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CURFEWS FOR CHILDREN:
Testing a policy proposal in practice

MARK DRAKEFORD AND IAN BUTLER

The Issue

Before during and after the general election campaign of 1997, the Labour Party proclaimed the advantages of a curfew as a means of addressing the problem of young children '10 and under out in the streets unsupervised at night' (Jack Straw, 1996). Defensively in front of audiences who know anything about the subject, defiantly in front of its own long-standing supporters, decisively for the benefit of its much-mythologised middle England voters, Jack Straw and Tony Blair regularly returned to the theme. The precise policy has not always been easy to pin down. Mr Straw, for example, has been quoted as favouring a curfew time which varies by two full hours. On 3rd June 1996 he told journalists: 'My preference would be for children aged 10 and under to be off the streets by 9 p.m.' (Independent 3.6.96.), while writing in the same newspaper three days later the policy had shifted to one of tackling unsupervised children at '11 at night' (Straw, 1996). In the entirely incongruous setting of a South African tour, Mr Blair told the Commonwealth Press Union that, 'I can see no reason at all for young children to be out on their own late at night, and I can see many reasons why they shouldn't be - not least their own safety. We are examining measures to tackle this. Some have called it a curfew. I call it child protection' (The Guardian 15.10.96).

Two different strands, often presented together but actually proceeding from different premises, thus underpin this discussion. In the first argument, young children are said to be on the loose and in need of control and restriction. In the words of the social commentator of a leading liberal newspaper such 'junior mobsters' are responsible for 'a relentless undercurrent of yobbery, destroying the quality of everyone's life' (Guardian 15.12.96). A curfew is the answer. In the second argument, children out at night are the victims of neglect, the product of a society divided into poor single parent households (where lone adults fail to fulfil their obligations) or rich two parent households (where both partners are working too hard and too long to exercise their responsibilities). Children in these circumstances are allowed untended into public places 'where close-circuit television has replaced grown-up watchfulness' (Bendell, 1996). Their basic civil liberties and freedoms have to be enhanced by a more emphatic reinforcement of adult obligations to look after them. A curfew is the answer. Despite these ambiguities, the commitment to the policy was strongly expressed. Speaking in Yardley in Birmingham, an area in which the need for a curfew had been specifically identified, Mr Straw declared in the autumn of 1996 that: 'If we win the next election, we would seek to push through legislation as quickly as possible to make a curfew an option for any part of the country that wanted it.'

Of course, such views are not universally shared. Ample evidence exists of the discriminatory effect of such measures (Jeffs and Smith, 1996) and their ineffectiveness as a measure against crime - most crime by young people takes place between 3 and 6 in the afternoon; by midnight almost all children, good, bad and indifferent are already asleep. The oppressive impact of criminal justice sanctions upon parents of young people in trouble has also been well established (see, for example, Drakeford, 1996). Such measures have a particularly unhelpful and debilitating impact upon those for whom the raising of children is already problematic and undertaken in the most disadvantaged circumstances. Commenting on proposals - including curfews - brought forward by the last Conservative Home Secretary to penalise parents for their children's behaviour, the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham, commented 'We would be dealing with parents of the most unpromising kind and whether they would change their ways as a result of these court orders is doubtful...We need to try to prevent children getting into the courts in the first place' (Guardian 7.3.97).

Labour In Office

In government, New Labour's approach to the curfew has shown some modifications but also essential continuities. The more extravagant claims of opposition, which sometimes appeared to suggest that curfews would be available almost on demand, have given way to a greater emphasis upon the caveats which would need to be in place before such a course of action could be followed. Thus Part One of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out a series of practical steps which need to be taken before a 'local child curfew scheme' (clause 14 (1)) can be instituted. The initiative must come from a local authority (clause 14) which will have already undertaken mandatory consultation with the chief officer of every police authority within that local council area as well as 'other appropriate persons' (14 (3)). Confirmation of the scheme will then be required from the Secretary of State before it can proceed (14(4)). Once orders have been agreed, any curfew, which can be applied only to children under 10 (14 (2)), will last for a maximum of 90 days (14(1)). Despite these procedural reservations and complexities, however, the actual proposal retains its prominent place within the flagship Crime and Disorder Act. From start to finish, the Home Secretary and other ministers have emphasised the purpose of the legislation as tackling the 'anti-social behaviour, particularly from young offenders, which makes a misery of the lives of so many law-abiding people of our country' (*Hansard* 30.7.97, clm 341). Additionally, throughout the process, the rhetoric and the content of the legislation have continued to conflate the issues of criminal offence and socially debatable behaviour, as though these categories were indistinguishable. The Home Secretary's speech, on first introducing the Bill to the House of Commons, performs this elision exactly. The text of a full paragraph in that speech reads: 'We shall replace the archaic rule of doli incapax, which assumes -absurdly - that a child aged 10 - 13 cannot differentiate between right and wrong' *(i.e. a criminal courts matter)*. 'Child protection orders will be available

to deal with children aged 10 and under left out unsupervised late at night' *(i.e. a matter of social behaviour)*. In this last sentence, moreover, the theme returns that curfews are a measure of child protection, rather than the suppression of social nuisance. The dubious reality of this distinction emerges clearly in the account of the Hamilton experiment in Scotland which is described in greater detail in a later section of this paper.

