted with sighs of relief. The prospect of being able to concentrate upon only teaching, or only research might seem, at first sight, appealing. Such a scenario needs to be set in the context of potential polarisations within the higher education sector, with research being concentrated in the most prestigious institutions. There are already some indications of such polarisation within the sector, part of

wider trends which are beyond the scope of this article. The point to emphasise here is simply this; that divorcing undergraduate education and training from post graduate education and training and research is potentially problematic, reinforcing previous divisions between education and training, theory and practice, knowledge and power. This could be the very opposite direction from that of education and training for empowerment.

Retaining the essence of community work practice in its education and training

Training which seeks to address economic and political exclusion and empowerment, based on collective action, needs to reflect this in the training methods used. Social justice needs to direct itself, in non-paternalistic ways, to confronting marginalisation, described by Harvey (1991) as 'one of the most crucial problems facing urban life in the 21st century'. Factors relating to marginalisation at an intra-group level are central to discussion and debate in the experiential element of the training for example, at Goldsmiths College, not least because of its ability to exert undermining forms of oppression.

If participation, hands-on experience (fieldwork practice) and experiential learning remain central to the debate they need to be considered in relation to curriculum content and also in relation to the ways in which students are evaluated. Centralising and unifying the qualification procedures has on the one hand made the process of learning more rigorous, but on the other hand has taken decisions about what is learned into the orbit of institutional bureaucracies (eg National Youth Agency, NCVQ, Department for Education and Employment) and away from students. By definition this is potentially disempowering to the trainee. These external bodies, as well as teaching staff and external examiners, now determine how students are evaluated and judge students' suitability to practice. Self and peer assessment have become increasingly sidelined since the more libertarian days of the 1960s and 1970s.

Experiential learning can be viewed as learning from doing (practice) and learning from experience (being in it). In truth some types of training/ learning lend themselves more to this than others. Experiential learning is not a panacea for all types of training, but in the helping professions it is, we believe, essential. It is essential in enabling students to make the transition from the inactivity of constant theorising and conceptualising to the facilitation of change in collaboration with others. We have found that presenting issues in ways which students can make sense of in terms of their own everyday experience, offers opportunities for high levels of engagement often absent from didactic methods.

The experiential learning process for community and youth work students at Goldsmiths College provides students with a bridge between the three major components of their training: reflections on their previous working and personal experiences of life; current fieldwork practice and the theoretical and conceptual considerations they grapple with during training. In effect it performs a similar function to that described by Annikki Jarvinen (1989 p 167) in her work with nurse educators in

Finland where she found that

*...students have adopted the processes of **learning to learn** and **learning to reflect my own practice** as part of their everyday lives. There was a similar development in their readiness and ability to share their experiences with others, which is an essential stage of reflective thinking.*

It is our belief that these training techniques are transferable to other situations, particularly those which focus on community-based skills training such as the training of community development workers and community health workers.

In the Goldsmiths' context learning through experience offers opportunities to fully engage with and reflect on situations before comparing, integrating, re-interpreting or rejecting a theoretical understanding of situations, thus enabling students to construct their own 'corner stones' of knowledge or home-made theories. Students are encouraged to embrace new and challenging approaches and experiences and to question traditional power relationships, in an effort to find effective and practical ways of responding to them.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, there remains a conflict between competency based learning - which may result in a limited view of empowerment as a series of techniques to be acquired - and a form of education and training which looks both to the origins of community work theory, and towards the future, for a form of learning which embraces a wider definition of how we integrate empowering approaches into our practice. This model focuses on developing a critical consciousness and the capacity to be self-reflective, which results from experiential learning over a period of time. Community workers with this background should find themselves working in ways which enable community groups to define and lead their own struggles and campaigns, whilst supporting them with genuinely participatory research methods based on agendas which belong to, and are owned by, the communities themselves. From this perspective then, education and training in community work need not be seen as professionalising the sector in a negative sense. This is a non-issue if the debate about professionalisation is reframed. Viewed in the context of a work style which is genuinely empowering, effective community workers support community groups by aiming to narrow the power relationships between, for instance, an architect and a tenants' association, or a traffic planner and a community group.

Whilst this approach can be viewed as nostalgically looking back to a golden time and a more optimistic climate, to lose sight of basic principles of community work practice in the search for a contemporary model of education and training could be equally dangerous. Current debates have to take account of recent trends in higher education specifically and the public sector in general. But these basic principles equally need to be safeguarded as the basis for developing strategies for education and training which are themselves empowering experiences.

In the current context of limited resources and restructuring in higher education, together with the demands of competing criteria, the task of applying these principles to the development of a truly empowering Community Development curriculum is more urgent than ever. But this raises a series of questions and debates which are beyond the scope of this article.

Jean Anastacio, Marjorie Mayo and Alan Turkie lecture in Community Work and Youth Work at Goldsmiths College, University of London.

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LILY MONTAGU:

A short biography.

JEAN SPENCE

On Wednesday night, 16th April 1941, a bomb struck 31 Alfred Place, Tottenham Court Road. The premises of the West Central Jewish Club, Settlement and Synagogue were completely destroyed. Twenty seven people who were sheltering in the basement were killed. Lily Montagu, the Club Founder, spent the remainder of the next day beside the ruins with Nellie Levy, the Club Leader, in order to console relatives arriving at the scene. Later, in order to spare the bereaved any further grief, Lily Montagu personally took responsibility for the formal identification of every single body (Levy 1968). That she could do so, was testament to the closeness of her relationship with the club and its members. Among the dead was the family of Miriam Jacobson who wrote later that year to the club magazine (Club Link):

I often think of the old Club and the happy times we all had there. Life isn't easy but one just has to carry on and hope for better times. I have heard from Vicky Pense (now Mrs Alony) and she is getting over the shock of losing her baby. We have adopted each other as sisters. I have a lot to thank the Club for where my friends are concerned. (Lazarus, 1941)

The personal tone of this letter is not unusual in the correspondence published in the magazine. Individuals are often referred to only by their first names in the complete assurance that they will be known to the readers. This directly reflected Lily Montagu's ideas about the importance of friendship as a basis for club relationships and she herself attempted to become the friend of every single member and worker (Montagu, 1904; 1913; 1941; 1943)¹.

In her last letter to the club members, discovered after her death on 22nd January 1963, the idea of the importance of friendship is reiterated among other affirmations of her religious beliefs and social values:

My dear friends,

I am writing this to you, dear club members, as my message to you when I pass away. God has given us the power to love and so we will never be really separated as love is eternal.

I have been most happy working with and for you. I began work when I was a girl of 18 and found that work brings a great deal of happiness through friendship which is the best of all blessings. although I had no previous training in social work, I think I began on the right lines. Its main object was to make the Club members develop their capabilities and learn to serve each other. Through our love of God we are able to serve His children. I am glad that through the Club some of you have learned to appreciate and

discover the true meaning of Judaism. I have tried all my life to share with you the thing I value most in life-JUDAISM. Do try to cling to your Faith and live by it, and express it in your lives.

Then I have tried to bring before you a high ideal of friendship and of continued education. The Club classes have given you a wider outlook and opportunities for relaxation. I have endeavoured during my Club life to show you the things that are eternal, don't accept anything that is cheap or vulgar. Remember you must respect your womanhood and manhood, never cheapen it by loose living, your life comes from God, live so that when your time comes you will have made your little corner of the world a little better than you found it. You must guard the higher ideals of Jewish womanhood and manhood.

Now dear friends, make your membership worthy of the Club, give of your best to it and one another. Remember that God can be found at all times, and behave as if you were in His presence. Let our Club be a Jewish Club because only the best will be found there, that Judaism in its teachings will be appreciated and lived by, otherwise why a Jewish Club?

Finally I would ask you to make our Club a happy place, a place of peace and hope, wherein happiness can be sanctified and sorrow softened through friendship.

And now, dear children, goodbye and god bless you and help you in all you try to do. I know you won't forget your Club Mother very quickly, she loves you all and will continue to do so from her new home. She leaves you her work unfinished and very imperfect so that you can complete and improve it.

Your affectionate friend and Club Mother.

Lily H Montagu

This letter both illustrates Lily Montagu's use of the idea of friendship, and also demonstrates her underlying religious purpose, her belief in the importance of education and finally, her own authority which she claimed as the founder and 'Mother' of the club.

Developing club work through friendship seems a simple idea and the texts by and about Lily Montagu tend to present an image of a simple, uncomplicated woman motivated throughout her life by her faith and her ideal of friendship between people across class, religious and national boundaries. Yet this apparent simplicity belies an authoritative individual who consistently negotiated contradictions and tensions in her life and work with understanding, skill and political acumen. The public image of herself which she constructed in her own writing, which itself is unaffected and unadorned², the simple ideas which she pursued, do not adequately explain her

influence or the extent of her practical achievements. In the social context in which she worked, where equal cross-class relationships were discouraged and where the philanthropic work undertaken with girls and women was largely conceptualised in terms of 'rescue', (GOP, 1880; 1885; 1892; Montagu 1904), the notion of friendship between club workers and members was a radical ideal. In its suggestion of human sympathy and similarity, it was an attempt to defuse the tensions inherent within the class differences between Lily Montagu and the immigrant Jewish community in London which she attempted to serve whilst enabling her to work with the structural similarities which she shared with her club members - her gender and her Jewish identity. Ultimately, it was her Judaism which provided the least problematic basis for true friendship in her work. That she never fully resolved the tension in class and gender relations with her members becomes apparent in her later adoption of a family metaphor, with herself as the 'club mother' which can be found increasingly running alongside and often superseding the friendship motif.

The class distance between Lily Montagu and the members of the West Central Girls Club were vast. She belonged to a wealthy and well connected Anglo-Jewish family. The girls who she befriended were the daughters of poor immigrant Jews from Eastern Europe.

Lily Montagu's father had been educated in the Mechanics Institute in Liverpool, but made a fortune in London as a banker, consolidating his wealth by marrying Ellen Cohen, the daughter of an established London Jewish family. In 1885 Samuel Montagu, later Baron Swaythling, became Liberal MP for Whitechapel, a centre of Eastern European Jewish settlement. Lily, born in 1873, the sixth of ten children, was brought up in unquestioning Jewish Orthodoxy. On visiting their home as part of her work on the Jewish community for the Booth survey, Beatrice Potter noted:

They live in luxurious but gloomy Kensington Palace Gardens mansion & are blessed with ten children - the ugliest and most depressed looking family I have ever set eyes upon (Quoted in O'Day and Englander, 1993, from MS Diary, circa Dec. 1887).

This contrasts sharply with the picture which Lily Montagu paints of her father as a lover of nature and beautiful objects, of her mother as a caring and liberal parent, of an affectionate and tolerant, though Orthodox home (Montagu 1913, 1943). Jewish Orthodoxy demanded responsibility from the rich towards the poor and Samuel Montagu was an active philanthropist within the Jewish Community in London. However, his philanthropy was firmly within the moralistic tradition of the English Poor Laws and his daughter subsequently expressed her distaste of his approval of the pseudo-scientific, investigative methods of the Charity Organisation Society. (GOP 1886-7; Montagu 1913; Roof 1972; Tananbaum, 1997).

The material conditions suffered by the immigrant Jewish community generally militated against a life of religious orthodoxy, even when this was desired. As with

any immigrant community, the difficulties of settling into the new situation were not only material, they also involved cultural adjustment, including gender and generational negotiations. Much of the responsibility for earning a regular income within the casual and sweated labour market of East London fell upon the women and young people of the family, partly as a consequence of the type of work which was available and partly in order to enable the men to pursue their religious observances. (GOP 1895; Stedman Jones, 1971; Marks, 1990; Tananbaum, 1997). At the same time, the anti-Semitic prejudices of the host population were disturbed by the visible difference of the immigrants, prompting insecurities among the Anglo-Jewish establishment who had only recently, (1858), won full rights of citizenship. It was into this arena that the philanthropic tendencies of the Montagu family were directed. The desire of this patriotic, upper middle class family, was that the new community should be Anglicised and assimilated as quickly and smoothly as possible, maintaining Jewish religious identity but deflecting the attentions of anti-Semitic sentiment. (Marks 1990; Tananbaum, 1997). In this context, Lily Montagu's initial efforts to work with poor Jewish young people, providing lessons for a small group of girls and organising children's synagogue services in English, was supported by her family. When she became involved in a girls' club the main concern of the family was about the health and safety of Lily and her sister Marian who accompanied her on her excursions to Soho where the club was based. Lily Montagu's first visits to the homes of club members were undertaken in the company of a governess.

It was fashionable at the end of the nineteenth century for upper middle class young ladies to engage in social and missionary work in poor urban areas. There are numerous examples of wealthy women of the period undertaking excursions into the slums as a means of expressing their religious instincts towards charitable deeds, whilst at the same time asserting their independence, their rights to a new idea of 'womanhood' and undertaking exciting and sometimes fulfilling activity which provided them with a degree of personal power and influence impossible within their own class milieu (Walkowitz 1992). Even the highly respectable 'Girls Own Paper' (GOP), published by the Religious Tract Society considered voluntary work in the slums to be worthy activity for middle class women. However, dedicated social work was usually counterposed to the ideal female achievement of marriage. The fashion of the time clearly influenced Lily Montagu's endeavours, as well as providing her with opportunities which might not have been available a generation earlier. However she was pursuing goals and purposes which went much deeper than fashion. She was influenced by a visionary dream (Levy, 1968) and motivated by deeply held religious conviction. If her two novels are to be read as partly autobiographical, (Montagu 1901; 1903) it seems she endured a period of personal indecision between the two avenues open to her - conventional, middle class Jewish marriage, or total dedication to a single life of service to her community. She chose the latter.

Lily Montagu's adolescence was troubled by deep anxieties about her faith and the purposes of her life. She became increasingly sensitive to the absence of true religious

feeling within the formal ceremonies of Orthodox Judaism. Her unease was exacerbated as she realised the difficulties which maintaining orthodoxy presented to the working class family. Industrial hours and housing conditions made ritual observance practically impossible and working class young people, women in particular, could be seen to be abandoning a faith which could not adjust to the conditions of their lives. There was concern within the Jewish community that young people were open to the temptations of inter-marriage and to proselytising Christians (Montagu 1901; 1903). When at the age of 17 Lily Montagu began to organise her children's synagogue services, their popularity not only with children but with their mothers, provided her with evidence of the irrelevance of the traditional synagogue service to women and young people. Later her conversations with girls from Eastern European families informed her about anti-female practices within their religious traditions, whilst her association with Claude Montefiore, a family friend with Liberal sentiments, eventually convinced her of the need to pursue a 'living Judaism'. Her article, *The Spiritual Possibilities of Judaism Today* (1899), marked the start of her religious career as a founder and minister of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in London and of the World Union for Progressive Judaism in 1926. Her religious activism became the dominant and central part of her adult life and identity and she conceived her voluntary social work as an integral part of this.

The years of her personal youthful struggles, which she fed with dedicated self education and reading, coincided with a period of intense political activity in the metropolis. The match girls' and the dock workers' strike, the rise of 'new unionism', the increasing confidence and organisation of socialist groups, could not have failed to impact upon a home already involved in the Liberal politics of the East End (Stedman Jones, 1971). Simultaneously, debates about women's suffrage and rights, about sexuality and sexual danger, brought into tragic focus in the Whitechapel murders whilst Samuel Montagu was MP for that district (Walkowitz, 1992), must have placed class and gender politics in high relief within Lily Montagu's developing consciousness of public affairs. At school she had become a close friend of Margaret Gladstone who introduced her both to club work and to membership of the Women's Industrial Council, as well as influencing her 'to see the connection between so-called philanthropic and industrial work' (MacDonald 1912, p15). Margaret Gladstone became centrally involved in labour politics through her marriage to Ramsay MacDonald³ and though it is clear from one of Margaret's letters written in 1895 that Lily Montagu retained her allegiance to the Liberal party (MacDonald 1912, p108), she was seriously influenced during the last decade of the 19th century by the type of 'socialist' ideas and principles which were discussed in middle class society, particularly regarding the positive values of trade unionism in deflecting anarchistic and revolutionary tendencies among the working classes.

Her political understanding was reflected in her involvement in the Women's Industrial Council (WIC) and the National Union of Women Workers through the

late nineties and the first decade of the 20th century. Her own assessment of the effects of this work in the club environment was not very positive:

I must admit to my deep regret that with a few exceptions our girls have not identified themselves closely with trade organisations. Certainly, one girl did much useful trade union work here and then went to the U.S.A. where she has attained considerable success as the head of a communal centre in which organised labour plays an important part. Another did much lecturing on industrial subjects. Perhaps, however, because of persecution, most of our parents are individualistic, they have had to fight for their places in the world of industry; they have had to win for themselves the right to work for their living; so their strength has spent itself, and they have been inclined to teach their children to get on with their work, mind their own business and leave other people to get on with theirs, saying: 'What's it got to do with you?' Again and again we have tried to inculcate a wider point of view and to explain the advantages of belonging to unions. The results have been rather sporadic and not very successful. (Montagu 1941, p 64).

Yet the evidence from the published texts and from the journal of the WIC, The Women's Industrial News, (WIN) suggests that there were some significant successes. Considered in the context of the historical difficulties of unionising girls and women (Pelling 1963), it would have been surprising if the girls of the West Central Club were different. If actual unionisation is set to one side, Lily Montagu's activity was not insubstantial in contributing to the general understanding of the iniquities of sweated labour, in raising the awareness of the public and politicians about the conditions of female labour, in educating girls about their rights under the Factory Acts and in uncovering abuses of these Acts. Incidentally, it is interesting to note that she worked within the Industrial Law Association under the presidency of Beatrice Webb (nee Potter). In this context, her work was ecumenical and she pursued cross-religious friendship in this sphere as much as cross-class friendship in the club environment. (Mappen, 1985; Montagu 1941.)

Lily Montagu's attempt to marry club work and industrial reform provides us with an early example of the progressive possibilities of youth work with working class girls. It was from her activity in the WIC that the Clubs Industrial Association, later absorbed into the National Association of Girls Clubs, was formed, with herself as the Honorary Secretary. She was thus a key figure in the foundation of Youth Clubs UK and it was partly through the medium of this organisation, in its previous identity as National Association of Youth Clubs that the latter day movement for work with girls and young women was able to spread so successfully during the late 1970s and early 1980s⁴.

Nevertheless, the sense of failure expressed in the extract quoted is representative of an absence which Lily Montagu herself never attempted to explore. Her consciousness of class was a consciousness conceived at the level of theory rather than identity. Her

efforts to address class issues were the consequence of her rational understanding of the iniquities of the industrial conditions endured by girls, but she herself remained firmly outside the experience of class oppression. She could not identify in class terms. She could only sympathise. The political organisations which she joined were essentially organisations of aristocratic and middle class women whose very strength lay in their networks of power, re-affirming their own power and influence as much as improving the conditions of those for whom they were working. In her efforts to come to terms with what she perceived as failure, Lily Montagu sought to reaffirm her identification with club members through the phrase 'most of our parents': the common experience of Jewishness within a framework of 'family' is used to override the difficulties experienced in relation to class politics.