Evidence from Elsewhere

The progressive shift in public policy-making in relation to young people, singling out this group for separate and less advantageous treatment than other sections of society, is not a uniquely British phenomenon. Indeed, in the American context, from which so much recent British criminal justice policy has been derived (Christie, 1993; Smith, 1996), a substantial curfew track record has already been established. During the 1990s, 'curfew fever' (Blumner, 1994) has swept across the United States, requiring young people - usually under the age of 17 - to be off the streets during the late evening and night time. In New Orleans, late evening begins at 8 p.m. Hawaii has a state-wide curfew. Thousands of small towns and three quarters of the largest 77 cities in America employ such arrangements (Ruefle and Reynolds, 1995). So popular have these measures proved, that by the early 1980s twelve American states had already imposed night driving curfews on young people (Merry, 1984) and according to Jeffs and Smith (1996) 'a growing number are being supplemented with daytime curfews operating during school hours'! A larger number, however, have separate truancy laws which effectively make any young person on the streets during school hours in prima facie breach of a de facto curfew. This conflation of night time and day time curfews is also characteristic of New Labour thinking. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1998) provides new powers for the police (clause 16) to arrest a young person believed to be outside school without lawful authority and to return her or him to the school from which s/he is absent or - in line with American practice discussed more fully below - to a centre designated for that purpose by the local authority. American policy remains an unreliable guide in this, as so many other areas of criminal justice policy, if only because the American experience has been almost wholly dominated by concerns about teenage conduct. In the 58 cities where Ruffle and Reynolds (1995:335/358) report on detailed curfew arrangements, for example, all apply to young people aged 15 and under, while fully 42 of the 58 place restrictions upon those up to and including 17 years of age. The US Conference of Mayors published a survey in December 1997 which showed that of 347 cities with populations of 30,000 or more, 276 now have curfews in place. 80% of cities reported a night-time curfew, and fully 26% also implemented youth curfews during the daytime. Just over half of these cities (154 or 56 percent) reported having had a youth curfew for at least ten years. Despite such a scale, and accelerating scope, only 26 cities within the survey were able to provide data in relation to any connection between curfews and the rate of juvenile crime (Murphy 1997). The combination of attractiveness to

the public and insignificance in practice has been characterised by Barry Krisberg, a leading American youth justice academic as 'country club criminology' (Independent 9.6.96.). The popular support for such measures was thought to be sufficiently strong, however, for President Clinton to include endorsement of a Justice Department recommendation for a national wide curfew as part of his 1996 re-election campaign. The curfew was to apply to all those under 17 years of age and to come into force at 8 p.m. on school nights, 9 p.m. in the summer and 11 p.m. at weekends. In a speech to a church audience at New Orleans - where a dusk to dawn curfew applies to young people - he embraced the idea as protecting children from the 'dangerous world out there' (Detroit News 1996). The rapid spread of curfews in America masks the considerable dissension, legal and civic, which has accompanied their rise. As Britain embarks upon this extension of 'status offending' - that is to say, making illegal for one group of the population, activities which would be legal for another - and the incorporation of the European Convention of Human Rights into United Kingdom law, it is worth noting briefly the issues which curfew enthusiasts have had to face in the United States.

Within the American legal system, curfews have faced repeated testing, mostly resulting in the Courts placing far greater restrictions on their use than the municipalities in which they had been proposed. In June 1997, for example, the state courts in Washington and California declared unconstitutional the juvenile curfew ordinances in their areas. The municipalities had failed to provide a practical arrangement sufficiently 'narrowly tailored' to prevent juvenile crime or prevent minors from becoming victims. In terms of crime prevention, the curfew plans had failed to establish an evidentiary nexus between such a compelling governmental purpose and the curfew prohibition. In terms of civil liberties, the court found that a minor's choice to stay out past ten o'clock in the evening, for whatever reason, was not the kind of important life decision which the state might legitimately have an interest in making for that minor. It also rejected the argument that curfews assisted the parent/child relationship. Rather, it interfered unhelpfully in the responsibilities which parents ought to be able to exercise for themselves (Rubstello, 1997). The American Civil Liberties Union which was involved in these and other challenges, described the curfews as 'good politics but bad laws'. The co-director of ACLU in New Mexico - where the courts followed those of Washington and California in September 1997 - commented, 'This law was merely a subterfuge to allow police to get kids off the street, but it was illegal. It violated the rights of children. And we were willing to stand up for children in the community when others were not' (ACLU, 1997a). Legal challenge has produced some impact upon curfew enthusiasm in American cities. Substantial warnings have been issued of the exposure to lawsuits and potential costs which face municipalities found to have violated children's constitutional rights in this way (see for example, Whitaker, 1995). A direct response to the Californian court ruling, for example, was to be found in Davies county which moved swiftly to axe its curfew which