The limits of Lily Montagu's class analysis were partly a consequence of the manner in which she used personal experience as lens through which her understanding developed. She considered the significance of the exploitative conditions of industry from a distinctly female perspective. Her sympathy was partly founded upon an empathetic understanding of the tensions in women's lives between private responsibilities and public expectations and she was always alert to gender inequality and injustice.

In a little known article published in Urwick's book 'Studies of Boy Life in our Cities' (1904) and entitled 'The Girl in the Background'⁵ Lily Montagu systematically explored the importance of the female role in adult life, the difficulties which beset working class girls whose environment militated against the achievement of a high ideal of womanhood, the iniquities of unequal pay and poor working conditions in causing girls to undervalue themselves, and the possibilities of using club work as a strategy to address these difficulties. In this article, she also made a telling criticism of her fellow philanthropists:

Like other philanthropists, club-workers are too easily satisfied with fringing the problems with which they should endeavour to grapple. They peep down the abyss in which the underfed, the ill-housed, and badly clothed work out their life's drama, and then they turn their energies to surface polishing. They try to make their girls conduct themselves well in the clubs, and interest them and amuse them as best they can during their evening's leisure. But they are inclined to ignore the industrial life; they like to forget the grim truth that if girls work for less than a living wage, in a vitiated atmosphere, they are not likely to become the strong, self controlled women whom we desire the clubs to train... (Urwick, 1904 p. 249/50)

In pursuing problems raised by the industrial and social conditions endured by girls, Lily Montagu subsumed class questions within the 'Woman Question'. Her analysis of the behaviour and interests of working class girls emerged directly from her own middle class female values, her personal struggles, and the public debates of the time (Walkowitz, 1992). She explained problematic female social and sexual

behaviour as the consequence of environmental conditions which were perverting the 'true' higher nature of women and she set out to improve these environmental conditions through intervention in the public and private domains of girls' lives. The work with the WIC was intended to improve the industrial environment, whilst her religious and club work was designed to influence private lives. She encouraged collectivity and interdependence between people, but was convinced of the value of personal development and seems to have enjoyed her greatest successes in her commitment to providing the means whereby individuals could achieve their highest potential. She believed that girls could achieve their true female nature if they were encouraged within a nourishing environment; they would then exert influence and power which could only be to the benefit of society in general. Whilst the achievement of female potential included the possibility of an influential public life, it was not intended to disturb the sexual division of labour. Lily Montagu persistently defended the centrality of women's role in the family as wife and mother and never sought to analyse or question this position despite the fact that this was not the life which she chose for herself.

In working to counter the environmental effects of poverty, Lily Montague attempted to provide a club environment for Jewish girls which was aesthetically attractive. After its destruction, she herself described the club, designed by the architect and fellow youth worker Ernest Joseph, and partly paid for by herself and Marian, as 'beautiful' (Montagu 1941). She wished to offer members the means whereby their appreciation of art and nature could be enhanced. This included contact and friendship with sensitive 'ladies of culture and refinement' (Montagu, 1904) as well as a distinct and innovative programme of education sponsored by the LCC. The purchase of the Green Lady Hostel in Littlehampton, bought jointly with Mrs Pethick Lawrence, who later played a central role in the struggle for female suffrage, to provide a seaside and country holiday hostel for factory girls and women away from the squalor of city life, was an integral part of her efforts to ameliorate the debilitating environment endured by working class women.

Whilst changing the physical environment was an important practical and political strategy in her work with girls and women, Lily Montagu's particular successes as a worker seemed to have been built very much upon the personal loyalty which she inspired. In order to sustain her belief in the higher nature of women, she sought to represent this ideal in her own life presenting to the public a carefully worked image of a private self which conformed with the ideas of female nature and Jewish womanhood which she espoused. In the early part of her career, her youthful ideals, inspired by her faith, her feminism and her sympathy for those less fortunate than herself enabled her to pursue a quintessentially Victorian and unproblematised ideal of female friendship within her voluntary work. Yet though she seems to have inspired almost universal love and respect from those who knew her, her ideals, though congruent with middle class liberal feminism, were never adequate to the task of superseding class difference. As Lily Montagu grew

older, as her influence in the public sphere increased and feminism lost its political influence, the gender basis for cross-class friendship became increasingly problematic too.

The interwar years were ones of consolidation of the work of the Club and its associated Day Settlement. Lily Montagu was becoming increasingly focused upon her religious activity and active in her role as JP sitting on the Juvenile Bench. In 1923, she persuaded Nellie Levy, whom she had trained, to resign her work with the National Organisation of Clubs to take over the leadership and day to day running of the West Central. This move freed her from the demands of professional organisation and administration, enabling her to consolidate her spiritual interest in club work and to maintain the role of interested friend. However, it also precipitated the admission of boys and men to membership, thus removing the basis for identification through gender. During this period Lily Montagu increasingly adopted the persona of the Club Mother. In this role, she was able to maintain her idea of friendship whilst at the same time resolving tensions and differences in class and gender, and by now, age relations between herself and club members. In the role of Club Mother she was able to legitimate her class authority whilst at the same time occupying an approved female role which was both powerful and beneficent.

On her mother's death in 1919, Lily Montagu and her sister Marian became fully independent women and they created an all female household with their friend Miss Lewins. The 'Red Lodge Trio' as they became affectionately known, lived a private life which appears to have been fully open to public view. Both Marian Montagu and Miss Lewins undertook and were responsible for various aspects of the work of the club. Both supported Lily in her religious endeavours. When Lily Montagu became Club Mother, Marian became its 'Aunt' and Miss Lewins became known as the club 'Father'. By 1941 Lily Montagu was referring to current members of the club as the Club grandchildren, the children having grown to biological motherhood themselves (Montagu 1941). The use of the family metaphor, though not entirely unusual in titles awarded to founders, in this case seems to have been a significant means of situating Lily Montagu and her private family within the public sphere of the London Jewish Community, of reinforcing her religious and spiritual leadership, whilst at the same time accounting for the differences between herself and those she identified as friends. Contained within the role of 'mother' is her determination to reinforce Jewish identity within the community, to stress the bonds of Jewish people across class and national barriers and to affirm the centrality of the mother within the family. Whilst she herself was not a biological mother, as club mother, she set herself up to represent the ideal. This complemented her role as a minister of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in London and associated motherhood with the spiritual rather than the biological.⁶ At another level, the family metaphor, which elevated an unmarried upper middle class woman to the status of mother over a large family of working class children, speaks something of the difference between Lily Montagu and her club members. Her class background, education

and relative wealth situated her in a position of social power and authority which was confirmed by her religious leadership. Identifying herself as Club Mother enabled her to maintain and mobilise that power and authority unselfconsciously whilst robbing it of its class connotations. In terms of gender, the mothering role enabled Lily Montagu to live an independent female life within the public sphere, sustaining an all female private household, without threatening conventional heterosexual ideas of women's status and family relations.

Lily Montagu was very much a 'modern' woman. She was a person with a vision and a grand design and she spent her life applying herself to fulfilling her vision. Alongside her activity, she generated a narrative about her life to explain herself and her actions. Certain themes emerge repeatedly. They stress family and community loyalty, the value of friendship, and a desire to further the interests of peace and justice, to undermine class, gender and particularly racial stereotypes by a commitment to the education and welfare of Jewish people here and abroad. Through all her narratives, her spiritual calling is central. Yet this publicly accessible story about her life and her faith does not give us a full picture. There are silences in the story of Lily Montagu's life particularly from those working class immigrant girls who were the first object of her attention as a voluntary social worker. She meticulously kept records and case histories of her work between 1893 when the West Central Jewish Girls Club was founded and 1941 when the club building was destroyed. Unfortunately the records were destroyed with the building. We are left with the image presented, of a woman who exerted powerful but always benign personal influence and authority in a local and global context, who generated intense loyalty from those who knew her. In relation to youth and community work she pursued a style of work within which her personal commitment was central, but which would have been impossible without her personal wealth and influence. Nevertheless, her work raises questions about class, gender and 'race', about the impact of professionalisation, about the relationship between the individual and the group and most of all, about the significance of spiritual commitment. In 1959, she herself questioned whether club work would continue to be relevant in the future (Rose 1959). Though her views were quintessentially those of her own time, her struggles and her insights continue to be pertinent.

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I would like to thank Celia Rose who spent time talking to me about Jewish Youth Work and provided me with books, references and contacts which enabled me to discover a much more influential Lily Montagu than I had previously imagined.

Notes

- 1 Celia Rose visited the West Central Club when Nellie Levy was Club leader. Nellie Levy had gone from group to group of young people within the club and had said a prayer which referred to the circumstances of each individual within the group. Celia suggested that Nellie Levy had been taught to do this by Lily Montagu.
- 2 In a second hand bookshop in Hampstead I enquired whether there were any books by Lily Montagu in stock. The proprietor, said he knew her work, and that she was 'a writer of very simple stories for children and moral texts', but 'no, he had nothing in stock'.

- 3 Lily Montagu claimed to have 'brought together' Margaret Gladstone and Ramsay MacDonald (MacDonald 1912)
- 4 The National Association closed the Girls Work Unit in early 1987, sacking the workers without notice and ending the highly successful Working With Girls Newsletter
- 5 This article is not included in the Lily Montagu archive held in the Jewish Museum in Finchley, nor is it listed in the bibliography of her published work in the memorial Tribute. Her work with the Women's Industrial Council and her concern to improve the industrial conditions of girls at work seem to have been completely overshadowed by her success and status within the Liberal Jewish Movement and the personal friendships and loyalties engendered in her club work.