forbade anyone under 18 to 'loiter, idle, wander, stroll or play' in a public place after 10 p.m. The Davies experience, however, had been one which also challenged the conventional wisdom that curfews are politically popular. According to a local newspaper report (The Davies Enterprise, 27.6.97), the nearby Woodland City Council had been obliged to withdraw its curfew proposals in January 'after a throng of parents, children and community members expressed outrage at what they termed a violation of children's civil liberties.' In Davies itself, very few residents had shown any active interest in the public meetings of the task force set up to organise and oversee the curfew, while the city had been 'deluged by letters opposing the plan.' Two weeks before the Court decision, the local chief of police had announced his opposition to the continuation of the curfew as 'unnecessary.' In other places, such as Dubuque City in the mid-West, curfews were opposed by civic leaders, against the enthusiasm of the police, because, in the Mayor's words 'a curfew would have an effect on Dubuque's reputation as a safe community. I've talked to business people who've moved their businesses here in the last 10 or 15 years, and they say they may not have located here if Dubuque had a curfew. They said they'd be very sceptical about a community that needs a curfew' (Telegraph Herald 5.3.97). Ruefle and Reynolds (1995) draw together a number of themes which emerge from these findings. They firmly reject the argument that curfews are part of a child protection agenda. Rather, they 'fall within the crime control approach to juvenile justice'. However, as crime control mechanism, the efficacy of curfews is questionable. As the authors suggest, the clearest evidence is of displacement of crime, either to hours outside the curfew period or to neighbouring localities where curfews are not in place. Once a curfew system has been established, enforcement of its requirements produces a series of further practical difficulties. Opposition from police officers and city legal departments has usually been the product of disillusionment at the time taken up by the 'baby-sitting' role of enforcement and the extent to which significant resources tied up in curfew enforcement creates severe opportunity costs in considering or developing alternative ways of addressing the problems faced or created by young people. The extent of the curfew enforcement task is suggested in figures quoted by Ruefle and Reynolds (1995: 351) which show that FBI statistics of curfew and loitering law violations amounted to 74,428 in 1992, almost twice the number arrested for robbery and only one thousand less than the numbers arrested for motor vehicle theft. Arrests in this area, as in the remainder of American youth justice (see, for example, Krisburg and Austin, 1993), are heavily skewed by race. In the successful attempt to strike out the Alburquerque curfew, for example, (ACLU 1997a), it was admitted in court that 73% of the children taken into custody for curfew violations were Hispanic. The penalties for violation are largely civic (fines) where the courts have been active in limiting curfew propositions, but criminal where not. Prince William County in Virginia, for example, has a sliding scale of fines and community service hours which includes the possibility - from the second violation onwards - of imprisonment for young people and parents (Prince William County 1998). The scale of curfew violation has led to special late

night holding centres being established, where young people can be held pending the arrival of parents or other arrangements being made for their onward transmission. At worst, these have been described (Aitkenhead 1997) as 'a kind of dog pound for stray children'. Better examples, as cited by Ruefle and Reynolds, 1995:352) are 'staffed by recreation workers or counsellors.' An example from Minnesota (Minnesota Workforce Preparation Branch 1998) includes two Truancy and Curfew Centres which began construction in 1998 at a total cost of half a million dollars. In a twist which has substantial British resonances, the Minnesota version of a welfare-to-work programme will be used in the construction activity, thus involving truants and curfew violators in the opportunity to build their own holding centre. However not all the problems end at this point. Four months into the opening of the Pittsburgh youth curfew centre (running contract over 200,000 dollars annually) only six young people had passed through its door, four of whom were not from Pittsburgh. The local newspaper highlighted the contrast between these figures and the 'hordes of youths the mayor, council members and community groups long complained roam the streets at night, terrorizing the populace' (ACLU, 1997b). Evidence for the growth of curfew proposals is to be found closer to home than America and is, if anything, even more disturbing. In France, during 1997, four right wing mayors in strongly National Front areas introduced bylaws which ban unaccompanied children below the age of 12 from walking in the street between the hours of midnight and 6 a.m. However in that country the new Socialist government has come out powerfully against this development. The Schools Minister, Segolene Royal, is on record as describing the curfew proposals as 'like extending laws on stray dogs to children' (Guardian, 22.7.96.).

The UK Experience

Arguably the most fully articulated and certainly the most widely publicised experiment with policing strategies designed to restrict the movement of children and young people after dark is the 'Child Safety Initiative' operated by Strathclyde police between October 1997 and April 1998. Targeted at young people under the age of 16, and particularly those under the age of 12, the experiment allowed officers of the Community Police Team, using existing statutory powers, to pick up unaccompanied children and young people out between dusk and dawn without 'reasonable excuse' and to return them to their homes. Parents would then be advised of the dangers facing their children on the streets. Should the police determine that there was no suitable adult supervision at home, children would be kept at the Community Police Office until collected by a responsible adult. If the view was formed that there was a need to do so, the local authority Social Work Department might be informed. The experiment arose, according to its architects, from a widespread concern amongst the general public over the depredations of young people living on the targeted estates and in equal measure, concern over the safety of young people themselves. The familiar elision between matters of crime and disorder and matters concerning the welfare of children, reflected in the

operation of the experiment, is echoed in the pronouncements made around the launch of the scheme. Henry McLeish, the Scottish Office Home Affairs Minister expressed the view that 'The curfew will mean that people on the streets who are going to create mischief will be dealt with and vulnerable young people protected.' (Guardian, 4.10.97). An even neater elision was provided by the local police Divisional Commander who declared that 'The police are a caring service and the move is about caring for youngsters and our community as a whole' (Guardian, 4.10.97).

Given that the criteria used locally to determine the success of the experiment, namely a reduction in complaints of vandalism and public order infractions, the merits of the scheme as a child protection strategy seem to have been left to one side but as a public order initiative considerable merit is being claimed for the Hamilton experiment. Donald Dewar, the Secretary of State for Scotland on a visit to the Community Police Office at the end of the trial heard how 'youths causing an annoyance' had been 'eliminated' and that residents now felt 'more comfortable'. (Guardian, 17.4.98). The confirmatory cosy glow that such findings might engender in any Labour minister was not however echoed amongst those who had themselves been the main objects of the exercise. A survey conducted by a local community group concluded that the curfew had reduced trust within families and caused greater anxieties amongst the families of children and other residents. The main impact of the experiment, they reported, had been to increase contact between police and young people (more than 100 young people had been rounded up during the 6 months of the scheme's operation) and to raise unnecessary fears among elderly people. 'Stigmatisation rather than safety appears to be the main concern', according to the researchers. (Guardian, 11.4.98). There is little to suggest that very much of substance on the three housing estates covered by the Hamilton experiment has changed. The limitations of such high profile, labour intensive and therefore high cost initiatives is acknowledged by senior police officers responsible for an earlier experiment to target young people out on the streets after dark, that based on the Downham estate in Catford, South London. This initiative used new powers given by the police in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994 to attach restrictive conditions to police bail. The measures are controversial in themselves (Haines and Drakeford, 1998) because of the way in which they transfer significant powers to restrict liberty from open to administrative justice. Officers are able to attach a wide range of conditions to bail at the police station, with only weak arrangements for internal oversight or appeal. Using these powers, the police in Catford identified a group of 12 young people and targeted them as part of a larger group whose disorderly behaviour was causing serious disruption to the lives of residents on the estate and which had led to the suspension of local bus services, for example. The Inspector who led the initiative compared his approach to 'zero tolerance' policing whilst acknowledging from the outset that 'ours was a short-term solution to deal with an immediate crisis' (Police Review 17.1.97). The medium and longer term approaches envisaged by the police were those that addressed the

educational and employment opportunities for young people living in the area. In the short term, however, the young people concerned had found themselves the subject of an experiment in which powers designed for other purposes were used as a form of 'class action', in which young people as a group were subjected to conditions upon their behaviour. The relatively short and episodic nature of the UK experience of curfews has not generated, to date, a broader debate on the wider implications of such schemes. In reports of both the Hamilton and south London initiatives, questions of civil liberties do not feature significantly except to be turned aside by arguments of the 'greater good' kind. Whether the breach of a curfew does constitute a status offence and hence would be contrary to articles 2 and 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights remains to be tested. Whether curfews could be taken off the streets and into discos and parties also awaits developments. Do the 'truancy patrols' that now operate in some areas constitute a day-time curfew? and so on. Yet there is some evidence that important questions are beginning to be asked. As one local paper has recently commentated when faced with the introduction of another council/police public safety initiative, 'After young children, who will be next?' (Cambridge Evening News, 1.9.98). The paper's leader column identifies the proposed initiative as a 'measure of the frustration over how to deal with young social nuisances' but goes on to note that 'What may seem like a simple measure has enormous implications for the social fabric of the nation. The real answer is for individuals to accept their civic and community responsibilities in order to protect their civil liberties.' In the UK context at least, the primary case for the introduction of such measures remains to be made. In Britain, the attitude of the incoming Labour government has been closer to that of American rather than continential European commentators. New Labour Ministers, when asked to provide an indication of the problem which a curfew might address, have fallen back on generalised claims of the 'its widely known' or 'I've seen it myself' variety, rather than being able to cite anything more substantial or testable. It is in this context that the event described below was organised. Its purpose was to contribute positively to discussion of this issue, by providing at least some hard evidence which has otherwise been so conspicuously lacking.

The Event

On the evening of Friday 11th July 1997, a census was conducted of the streets of the parliamentary constituency of Cardiff West. The census was initiated by the authors of this paper as a result of hearing the Minister most responsible for the policy defend its place in the Goverment's legislative programme in the terms set out above. The practical organisation of the idea drew on contacts in the field, through local Trade Union branches and colleagues and students at the local social work qualifying course. Between the hours of 10 p.m. and midnight, twenty eight people, walking and working in pairs, patrolled the streets of the area, making a record of all children between the ages of 6 and 10 years of age who were visibly outside the confines of their homes or any other building. The twenty eight were

all experienced observers, and included probation officers, youth justice workers, youth workers and others. The whole process was independently monitored by a local councillor and former leader of Cardiff City Council who observed the process, oversaw the briefing of participants and scrutinised the materials used. The advice to those conducting the census was straightforward: firstly, they were to confine themselves to the role of observers, actively alert to the presence of children within the intended category, but confined to recording of, rather than intervening in, any observed event. Secondly, if in doubt, observers were to err unambiguously on the side of including rather than excluding any individuals from the record. Any question concerning age, *'is she older than 10?'* or location, *'is he actually outside his house?'*, were to result in a record being made.