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WORKING SPACE

STICKING TO THE KNITTING

KERRY YOUNG

Unemployment, crime prevention, social exclusion, work with disaffected youth. Is this really what youth work and the Youth Service is about...or ought to be about? Kerry Young asks the question and concludes that a return to first principles is long overdue.

Taking questions at a recent conference Dr Kim Howells, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Lifelong Learning, commented that the youth service was the 'patchiest, most unsatisfactory of all services I've come across'¹. On other occasions Dr Howells has alluded to the youth service's contribution to youth crime prevention, drugs awareness and health education² as well as envisioning a role for the service in helping to deliver the New Deal for unemployed 18-24 year olds through:

- *offering work placements; and*
- *delivering gateway services - either by acting as mentors to those needing extra support or helping young people gain the confidence and experience to move into the field of work.*

He has also highlighted the possibility of the service providing placement opportunities or facilitating projects with young people as a part of the newly launched Millennium Volunteers scheme³.

All of this is, of course, his prerogative as the minister responsible for the youth service. But he is not the only one with opinions about what the youth service *ought* to be doing.

The Audit Commission report 'MisspentYouth'⁴ proffered a role for the youth service as crime prevention through young people's constructive use of leisure and other diversionary activities. The national evaluation of the GEST funded Youth Action Scheme⁵ suggested that the youth service should target its work on young people at risk and help prevent them from being damaged by crime. The New Start strategy includes a key role for the youth services in the design and delivery of local initiatives for getting disaffected 14-17 year olds back into learning. And guidance notes to partnership groups bidding to set up Education Action Zones suggests that youth services could play a role:

- *as an active partner in facilitating links between schools and their communities; and*

- *providing peripatetic specialist or additional staff, on contracts which recognise more flexible working arrangements.⁶*

Now is it my imagination or does there appear to be a recurring theme that somehow includes crime prevention combined with getting 'disaffected' young people back into education/learning, training or the world of work. In fact, now that I come to think about it I realise that this word 'disaffected' is looming large and increasingly I find myself asking 'who are these disaffected young people?', and given the reference to the youth service's 'good track record of working with disaffected young people'⁷, 'what is the youth service's expertise in this endeavour?'

Disaffected

'Disaffected' young people are characterised as those outside mainstream education/training and not active in the labour market. Typically this includes:

- *truancy from school*
- *school exclusion (or risk of exclusion)*
- *non attendance*
- *unemployment/not engaged in youth training.*

However, emerging practice in work with 'disaffected' young people has enlarged the term so that it now includes a whole range of young people on the basis of them experiencing:

- *learning problems*
- *literacy/numeracy difficulties*
- *school phobia*
- *mental health or emotional problems*
- *behavioural difficulties*
- *sexual, physical or mental abuse - now or in the past*

or being:

- *pregnant*
- *young/single parents*
- *from disadvantaged cultural groups*
- *members of ethnic minority groups (particularly African Caribbean young men)*
- *cared for by the local authority - currently or in the past*
- *homeless*
- *involved in crime - or an ex-offender*
- *involved in solvent or drug abuse*
- *long term unemployed⁸*

So now young people are being identified as 'disaffected' not only in terms of their behaviour but also on the basis of factors which are actually beyond their control (eg being cared for, abused or discriminated against) as well as those over which they have limited control (eg homelessness, unemployment).

Certainly the suggestion that young people experiencing such circumstances *may* be disaffected could be well founded. Indeed there is work to suggest that 'disaffected' young people share some similar characteristics including:

- *family problems which can lead to homelessness, health worries, drugs and crime*
- *difficulty in sustaining a motivation to learn and develop and an investment in formal education and training*
- *patterns of non-completion, under achievement and low self-esteem*
- *involvement in crime - either as offenders or victims, actual and potential.*⁹

However, there is a difference between:

- *appreciating the multi-faceted personal and social difficulties which 'disaffected' young people tend to share; and*
- *targeting particular circumstances in young people's lives as if they are somehow symptoms of their disaffection.*

Or put another way, whilst some of the young people experiencing personal and social difficulties may be 'disaffected', in the sense that they are not in education, training or employment, it is not the case that experience of any of these conditions makes any individual necessarily 'disaffected'. Disaffection cannot be inferred from young people's circumstances. Indeed, absence of information about the extent to which young people actually 'feel' disengaged would also make inferring disaffection from their behaviour somewhat questionable.¹⁰

Disadvantaged

So what we have is an enlargement of the term 'disaffected' to encompass two different groups of young people - those not in education, training or employment; and those who could otherwise be described as belonging to disadvantaged groups. For example, careers service activities with 'disaffected' young people is reported as tending to be:

[either] generic in their approach to disaffection, ie defining the disaffected group in terms of 'behaviour' (disengagement, low achievement etc); or, they were targeting specific disadvantaged groups¹¹.

Recent research on the development of local youth services¹² also confirms the targeting of, amongst others, two distinctly identified concerns of disaffection and disadvantage to which the local services surveyed are responding.

	New Unitary Authorities	Continuing Authorities
disaffection	50%	30%
disadvantage	64%	70%

This highlights the youth service's overall tendency towards working with 'disadvantaged' as opposed to specifically 'disaffected' young people. Although, given the service's commitment to a broad based holistic approach to young people's personal development and social and political education, it is inevitable that some of its work will include young people who could be described as 'disaffected', disengaged or disillusioned. In addition, the timing of the establishment of the new authorities may account for the relatively higher % response to the issue of disaffection.

This is not to suggest that work with 'disaffected' young people is somehow unworthy or unnecessary. Far from it. Indeed, The Children's Society has warned that the numbers of children permanently excluded from schools is spiralling out of control having escalated some 450% in the past five years and including a large proportion of primary-age children and young Black men.¹³ A recent Childline report also states that young people involved in truancy are often fleeing from problems at school or home including bullying and sexual and physical abuse.¹⁴ These are real and substantial concerns in young people's lives. The question is not should they be addressed but rather should such work constitute the primary purpose and focus of youth work.

Social manipulation or social education?

Indeed, a similar question could be asked about the youth service's involvement in crime prevention. The national evaluation of the Youth Action Scheme noted not only youth workers reluctance to act, in their perception, as agents of social control but also suggested that they did not possess the basic skills to undertake crime related work - in the sense that they were generally unconvincing about how their methods would, or did, reduce young people's involvement in crime.¹⁵

The problem seems to be that whilst some Youth Action projects successfully targeted and worked with those most at risk from crime, the general commitment was not to crime reduction as such but to the fundamental youth work principles of social and informal education, community development and empowerment. However, that the 'meaning of such terms was not always clear or understood by those working on the projects'¹⁶ begs the question:

- *Is the current challenge for the youth service the task of proving how its theories and methods can be fashioned to reduce young people's involvement in crime; or*
- *Should the youth service pursue a sense of its own purpose and clarity which can be systematically evaluated as suggested by France and Wiles¹⁷*

Actually, it would not be the first time. In 1989 Alan Howarth, then Conservative Under Secretary of State for Education, asked the youth service to:

- *produce a statement which clarifies for participants, funders and providers of other services, the core of what the youth service is uniquely best placed to provide;*
- *identify in concrete terms the priority outcomes which the service should uniquely seek to achieve;*
- *agree the concept of a 'core curriculum' for the youth service*

Purpose, principles and partnership

The idea of the 'core curriculum' was a tortured one, but the process of the Ministerial Conferences for the Youth Service produced four fundamental principles of youth work which have withstood the test of time - that youth work offers young people opportunities which are:

- *educative*
- *participative*
- *empowering*
- *designed to promote equality of opportunity*¹⁹

It was perhaps our mistake that, in 1991, we missed the moment to pursue and clearly articulate what these principles actually mean in practice and what youth work is seeking to achieve. But that moment is not lost. As recently as February Dr Howells commented that a statutory base for the service depended on the production of 'real proposals for the future of the youth service...and what their relationship is with everything else that's going on'.²⁰ And indeed, the current youth service audit may shed some light.

But, for the youth service, this is both a journey forward and a return to first principles - to the idea of social education - not because young people are socially excluded, disaffected or disadvantaged but because they are in the process of 'transition from childhood to responsible adulthood'²¹ - the process of creating themselves and the meanings they compose for their lives.

Notwithstanding, young people do not live in a vacuum but within the social and political context which shapes their lives and mediates their meanings. Their well-being cannot therefore be successfully pursued simply through projects specifically targeted at them - no matter how purposeful, meticulously designed, efficiently delivered and expertly evaluated. Social exclusion, disaffection and disadvantage are multi-faceted experiences which require multi-faceted responses which demand multi-agency approaches.²² Therefore, the youth service's involvement in inter-agency collaboration and partnerships is a crucial part of its responsibility to young people, not simply, as it sometimes appears, a financial imperative.

However, in engaging in these partnerships, the youth service will need to ensure that it develops:

- a clear sense of purpose;
- clarity about the positive contribution it seeks to make and the role(s) it seeks to play
- an analysis of youth work praxis which enables proficient assessment of negotiations and agreements
- knowledge and skills in project management, development and evaluation - particularly in relation to short term funded and multi-agency approaches; and
- a clear understanding of and commitment to the values underpinning its work.

In doing so the service should take heed of Peters and Waterman's advice 'stick to the knitting'²³ - stay close to the business you know.

Kerry Young is an independent training and development consultant working specifically around values and ethics. She is currently involved with colleagues at De Montfort University, in the development of a new distance learning MA: Health and Community Development (with JNC professional qualification in youth and community work option). Kerry can be contacted on 01509 416350

Notes

- 1 Lifelong Learning conference, Exeter 10 February 1998 - see *Young People Now*, April 1998 p 4, NYA
- 2 DfEE Press Release 'Howells Launches New Survey of Youth Services' 22 August 1997.
- 3 Youth Clubs UK Peer Education Conference, 20 November 1997 - see *Young People Now*, January 1998 p 4, NYA
- 4 Audit Commission (1996) *Misspent Youth: young people and crime*, Stationery Office - see *Young People Now*, February 1997 p 4, NYA
- 5 *Young People Now*, February 1997 p 4
- 6 'Youth Action Zones Briefing' in *Youth Policy Update*, Issue 5 1997-1998, February, National Youth Agency
- 7 DfEE (1996) *Learning to Compete: Education and Training for 14-19 Year Olds*, White Paper, Stationery Office - see *Young People Now*, February 1997 p 8
- 8 See for example DfEE (1997) *New Start: Literature Review*; and DfEE (1997) *New Start* journal
- 9 Merton, B (1997) 'Still Disaffected After All These Years' in *Social Action Today*, Issue 5. July 1997, Centre for Social Action, De Montfort University
- 10 *New Start: Literature Review*, op. cit.
- 11 ECOTEC Research and Consulting Ltd (1997) *Survey of Careers Service Work With Disaffected Young People*, DfEE
- 12 Payne, M and Tyler, M (1998) *Youth services in the new unitary authorities: a new deal or more of the same?*, National Youth Agency
- 13 TES, 26 September 1997 detailed in *Social Action Today*, Issue 7 January 1998 p2, Centre for Social Action
- 14 Childline, *Tuancy: What Children Tell Childline About Skipping School*, 1997 detailed in *Social Action Today*, Issue 7 January 1998 p 4, Centre for Social Action
- 15 France, A and Wiles, P (1997) 'Practice for the future: the lessons of the Youth Action Scheme' in *Social Action Today*, Issue 4 Winter 1997, Centre for Social Action
- 16 France, A and Wiles, P (1997) op. cit.
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- 21 National Youth Agency (1997) *Youth Service Statement of Purpose*,
- 22 See for example:
Johnson, C (1997) 'Re-engaging Young People in Education, Training and Employment' in *Social Action Today*, Issue 6 October 1997, Centre for Social Action; ECOTEC Research and Consulting Ltd (1997) op. cit. Merton, B (1997) op. cit.
- 23 Peters, T and Waterman, R (1982) *In Search of Excellence*, Harper & Row

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Alan Dearling with Howie Armstrong

Youth Action and the Environment

Russell House Publishing 1997

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Chris Parkin

I was looking forward to reviewing this book, its forerunner *Earthworks* which was produced by CEE (Council for Environmental Education) had been a useful starting point for raising and responding to environmental issues in informal settings. *Youth Action and the Environment* promised to build on this by describing a wider range of activities which young people could 'initiate or get involved with'. In fairness the book probably does this but it fails to organise either the activities or the issues in any systematic way and as a result is disappointing.

The authors justify their approach in the introduction which explains *The Why, The How and The What* of the publication. It emerges that the initial idea for the book was a conversation in the pub about a publication which would look at how youth workers could introduce young people to some environmental issues. The introduction goes on to explain that the material for the book was based on a brainstorm by the authors and an invitation to a range of organisations to get involved. I could not find any explanation of what form this involvement took. The resulting book gives the impression that all available material was inserted very much in the form of a brainstorm and I could not detect any evidence of editing other than the several references to previous publications by the authors and some chatty linking paragraphs.

The original justification for the book is based on the notion that youth workers should be introducing young people to the environment. This raises some fundamental questions: Why should youth workers do this? how does environmentalism relate to the purpose of youth work? and How can youth workers raise issues without an awareness of the issues themselves? The book does very little to address any of these points. It consists of a collection of reports about some work which has taken place, reports from organisations with an environmental focus and some discussion with people involved in alternative lifestyles. It is very difficult to categorise the material because the authors have not done this themselves, preferring to allow the contributions to have 'a life of their own', unfortunately it's a very disorganised life. A wide range of issues are covered; Agenda 21 initiatives, conservation and reclamation projects, art, drama and 'animation work, human rights issues, sustainability, participation, games and activities, global and international issues and taking direct action. However

there is no comprehensive coverage of any of these and no coherent framework provided to enable the reader to understand the links between these diverse topics and environmental youth work.

The term 'environment' is understood in a number of different ways and people become involved in environmental issues for a host of reasons ranging from the 'not in my backyard' syndrome to a genuine concern about the future of the planet. Within these extremes lie a whole range of reasons from wanting to conserve the countryside for recreational use to saving resources for economic reasons. This range of views is apparent in the book but there has been no attempt to pull these aspects of the collection of statements, reports and discussions together. Perhaps the most useful attempt to define an environmental approach is a series of guidelines included in the book from Geoff Cooper who is involved in an environmental centre in the Lake District, an attempt by the authors to adapt this in relation to youth work would have been welcome and would have provided some kind of framework for the book.

The book starts with an explanation of some of the key concepts in environmentalism and this represents the way in which the authors have addressed the need for youth workers to have some understanding of the issues. I found this section very unsatisfactory; it selects a few 'buzzwords' and attempts some definitions. These definitions are limited. For example it is suggested that constructing a bottle ecosystem will help people to understand how an ecosystem works, the idea is that constructing one will develop an understanding of things like water and food cycles but it does not explain what these are and given that water cycles are driven by the sun and include large masses of water it is difficult to envisage how the mechanisms of the water cycle can be demonstrated in a bottle ecosystem without a considerable leap of the imagination and at least some explanation by the worker/facilitator.

The introductory section ends with a discussion of 'shades of greenness' but it is simplistic and in no way reflects the level of research and debate current in this area. More worrying is that it is not presented in a way which would allow workers or young people to question or develop their own values in relation to environmental issues. I was also concerned that there was no equivalent section of 'buzzwords' in relation to the issues in working with young people.

The collection of reports and contributions begins on page 11 and ends on page 216. There is no summing up or conclusion to the book. The reports/contributions are of variable quality and I found reading through them an extremely frustrating experience. Whilst the index suggests some continuity in terms of topics, the varying styles and underlying assumptions

REVIEWS

make them appear disjointed and even contradictory. There are extracts from press cuttings, annual reports, illustrations and descriptions of activities. The reports/contributions are also interspersed with some examples of activities from the author's previous publications *New Youth Games* and *New Youth Arts and Crafts*. Some contributions have been submitted and their source is acknowledged and others appear to be the result of discussions with the authors. Thus in the section on alternative lifestyles we hear that 'Alan spent a pleasant and informative afternoon in one of the lodges' in Tipi Valley talking about '...Mother Earth, the vital importance of water, fire, growing trees and small scale organic crops...' but I couldn't discover exactly what the significance was. We also hear that '...a lady named Sonia sent Alan her own chronicle of some of the early years of Tipi Valley...' but we don't get a great deal of information about the chronicles of their relevance to young people. The gender differentiation in language highlighted by this example illustrates the absence of any consideration of equal opportunities issues in the book.

There are some examples of interesting, thought provoking material in the book which highlights good practice, such as the extracts from *Earthworks* and some material which has been copied in original format from the contributors, unfortunately this material gets lost in the assorted collection of poor quality material and the opportunity to maximise the value of this material is lost by the lack of organisation and analysis.

The publication will not help youth workers to understand the purpose or rationale for helping young people engage with the environment and most of the ideas contained within it are available from other sources. The book's main strength is its wide range of useful contacts and publications listed in the bibliography.

Chris Parkin *University of Sunderland.*

M A Bortner and Linda M Williams

Youth in Prison: We the People of Unit Four

Routledge 1997

ISBN 0 415 91438 8 (hbk)

ISBN 0 415 91439 6 (pbk)

Mandy English

REVIEWS

This book is a critical analysis for an American model youth prison programme called Unit Four. The researchers used qualitative methods which they describe as 'intense interaction' with youths, staff members and administrators within the prison. The research includes studies of the young people's history and their involvement with the prison system.

Unit Four was devised to create changes within the juvenile justice system in Arizona. The impetus for change was in response to a 'class action' law suit, *Johnson v Upchurch*, filed in 1986.

The charges alleged 'the policies, practices and conditions of confinements' at a Tucson institution subjected youths to 'cruel, unconscionable and illegal conditions of confinement, which did not include rehabilitation'.

The allegations made were that juveniles had to endure particularly harsh conditions which did not include rehabilitation. Graphic descriptions of deprivation and harsh punitive regimes showed juveniles were locked up in their cells continuously, with limited opportunities for showers and toilet needs. Provision for education, reading materials and counselling for those young people suffering emotional or mental health problems were non-existent.

The law suit described various abuses of young people. Included is a description of youths being 'four pointed' whilst naked or wearing only underwear. The authors describe 'four pointing' as carried out in two ways. First, placing a youth face down on a bed and strapping his arms and legs to the frame with leather straps. Secondly, 'handcuffing a youths wrists to his ankles with metal handcuffs while he is sitting on the floor'. This punishment could last for hours.

The model programme was designed to be based on mutual respect and dialogue, addressing enormous problems relating to 'meaninglessness, hopelessness and lovelessness'. Hopefully, capturing the youths' imagination and building a programme to address their individual needs.