Friday 11th July ended in a perfect evening. The sky was clear, the air temperature warm. On the previous day, play in a Scottish golf tournament had ended at 10.30 p.m. and even as far South as Wales those conducting the census conducted the first half of their activities in the last rays of daylight. It was certainly the evening for which the organisers had hoped, a warm, light, Friday night with no school to follow and, on the large Ely estate which dominates the constituency, coinciding with the culminating weekend of the local, large scale community festival. If ever there was an evening when children might be expected to be up late and in the open air, this was surely it.

The Area

Cardiff West is a constituency which offers a number of advantages as a location for a census of this description. In many ways, it exemplifies the history of post 1979 Britain. A comparison of the 1981 and 1991 general census returns reveals a pattern of polarisation. Wards in the area move from the middle ground of 1981 either in the direction of greater affluence or of pronounced disadvantage. A classification of all 908 local authority district council wards in Wales (Jenkins 1994) places two of the seven wards within the constituency amongst the ten most deprived in the country (Ely and Riverside), two amongst the ten most advantaged (Llandaff and Radyr), with only three left in between. In the Ely ward, the constituency has the largest council estate in Wales, containing pockets of multiple deprivation and the site of disturbances during the wider urban unrest of Britain during the early 1990s. The Llandaff ward, by contrast, is amongst the five least deprived wards in Wales, sharing with Radyr characteristics such as low levels of unemployment, high car ownership, absence of overcrowding and so on. The inner city portions of the constituency contain an area of long-established, respectable working class housing, the city's greatest concentration of privately rented accommodation, examples of area gentrification and, in the Riverside ward, the highest proportion of minority ethnic populations anywhere in Wales. When the curfew idea was first mooted by the Labour Party, Jack Straw was widely quoted as being 'convinced there is a growing problem, even in traditional market towns in Tory areas, of children

being allowed to run in gangs at night'. Cardiff West provides as useful a microcosm as locally available of the urban conditions at which the curfew proposals seemed directed. It sets at least as sharp an examination of the proposals as the market towns of middle England, and one which adds a series of further social tests against which the curfew proposal can be examined.

The Results

The census recorded a total of 68 young people as being outside their own homes or other domestic setting between the hours of 10 p.m. and midnight. This number was made up of 51 boys and 17 girls. Observers assessed 24 children as falling within the 6 - 8 age range, and 44 aged between 9 and 10. In terms of raw numbers, therefore, the census revealed a considerable number of young children who were, in the words of the Home Secretary 'out on the street at night.' By a ratio of almost 2:1, however, these are at the higher end of the age range - and older than the 6 - 8 year olds sometimes cited by Ministers. Boys outnumber girls by a ratio of 3:1. More detailed scrutiny, however, reveals a more varied pattern than the headline figures might suggest. Table One sets out the immediate circumstances in which observations were recorded. Far from being 'out on their own', to quote the Prime Minister, the children in this survey were overwhelmingly in the company of adults or older young people by whom they were being supervised.

Table One:
34 were in the company of adults, most often identifiable as their parents.
17 were in the company of older young people.
14 were in the company of other children within the census age range - i.e. 6 - 10.
3 were alone, all of whom were identified as being 10 years of age.

The timeframe within which records were made casts further light on these findings. Just under half the observations - 33 or 48.5% of the 68 records - took place between 10.00 and 10.15. Cumulatively, 46 of the 68 records - or 68 % had occurred by 10.30. A further 11 children (8 of whom are accompanied by older people) were identified between 10.31 and 11.00, giving a cumulative total in the first hour of 57, or 84%. Thereafter, 9 records occur between 11.01 and 11.30; 1 between 11.30 and 12 midnight and 1 record after 12. Within that time sequence the following observations can be drawn out of the records made:

- *no 6 - 8 year old was recorded as being out alone at any time.*
- *no female children were recorded as being out alone at any time.*
- *the latest time at which any female child was recorded as being out, other than accompanied by an adult, was 11.15 p.m.*
- *the latest time at which a 10 year old was recorded as out alone was 10.40.*
- *the latest time at which a 6 - 8 year old was identified as out accompanied only by another child aged between 6 and 10 was 10.15 p.m.*

- *the latest time at which children were recorded as being out with older young people is 11.00 p.m. Of the 17 children identified as being out with older young people, all but three instances took place between 10.00 and 10.30 p.m.*
- *after 11.15 p.m. all records involve young people with their parents.*

Two main conclusions may be drawn from this analysis. Firstly, the basic premise upon which suggestions of curfew are made turns out not to be sustained. During this census, at least, there was no evidence of large numbers of young children unattended on the streets late at night. Indeed, no single child in the 6 - 8 year old category could be found, despite the best efforts of observers. Rather, the clearest trends are for children to be in the company of family and friends, and to be disappearing from the streets in large measure within the early portions of the survey period. Against that background the second general conclusion to be drawn concerns the enormous variability to be found within the basic framework. Variation in the circumstances which surround the presence of children outside the home at this time of night are almost as numerous as children themselves. Any attempt to frame a rule which could distinguish between situations which might be regarded as legitimate and those which could be identified as problematic in such circumstances would appear to be very difficult. Such difficulties are intensified, moreover, when the reasons for being up late are taken into account, as considered further below. Before moving to that discussion, however, one further sub-analysis of the findings is possible and instructive. Table Two, overleaf, divides the records according to the Council ward areas in which children observed, revealing the following pattern:

Table Two: observations by geography

	Nos.	6/8	8/10	gender		adults	older yp	other ch.	latest
Canton	12	5	7	10m	2f	7	3	0	11.30
Caerau	2	2	0	2m		2	0	0	11.00
Ely	28	9	19	21m	7f	2	12	14	11.25
Fairwater	9	2	7	8m	1f	6	2	0	10.20
Llandaff	6	2	6	3m	3f	6	0	0	10.20
Radyr/Morganstown:	1	0	1		1f	1	0	0	11.10
Riverside	10	6	4	7m	3f	9	1		12.03

In an earlier section, the socio-economic characteristics of Council wards in Cardiff West were briefly discussed. Discussion of curfew proposals in Britain has largely been bound up with a class analysis which identifies the problem which curfews might address as occurring on large working class estates. The findings recorded here offer some superficial support to that contention, while denying it in other more important ways. The usually-cited model would accurately predict the absence of children on the streets of Radyr, an affluent middle class area in which children in their own gardens might not easily be seen from the street. The Caerau

Ward, however, is the second largest council estate in Cardiff West and is, in fact, most often identified by those who live in the area as 'Ely'. The streets of Caerau were almost wholly quiet on the night in question and apparently considerably more so than the leafy spaces of Llandaff or the respectable calm of Canton. Only North Ely, with its 28 records, or 41% of the total observations, stands out as an area where considerable numbers of children were to be seen in these circumstances. The explanation for these findings is, perhaps, best found in the reasons why children appeared to be up at this hour. The surprisingly large number of records from Llandaff and Fairwater are placed in context by information from observers that six of the nine instances in Fairwater related to one sighting of a group of children together with their parents and older siblings in the garden of a neighbourhood pub at 10.10., while four of the six records in Llandaff all related to one sighting of a group of children in the same company sitting in a local pub garden at 10.15. The twelve records in Canton include eight which occurred on a long main thoroughfare which includes main bus routes, late night shopping and entertainment. North Ely provides the only example of children of this age in relatively large groups together and not in the company of anyone older. Here two separate groups of 5 children were observed, both made up of mixed ages between 6 and 10. Far from being the 'marauding gangs' (Bedell 1996) of some popular imaginings, however, one group was found sitting on garden wall, the other chatting quietly by school railings. Both groups were observed before 10.15 and none were in evidence after that time.

As to the three young people out alone, all were boys at the top of the census age range and all were engaged in identifiable activities. One was waiting at a bus stop, a second was out walking the dog and the third was going into a fish and chip shop. Observers did report anxieties at finding such young children out so late, even in such recognisable contexts. Anxieties, however, were of a lifestyle nature - *'I wouldn't want children of mine to be out so late on their own'* - rather than because of concern that the individual observed was involved in anything untoward. Indeed, in all 68 instances, observers reported only one instance of behaviour which could be identified as in any way anti-social, involving one boy hitting traffic signs with a stick as he walked along.

Conclusion

Mr Straw has said that his view of a curfew would be one in which 'a key element in the approach is that it would be local' (Straw 1996). This census does not purport to be anything other than an account of the circumstances in one locality on a particular occasion. As suggested earlier, however, the locality contains a wide social mix and the occasion was one on which, because of time of year, weather conditions and local community events, circumstances were relatively conducive to late night street activity. This discussion has deliberately eschewed arguments concerning the ethical desirability of curfew measures, despite the very substantial extension of the state in taking to itself the power to define good parenting and to back up

that definition with powers of intrusion into hitherto private spheres. While we have focussed upon assembling and discussing some practical evidence of those problems which a curfew is claimed to address, the approach which is thus embodied has to be understood in a wider context than the narrow policy itself. In the view of the authors of this paper, the curfew is best understood as part of the 'new demonology' that is evident in relation to not just to adolescents and 'threatening' youths, but to younger children too, in the post-Bulger era. The novelty of the curfew powers, and their most worrying effect, lies in just this aspect. The dislike which our society shows towards its young people is long-standing, part of what Geoffrey Pearson described in *Hooligan* as the 'timeless phenomenon' of 'the grumbling of older generations against the folly of youth' (Pearson 1983: 220). Under the new Labour Government debate about juvenile crime has been set substantially in the terms developed and most commonly used by its political opponents, locating the difficulties which young people experience and cause in the context of 'bad' families and the efficacy of punishment, spawning yet more chaotic custodial facilities and 'new deals' (from the same old pack). Despite the 'child protection' rhetoric in which Ministers have sometimes attempted to cloak and justify the curfew proposals, their root lies firmly in an approach which seeks the solution to social problems in the criminal justice sphere. This approach is now being driven further down the age-range. It is police officers who will detain the six year olds caught by the new powers, and the machinery of criminal justice system which will await those who are marked out so early for attention. For some, at least, these issues would matter least if the policy could be shown to be necessary and effective. This, certainly, has been the position of those politicians promoting the measure and whose views gave rise to the census reported here. This paper now ends by returning to this theme, with some estimation of the likely efficacy, or otherwise, of a curfew as a policy measure in this context. To recapitulate briefly: this paper has demonstrated that the basic concerns which are cited as justifying curfew proposals were not borne out in practical investigation. There were no unattended gangs of young children marauding around the streets of Cardiff West, causing distress and terror to respectable citizens. There are a small number of marginal cases where concerns about the personal safety or welfare of children legitimately arise but, at the very strongest, a case for a curfew in these instances would have to rest on a claimed preventative effect. Restricting children to their home because of what they might do, or because of what might happen to them, is a very different basis from the call for measures to prevent, 'nine and ten year olds causing chaos after nine o'clock at night' (Independent, 3.6.96.) with which this debate began. Yet, outside these instances, this census did reveal considerable numbers of children outside domestic settings during the period which politicians have cited as problematic. If it is at all possible to generalise from this pattern then any curfew proposal would be faced with a plethora of practical difficulties. How would it be possible to devise a set of rules which would encompass and differentiate between children with parents,