Part of the philosophy statement stressed that it is designed 'to empower the young people to become productive members of their community'.

A two year period of extensive research also revealed that adult institutions were being financed at the expense of juvenile institutions. This led to a

regime equal to that for adults, including those on death row. This created a lack of concern for the obvious distinctions between the two. A high rate of attempted suicides among young people resulted.

The programme promised a dialogue with young people. Encouragement was given to the young people to take an active part in the decision making and to accept responsibility for their own actions. This was in particular to those relating to the crimes they have committed and to their victims. The whole thrust of the programme is to rehabilitate the young people, support them until release and hopefully return them to communities with hope for success and skills to help them resist reoffending.

Bortner and Williams describe the aspirations of the programme well. Reading it I felt at last someone is re-addressing the balance and advocating on behalf of young people. They are easy targets for politicians and the media. Blaming them for the 'decline in morals' and the breakdown of society is convenient. Young people have little power and provoke little compassion from those who do hold power. It was good to read of a programme which was directly funded to 'empower' young people, although at times I felt what I was reading was 'too good to be true'.

Sure enough, Bortner and Williams go on to explain the subsequent failure of the programme. The reasons are well set out and include comments from the young people themselves.

Explanations include, lack of enthusiasm on behalf of the State Government and a decline in commitment on behalf of the staff themselves. Once the initial media interest and the high profile visits by 'important' people ceased, the whole programme seemed to dip into decline. Equal respect was not forthcoming. When the young people reached a decision relating to an issue, staff often over-ruled them. Staff used bad language whilst youths were punished for doing the same. Petty rules which had been discarded slowly resurfaced. Staff felt abandoned by directors and management, funding was not in place to follow through support of young people, in particular once they had been released. The chances of failure and re-offending were becoming increasingly high.

Once a young person had re-offended on release the staff felt an overwhelming sense of failure. Supervision and support was not in place for the staff to discuss these feelings, therefore creating uncertainty in their ability to 'do the job properly'.

The main lack of commitment came from the politicians. This book describes how it serves political ends to incarcerate young people. Changes in the juvenile justice system were to be monumental but

needed long term support. Politicians sought to appease the public by appearing to be 'tough on crime', and supportive of 'prison works' theories.

The book described imprisoning young people as being 'political currency' rather than treating them as human beings. The authors rightly reminded us that, 'citizens have virtually no information about what happens to imprisoned youths'. This helps explain the loud cry from the public for more prisons to hold younger and younger children. Getting them off the streets at all costs!

Politicians should perhaps look as much at their own inadequacies and the weakness of their policies rather than individuals who are caught up in a system not designed to help them in a positive way.

Bortner and Williams end with the statement,

'Youth in Prison' is a shameful banner for a society. It signals a collective loss as well as individual destruction. Change is essential to nurture youthful hopes and to rekindle our own.

I can only conclude this review by urging those working with young people to read this book. Identifying the need for change when dealing with young offenders is vital. To ignore this need is costly to those of us living in our communities, to those families who have problems coping in our society and to each of us as individuals.

The 'get tough on crime' is merely political rhetoric and the statement that 'prison works' hardly stands up to scrutiny. This book does highlight the need to get the balance right and to move to rehabilitation rather than prison, to prevention rather than cure.

Please send a copy to the Home Secretary!

Mandy English is a student at Durham University and is a National Campaigner against Miscarriages of Justice.

Jennifer Coates

Women Talk

Blackwell Publishers

ISBN 0 631 18253 5

£12.99 (pbk)

pp 324

Gill Millar

Jennifer Coates uses socio-linguistic techniques to analyse the conversational patterns of women friends in this book. She claims to show that there are specific features which differentiate women's talk from that of men, and that women's friendships can have both a conservative and a radical function in confirming and questioning women's roles in heterosexual society.

While finding the book immensely interesting (once I had come to terms with the technicalities of the layout adopted to show conversational patterns), I have reservations about its ultimate contribution to feminist debate. My first concern is with the sample of women who form the 'corpus' of the research. They are all white, heterosexual and although encompassing a range of age groups are largely middle class. Coates explains the non-inclusion of Black women because 'it seemed likely that friendship patterns would vary with ethnicity' (p 10), and says that a friendship group including some lesbians refused to take part in the research as they felt uncomfortable about revealing some aspects of their lives. These omissions are not returned to, or problematised in the rest of the book, and make it difficult to generalise from the books findings.

Coates is remarkably honest in sharing some of her research dilemmas with the reader: in particular the revelation that one group who feature strongly throughout the book was a group of her own friends, and that she started recording them surreptitiously! When she subsequently revealed to them that their conversations had been recorded they did eventually give their consent to taking part in the project, but the incident raised concerns for me over the ethics of the methodology adopted. It also highlighted some issues for women's friendship, and the extent to which women are willing to give support to members of their friendship group, in spite of what could be seen as manipulative behaviour.

Coates highlights the crucial place occupied by talk in the creation and maintenance of women's friendships, noting that women tend to spend more time and place more importance in conversation with their friends than do men, who are more likely to 'do' activities with their friends. Her research indicates that the subject matter for women's talk is largely

centred on people: people the women know, their families, neighbours and acquaintances. When more general issues are discussed this tends to be with reference to personal experience and observation. Coates' sample demonstrated a wide range of topics for discussion which (oddly, in my experience) did not feature work as a major issue. Nor, contrary to the expectations of many men, did the women spend time discussing sexual practices.

For me the most useful part of the book relates to conversational forms employed by women. In particular, storytelling plays a major role in these conversations, either as a way of women 'catching up' with each other's lives, or as a starting point for discussion of issues raised by the story. It is only when telling a story that an individual woman speaks for any length of time: in general the conversational 'floor' is shared by women who create and develop the conversation in collaboration with each other. This 'collaborative floor' is contrasted with male conversations which, according to Coates, operate from a 'single floor' in which one speaker at a time is allowed the space to speak. She uses examples from her research to show how women work together to build a conversation by what she describes as 'mirroring' and mutuality, in which women reinforce each others experience and contribution to the conversation through relating their own similar experiences, often overlapping with each other and taking the conversation on. Women, she argues, are much more likely to agree with each other, and reinforce each other's views than to challenge or confront them. She has found very few examples of challenge within the conversations she studied: in fact most of those she does identify come from conversation between young women aged 12 and 13, who later learn to 'hedge' their statements into less confrontational forms.

Coates quotes one of her women interviewees as saying 'the feminine shape (of conversation) is more melding in together' (p 117), emphasising the collaborative nature of women's conversation. The idea of conversation as creative play is also highlighted, and there are several examples in the book of women building on ideas in a conversation towards fantastic or surreal finales. It is this element of the book, identifying the mechanisms through which women build a collective floor and create through talk that I find most helpful to the development of feminist thinking and practice.

In her concluding chapter, Coates contends that there is a radical potential to be explored in women's friendship and conversation. I am not sure, however, whether her evidence bears this out. The role such conversations play in confirming women in their existing roles, and the way that many of the conversations operate within conservative and patriarchal dis-

courses may be over-emphasised by the small sample of women who all have substantial stakes in the status quo in their private and public domains. However, the mechanisms women in the research use to avoid challenging each other, or to avoid sounding like 'experts' at anything, have resonance with other conversations I have experienced. It is difficult to see how the lives of the women involved can be changed through the very limited explorations of their experiences demonstrated in this book. At the end of the book I am left with a question: can women's friendship and conversation have a genuinely liberating impact on women's lives, or will it always be a means of confirming us in roles written for us through patriarchy?

Gill Millar is a Senior Lecturer in Youth and Community Studies at the University College of St Mark & St John.

Sally Tomlinson (Ed)

Education 14-19: Critical Perspectives

Athlone Press

ISBN 0 485 12131 X

pp 222

Ted Harvey

For those of us 'at the chalkface' in education the transition from old Tory to new Labour has so far been almost seamless. If, by any chance, the new government should be looking for a critical examination of the 14 to 19 stage of education provision, this book would be an excellent source.

The current tripartite system of 'gold standard' A-levels, vocational GNVQs and 'also-ran' NVQs bears an uncanny similarity to its 50 year old predecessor. Whilst the faint hope of parity of esteem could perhaps be forgiven as naive then it is inexcusable now. This divided and decisive system is fraught with problems and the articles in this book expose the social shortcomings of our current provision with great effectiveness and from almost every conceivable angle - the situations of ethnic minorities, girls, students with special needs, disruptive pupils and public schools are all covered with acuity and a mixture of arrogance, complacency and downright incompetence of the politicians and administrators of the last decade are all too evident. The writers offer both evidence and

analysis of a high and convincing order, to show that the present structure fails to serve both the nation as a whole and the individuals within it.

While the argument for a more coherent system of 14-19 education is totally convincing and well expounded here, there is another level at which this book is perhaps less successful - just what sort of education would we be talking about in a preferred provision of the future? In fact it may well be the inability to answer this question that underpins the paralysis when it comes to dealing with the more obvious issues of equality of opportunity. The problem is exemplified in the content of A-levels and GNVQs, the former are academic, generally taught traditionally and, despite protestations to the contrary, almost inevitably norm-referenced in effect; GNVQs, on the other hand, are more student-centred in terms of methodology, emphatically criterion-referenced and with a vocational content which arouses the antipathy of literal educationalists everywhere. While the debate centres on these oppositions there is unlikely to be a resolution.

Regrettably only one article in this volume addresses this issue directly and exclusively - Richard Pring's 'Aims, Values and the Curriculum' which raises several profound questions which are only partially answered. Personally, I think there is a serious imbalance here which requires probably another volume of similar length and rigor plus a good deal of imagination.