with older siblings, in pubs, on garden walls, out shopping, waiting at bus stops, walking a dog, buying chips and so on? The cure, assuming it would be so, would be a good deal worse than the disease, assuming that one exists. The hard evidence reported here suggests that it may be rogue ideas, rather than rogue children, which really need to be kept in check.

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LOCAL PLACES AND THE POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE:

youth councils as participatory structures

HUGH MATTHEWS, MELANIE LIMB, LISA HARRISON AND MARK TAYLOR

Abstract

Considerable evidence shows that within the United Kingdom young people have low levels of political interest and involvement. We suggest that young people's lack of participation and engagement in politics is a product of their strong (and growing) sense of marginalisation, an outcome of the ways in which they are treated by adults prior to the voting age. For the most part, young people, especially those under 18, are provided with few opportunities to engage in discussions about their economic, social and environmental futures and seldom given chances to express their preferences outside of adult-dominated institutions. It would seem that within the UK participation is conceived to be an adult activity. However, there is ample evidence to suggest that if young people are given more responsibilities and more chances to participate in the running of society, then they will be more willing to engage in the processes of democracy. In this paper, we examine competing discourses on the appropriateness and capability of children to participate and the form that participation should take, stressing the importance of 'local' decision-making to the political engagement of young people; we then examine young people's participation and representation within the UK at a local level, focusing on the history and development of youth councils as fora for young people's views; and lastly, we discuss examples of local participatory structures within mainland Europe where the political participation of children has been taken more seriously and where working mechanisms by which children are politically enabled are further developed. By making such comparison we seek to inform the debate on children's participation and representation within the UK.

Introduction

Considerable evidence suggests that within the United Kingdom young people have low levels of political interest and involvement (Bynner and Ashford, 1994; Park, 1995; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997). People under 25 are more likely than any other group not to be registered to vote, with only 43 per cent voting in the 1992 general election. It would seem that 'for many young people in Britain today politics has become something of a dirty word' (Wilkinson and Mulgan, 1995, p8). Explanations for political apathy of this kind hinge on two competing interpretations (Park, 1995). On the one hand, there is a view that non-involvement is something which has always been a universal characteristic of young people and that with age and growing responsibilities political interest will develop. For example, a recent survey in the UK (Bynner and Ashford, 1994) has shown that the majority of

15-16 year olds (72 per cent) are not at all interested in politics, an attitude confirmed in parts of Europe, USA, Canada and Australia (Wilkinson and Mulgan, 1995) and one which is in stark contrast to overall turn out rates in national elections. On the other hand, another explanation is that disillusionment and apathy is a recent phenomenon and symptomatic of a trend that will become more apparent as the present 'new' electorate grows older. Evidence in support of this view includes the declining figures of party membership by young people across the whole political spectrum (Cole, 1997). The plummeting of Young Conservative membership from 50,000 in 1970 to 10,000 by the early 1990s is typical of this trend. Also, in a report produced by the Industrial Society (1997) prior to the General Election of 1997, only 5 per cent of 12-25 year olds claimed involvement in national politics of any sort and a substantial majority, 80 per cent, of 16-25 year olds felt they were not part of any political party. Possible reasons for this growing sense of 'political disconnection' are that young people are now too 'busy' given the developing range of leisure opportunities or are more 'satisfied' due to increased material affluence, compared to their parents and grandparents. Another suggestion is that political disaffection is strongly associated with a growing cynicism about politics, grounded in accusations of sleaze and corruption which do nothing to attract the interest of young people (Bynner and Ashford, 1994). It would appear that an entire generation is opting out of politics (Barnardo's, 1996).