The pace of change brought about by information technology has massive implications for education, both in terms of the skills needed by the workforce of the future (with all the attendant issues for equal opportunities) and for the ways in which education can be 'delivered'. Some writers have suggested that it would be better for pupils to attend school only for the purpose of personal and social development, leaving more traditional content to be learnt at home with their computer. Many teachers of older and particularly more affluent pupils are noticing this trend materialising in their classrooms already. There are those of us who believe that what is required is a closer examination of the processes of education and perhaps even a renewal of some of the notions of personal growth and responsibility which found brief favour in those oh-so-derided sixties, and which now have reached maturity and would rejuvenate the experience of schooling for so many disaffected and jaded pupils.

While this book offers a compelling case for overhauling our current 14-19 provision, particularly with regard to its devastating effects in terms of equal opportunities, its relative lack of exploration of other dimensions of critique is a disappointing omission.

Ted Harvey is assistant warden of a village college in Cambridgeshire.

Valerie Walkerdine

Daddy's Girl: Young Girls and Popular Culture

Macmillan Press Ltd

ISBN 0 333 64780 7

pp 209

Anna Whalen

This book is specifically about working class little girls and in dealing with the subject is challenging, honest and powerful, covering much more than the title suggests. I expected a fairly standard feminist analysis of the relationship between little girls and popular culture when I started to read this book, but Walkerdine very quickly brushed aside conventional discourse as being too simplistic.

Walkerdine's starting point is that the media reflects two basic approaches to the eroticisation of working class girls in popular culture, neither of which are credible: broadsheets focus on the child corrupted, innocence lost and the tabloids report on individuals' paths to success and fame. The first three chapters are devoted to the exploration of theories about and perceptions of the working class in order to demonstrate how accepted discourses relating to the working class are deeply flawed. Reflecting on her own experience as a working class girl with working class parents, Walkerdine claims that a comprehensive study of the ordinary working class has been overlooked by academics.

She asserts that: cultural studies has a bias towards the more interesting, resisting 'conscious' working class; left wing intellectuals view the working class either as easily swayed and unaware or as potential resisters of oppression; and social psychology has ignored the individual psyche of the working class, adopting a blanket approach to a class which is treated as psychologically infantile. Her central claim is that the ordinary, conformist working class is not deemed worthy of study: they are not dangerous to the bourgeoisie or interesting to the left wing intellectuals if they are not resisting. Thus any discourse on the relationship of little girls to popular culture is likely to be superficial.

Given the changes in the labour market, unemployment patterns and the increasing employment of women, I would have welcomed Walkerdine laying down some markers about what she meant by the term working class and her perceptions of the positions of working class women today. Without this it felt that she was almost stuck in the past, projecting her own experiences as a child on to the present without acknowledging changes. Despite this, her use of her own experiences greatly enhanced the book.

Arguing against the pathologising of the working class, Walkerdine uses her own and other families' experiences to show that survival strategies are adopted to cope with poverty and emotional pain. One of these strategies is fantasy - of a different life, filled with glamour and fame. What Walkerdine actually means by fantasy is anything from watching a film and verbalising wishes of a different life, singing pop songs with friends in the playground to performing on a stage. Middle class girls do not need these fantasies because they have nothing to escape out of, their paths to a good life are already established.

The book is not written on the back of primary research. Walkerdine draws on some qualitative research done with working class girls in the 1980s and on her own experience. She justifies her methodology in Chapter Four, which will be food for thought for anyone involved in participatory research. Once again she contests existing conventional approaches claiming no social research, no matter how scientifically prepared can ever be anything other than one story, open to interpretation. Instead of trying to eliminate subjectivity, Walkerdine suggests looking at how to best use this in research.

Walkerdine explores the fantasy created in the film *Annie*, and how that fantasy has subtly changed from the 1920s to the 1980s. Whilst *Annie* is about rags to riches through a child being street wise, sheer hard work and charm, other fantasy stories. *My Fair Lady* and the Shirley Temple films are about transformation due to education and charity respectively. This is not an area which Walkerdine builds on, but is interesting. If settings for fantasy are provided through popular culture, they come with value-laden messages about the way to escape. These messages will alter depending on class, race and gender, for example, Black children's encouragement into sport, music and dance has been well documented.

Fantasies of escape through stardom are not unique to little working class girls, but what is contested is how society should react to this particular phenomena. Walkerdine states that there is nothing wrong with little girls holding these fantasies: the notion of losing childhood innocence is based on a Western version of childhood which is culturally too specific. Middle class ideals are presumed transferable to the working class and deviation from the accepted norms are open to criticism without any in-depth study of the working class. The space created for little girls to have fantasies about escape is a chance for them to feel powerful, to imagine a life different to their mothers. The problem with the fantasy of escape through stardom is the eroticisation of little girls by adults in that process. Walkerdine never takes the easy option, she fully acknowledges it would be simple to suggest that programmes like the infamous 'Minipops' (a

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talent show for children) are the soft porn of child pornography and the precursor of child sexual abuse, but again she argues this is over-simplistic. Whilst as a society we want to convict paedophiles, Walkerdine claims we are ignoring the central issue of how popular culture condones the projection of adult sexuality onto children.

There is not a simple, single truth about the relationship between little girls and popular culture and Walkerdine is clear her account is only one story. But this is a valuable book, because it contests so much and manages to demonstrate the complexities of the subject matter.

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

Helen Spendler

Who's Hurting Who?

42nd Street

ISBN 1 9007 8200 6

£10.00 (pbk)

pp 126

Marion Leigh

Who's Hurting Who? is about young people's own perceptions of their self-harm or suicide attempts and of the services to which they turned for help. It covers new ground and as such is to be warmly welcomed. It is a phenomenological study based on in-depth interviews or discussions with fifteen young people who were involved through a community mental health resource for those aged between fifteen and twenty five. The core group consisted of five females and three males, a gender balance chosen to reflect similar proportions in the total population. The research was carried out over two years.

The book should lead to a better understanding of self-harm and suicide attempts and there are salutary lessons here for all who work with young people or in counselling and related works.

Complex material is discussed clearly and sensitively. The responses to suicide and self-harm in the counselling professions and elsewhere are highlighted and all the more telling since it is the words of young people themselves which reveal these. It is invaluable to have clear statements of what it is like from the inside to feel powerless and the author's request that the quotations are meant to be read should be observed.

The book concludes with a thoughtful discussion of the conflicts and paradoxes facing the young people concerned and points out that there are no simple right solutions. The Appendix contains the interview schedule.

When Durkheim's study of suicide argued that external factors played a crucial part in suicide attempts he both established sociology and the construct of a social moral order based on social norms and, therefore, challenged accepted thinking of suicide as bad or mad. The long-term effects of the legal treatment of suicide attempts as self-murder and against the law was to produce verdicts of 'unsound mind'. Whilst the law no longer applies, the attitudes linger on.

This telling study throws a searching light on these attitudes. Another common response is that of denial. Young people meet stressful situations as often as any other human beings but these may be dismissed as most unlikely, or by claims that no 'real' intensity of feeling or stress is involved because these are 'young' people.

The emerging view of life is as property, and thus questions of who owns life, are central to the issue with which *Who's Hurting Who?* deals. A maelstrom of issues such as genetic engineering and cloning, the pro-life lobby or euthanasia add to the complexities confronting young people and those working with them. Early on the book shows what it feels like to meet these conflicts head on and the urgent need in training to address the issues and how to respond to them.

The study identified complexity and ambiguity both in the subjects of the study and in those they encounter. The illuminating section on whether self-harm and attempted suicide are on a continuum or are qualitatively different, explores this in some detail and suggests that self-harm may be a preferred alternative and a coping strategy. The experiences are not lumped together but revealed as distinctive and varied so that, say, alcoholism or anorexia are contextualised too.

Young people face not only initially hostile or dismissive responses. Persistent self-abuse may be regarded as untreatable and whilst this is a clinical medical judgement it adds rejection to the pain already felt by the young person. Clearly a breadth of experience and variety of expertise is called for in such work.

Self-harm and attempted suicide challenge the moral constraints of both social norms and religious laws, and the current politico-utilitarian code is implicitly antagonistic. Karen Horney's 'tyranny of the should' and Paul Halmos' 'faith of the counsellors' both pointed earlier to increasing external controls and diminished control by individuals over their own

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lives and saw the growth of counselling as a response to that. This study contains similar observations about loss of personal autonomy. The Dutch definition means 'accompanying' or 'journeying alongside' and seems less didactic, less intrusive and more respectful of individual autonomy than does our 'counselling' with its cultural overtones of 'telling'. This book demonstrates the value of talking as a helping process, a view I share as seeing counselling as partly about learning. Individuals each have their own internal logic and this will unfold in time given the right climate (see Jung's fascinating account of work over a ten year period with one client). *Who's Hurting Who?* shows clearly the importance of hearing, as opposed to just listening, and gives us a memorable record of its place in work with young people.

This book is also about services and work settings and workers. It records instances where official systems of aid, with obvious shows of power, are counter-productive. There is a clear message here too about the appropriate support, supervision and resources which are needed for staff.

The study looked at what services young people themselves thought would help. The list included a crisis telephone service, a rage room in which to break things up, a non-medical service with medical back-up, non-judgemental attitudes in the health service.

So it is frustrating to suspect that the know-how to make such provision is there, but fragmented and scattered randomly up and down the country, often existing by a fingerhold in a hotch-potch of settings. If an equivalent investment was made in such provision as is made in the Welfare to Work scheme, it could well serve better both young people and society. This work points the way.

Who's Hurting Who? is an outstanding study which calls for a radical shift in responses to self-harm and attempted suicide. It has far-reaching implications, well beyond the limits of the particular people involved and I cannot recommend it too highly.

Marion Leigh worked as a Student Counsellor and contributed to BACS 'Growth Towards Autonomy' 1978.

Trefor Lloyd

'Let's Get Changed Lads': Developing work with boys and young men

Working with Men Collective

ISBN 1 900468 03 4

£9.95 (pbk)

pp 195

Ken McCulloch

Trefor Lloyd and his fellow proselytisers for the development of work with boys and men over the past decade or so have made some important contributions to debates about work with young people. This contribution is, arguably, significant out of all proportion to either the volume of such work, or the quality of theoretical analysis emerging out of that movement. The importance of this debate seems to me to have been its raising the problematic of masculinity as a proper subject for professional exploration. Against that background it was very disappointing to find this latest output from 'Working With Men' a rather unsatisfactory read. The title had led me to expect something rather different from what emerges. Frustratingly, I could find no explanation or indeed reference to the title in the text.

The book has three main components. First, there is a section headed 'Understanding Boys and Young Men' which attempts to explain and analyse contemporary understandings of masculinity and to explore their potential as a means to understanding the lives of boys and young men today. This is followed by some exploration of practice issues and a dozen short case studies describing examples of practice working with boys and young men. Perhaps the first specific observation should be that this structure doesn't seem to make the best use of the material available. The relationship of the parts to the whole is difficult to construe, and opportunities are lost, most importantly in the failure to make explicit connections between the examples of practice and the general arguments.

There is considerable potential in the initial section, which sets out to contextualise the situation of young males in contemporary Britain. Much useful material is covered and some of the references appear to offer worthwhile lines for further enquiry. However, the argument lacks real coherence and this ground has been covered much more convincingly by writers such as Mac an Ghaill (1996) and Seidler (1997). The selection of theoretical frameworks seems somewhat random, and the evidence presented seems both fairly selective and to be poorly explained. This is partly a matter of expression since this section of the book seems very poorly edited. Most, apart perhaps from the exceptionally gifted writers', work benefits enormously from the scrutiny of a critical friend in the

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shape of a peer or a publisher's author, and it is a pity to have to report that through its failings this book demonstrates the importance of a rigorous editorial process, both in its flawed structure and in the malapropisms, literal errors and opaque constructions which appear particularly in the early pages.

The central purpose of the book seems to be an attempt to lay specific claim to a particular approach to work with boys and young men, labelled as 'boyswork' but never clearly explained and distinguished. A section is devoted to an argument around the distinction between 'boyswork' and 'anti-sexist work with boys' and I have to say that after several readings the distinction still isn't really very clear. There is certainly an interesting debate to be explored here, in considering the relationship between different strands of thinking about gender and their impact on work with masculinity issues, but such an analysis needs more care and clarity than is evident here. It may be that this book contains the basis for some useful work in this direction; I return to this point below.

By far the most useful and satisfactory element of the book is the collection of practice examples. These cover a wide range of different projects ranging from activity based work and boys groups in mainstream youth work through work with young black, and Asian, men, to work with a specific focus on sexuality and sexual health. The case studies cover different parts of England, Wales and Northern Ireland and it was disappointing for me to find no Scottish example despite the documented accounts available (see Tett 1996, also Boyle & Curtis 1995). They do however provide a useful selection of insights into the kinds of practice that are emerging in response to various kinds of concern about both masculinity in and for itself, and meshed with specific concerns about, for example, violence, sexuality, race and marginalisation.

What would have been much more useful would have been to attempt, even if tentatively, to build some kind of theoretical framework or analysis of 'boyswork' out of the data offered by the case studies. It might just be possible using such an approach to say a little more clearly what the different forms of this work are, how they differ or are similar, what kinds of thinking about both the work itself and about masculinity are associated with which approaches, and so forth. The case studies appear by their structure to have been generated in response to an open-ended questionnaire, and despite the very different emphases and levels of detail it would be perfectly possible to use this material as the basis for a more rigorous analysis.

It gives me no pleasure to have written such a critical review. Single-sex work with boys is a tremendously significant part of the contemporary

youth work scene, and deserves to be promoted. The intention that this book embodies is admirable. I hope that despite its flaws it may help both to encourage more work of this kind and the development of frameworks through which the nature and purposes of work with boys and young men can be more fully understood.

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William A Corsaro

The Sociology of Childhood

Pine Forge Press (A Sage Publications Company) 1997

ISBN 0 8039 9011 1

£19.95 (pbk)

pp 304 + xvi

Andrew West

A book about childhood? What is that to do with youth? The question of a link is more than a misnomer, for they are (in part) one and the same, but we shall come back to this issue; the division of the life course in the West/North into stages of childhood, youth and then adulthood is arbitrary and artificial, and for academics and others has led to the creation of two literatures that barely speak.

There is a new sociological interest in childhood, marked by texts such as James and Prout (1990), Jenks (1996) and Qvortrup (1993). In another welcome addition to the canon, Corsaro does two things. First, he surveys a wide range of theoretical and ethnographic material about children and childhood (although the latter is mostly drawn from the US). Second, he examines two of the main tenets in the new sociology, and offers the notion of 'interpretative reproduction' as an extension of these. The two tenets, or 'key features of the paradigm' (James and Prout 1990 : 8) are, that children are social agents, 'active in the construction and determination of their own lives' (ibid) - or, as Corsaro puts it, 'children are active agents who construct their own cultures and contribute to the production of the adult world; and childhood is a structural form of part of society' (p5). Interpretative reproduction is 'the idea that *children* actively contribute

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to societal preservation (or reproduction) as well as societal change' (p5, emphasis in original): it is composed of 'three types of collective action:⁽¹⁾ children's creative appropriation of information and knowledge from the adult world;⁽²⁾ children's production and participation is a series of peer cultures; and⁽³⁾ children's contribution to the reproduction and extension of the adult culture' (p 41, emphasis in original). The relevance of these ideas to youth, and connections with studies of young people, seems readily apparent.

The book is laid out in four parts. In Part One (two chapters), Corsaro looks at traditional theories of childhood and introduces interpretative reproduction, noting how children have long been ignored in sociology as Jens Qvortrup has argued, because they have been marginalised: 'children are marginalised in sociology because of their subordinate position in societies and in theoretical conceptualisations of childhood and socialisation' (page 8). Part Two examines the 'historical and cultural context', the former rehearsing the debate over the works of Aries and Pollock, and some new material, while the latter particularly looks at socio-economic change. This fourth chapter includes a section on childhood in 'developing societies', but the two pages allotted cannot do justice to the complexities involved, and this should have been emphasised more strongly.

Part Three is the longest (four chapters) and examines children's cultures from different perspectives, and here there is most drawing from forms and phrases of psychological literature, perhaps reflecting the paucity of sociological and anthropological work. Part Four examines children as social problems, and problems faced by children, ending with proposals to enrich children's lives. These proposals include the need for family support and addressing the experience of isolation, action to tackle abuse, the implicit and explicit needs of children in poverty (particularly in the USA), and the requirement that action is taken now; 'the future of childhood is the present' (page 277), and 'cultures that invest in their children, that shelter, nourish, and challenge their young, that hold high expectations for their future generations, will survive and flourish. All children live their childhood only once' (page 276, emphasis in original).

These sentiments, and indeed the reality, strike a chord with those concerned about young people and policy in the UK, particularly as we have seen the escalating incidence of youth homelessness, poverty and marked inequality in the 1980s and 1990s. Yet studies of children, childhood and young people, youth, not only generally revolve around separate literatures but are conceptualised differently, often it seems with different assumptions and policy implications. In terms of the relationship to young people, the issue of marginalisation and subordination should strike resonance, although the question of power implicit in subordination is perhaps

less marked in youth studies which emphasise more the preparation for the acquisition not of power but of 'independence' (generally unproblematic) or adulthood. A popular division between the two, childhood (positive, angelic) and youth (negative, demonic), is perhaps well illustrated here (unintentionally) in the chapter on children as social problems where the main example is of teenage pregnancy (a youth problem, blame on the individual) which includes a good critique of the American Right as personified by Charles Murray.

The main focus of the book is on the USA and this, coupled with the separation of childhood and youth studies, has probably contributed to the omission of the work of Angela McRobbie and Mica Nava, and the anthropological studies of Allison James, among others. The link between childhood and youth is crucial for policy: the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as up to 18 years (with clear implications for welfare policy for 16-17 year old children, for example!). Not all societies conceive of youth: it has come to play an important part in the West through industrialisation, and processes of employment, but as increased inequality begins to bite harder, its usefulness as an all-purpose social category must be questioned. Texts such as this help to bring a fresh perspective on the lives of young people, while raising the need for a greater integration of child and youth studies - and the facilitation of better and integrated policies for children and young people.

Corsaro's book is useful both as reference and text. It is well presented, laid out with delineated examples, and having chapter summaries. It is also well written and easy to read. The references to childhood in the 'developing world' are two-edged: awareness of the multiplicity of childhood and children's lives and problems around the world is useful, but to do it justice requires a much larger book: in parts, such as the question of child labour, the complexity of the issue is missed. The focus of the book is effectively on the USA, which means that issues emerging from cases such as the Bulger murder, in particular concerning the popular construction of childhood (which are usefully discussed by Jenks and others), also have been missed. However, the book deserves to be widely read among the growing literature on childhood.

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