We suggest an alternative explanation to those above, that is, young people's lack of participation and interest in politics is a product of their strong (and growing) sense of marginalisation, an outcome of the ways in which they are treated by adults prior to the voting age. For the most part, young people, especially those under 18, are provided with few opportunities to engage in discussions about their economic, social and environmental futures and seldom given chances to express their preferences outside of adult-dominated institutions (Hart, 1997; Matthews, 1992, 1995; Matthews and Limb, 1998). It would seem that within the UK participation is conceived to be an adult activity (Oakley, 1994). However, there is ample evidence to suggest that if young people are given more responsibilities and more chances to participate in the running of society, then they will be more willing to engage in the processes of democracy (Hodgkin and Newell, 1996). For example, in single issue organisations where young people are encouraged to take part, membership statistics confirm a growing participation rate. Amnesty International's youth section increased from 1,300 in 1988 to 15,000 in 1995; Greenpeace's youth membership rose from 80,000 in 1987 to 420,000 in 1995; and Friends of the Earth report a growth of 125,000 new young members over the same period (British Youth Council, 1996). In keeping with these sentiments, Hodgkin and Newell (1996) assert that 'our society is in some danger of infantilising children, of assuming an incapacity long past the date when they are more capable'(p 38).

We suggest three factors which contribute to this culture of non-participation. First, there remain discourses within UK society which question the appropriateness of

children's political involvement. Second, there are those who doubt the capability of children to participate. Third, even amongst those who believe in the principle of children's right to say, there are uncertainties about the form that participation should take and the outcomes which might result. In this paper, we consider these competing perspectives on the appropriateness and capability of children to participate and the form that participation should take, stressing the importance of 'local' decision-making to the political engagement of young people; we then examine young people's participation and representation within the UK at a local level, focusing on the development of youth councils as fora for young people's views; and lastly, we discuss examples of local participatory structures within mainland Europe where the political participation of children has been taken more seriously and where working mechanisms by which children are politically enabled are further developed. By making such comparison we seek to inform the debate on children's participation and representation within the UK.

The participation debate

In spite of a growing lobby in favour of children's rights to participate, particularly fuelled by Article 12[1] of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of The Child (UNCRC), there remains an intransigence in some quarters about whether such political involvement is appropriate. Lansdown (1995, p.20) identifies three reasons why some adults are reluctant for children to take part in decision-making that will impact on their own life and the lives of others. First, giving children the right to say threatens the harmony and stability of family life by calling into question parents' 'natural' authority to decide what is in the best interests of a child. Yet, as Qvortrup *et al.*, (1994) suggests, to sustain such an argument, it must be beyond reasonable doubt that adults behave with children's best interests in mind. In practice, this is not always the case. Second, imposing responsibilities on children detracts from their right to childhood, a period in life which is supposed to be characterised by freedom from concern. Such a perspective ignores the fact that many children's lives are full of legitimate concerns which are products of the same social and economic forces that affect adults. A third strand to the argument is that children cannot have rights until they are capable of taking responsibility. This view is based on an idealised view of childhood, yet few children live without responsibilities. Alanen (1994) points out that children's labour and duties within the home are underestimated, whilst the reality of school work and its associated responsibilities are rendered invisible by the label 'education'.

A second, though related, argument against children's participation is based on a conviction that children are incapable of reasonable and rational decision-making, an incompetence confounded by their lack of experience and a likelihood that they will make mistakes. Furthermore, if children are left to the freedom of their own inabilities the results are likely to be harmful (Scarre, 1989). Franklin and Franklin (1996) draw attention to a range of libertarian criticisms of these two

viewpoints. As a starting point, children are constantly making rational decisions affecting many parts of their daily lives (some trivial, some less so) without which their lives would have little meaning, order or purpose. In addition, adults are often not good decision-makers and history bears this out. Indeed, this observation provides an incentive to allow children to make decisions so that they may learn from their mistakes and so develop good decision-making skills. More radically, it has been argued that the probability of making mistakes should not debar involvement, as such an assumption 'confuses the right to do something with doing the right thing' (p 101). Critics also draw attention to the existing allocation of rights according to age, which is flawed by arbitrariness and inconsistency. For example, within the UK a young person is deemed criminally responsible at the age of 10, sexually competent at the age of 16, but not politically responsible until the age of 18, when suddenly, without training or rehearsal, young people enjoy the right to suffrage. Lastly, denying rights of participation to everyone under the age of 18 assumes a homogeneity of emotional and intellectual needs, skills and competences. Furthermore, we contend that both positions are imbued with an adultist assumption that children are not social actors in their own right, but are adults-in-waiting or human becomings. Denigrating children in this way not only fails to acknowledge that children are the citizens of today (not tomorrow), but also undervalues their true potential within society and obfuscates many issues which challenge and threaten children in their 'here and now' (Matthews et al., 1999).

The debate about children's right to participate is compounded by a divergence of views on the nature, purpose and form that participation should take. For some (Hart, 1992; 1997; Lansdown, 1995), democratic responsibility is something which does not suddenly arise in adulthood but is a condition which has to be nurtured and experienced at different stages along a transition and so should be a feature of all democratic education. 'It is unrealistic to expect them (children) to become responsible, participating adults at the age of 16, 18 or 21 without prior exposure to the skills and responsibilities involved' (Hart, 1992, p. 5). In addition, there is ample evidence to suggest that the involvement of children in local decision-making acts as a catalyst for participation amongst the community as a whole (Hart, 1997). However others (Council of Europe, 1993; Storrie, 1997) argue, that education of this kind is disempowering in that it is designed primarily to integrate young people into existing social and institutional structures, on which they are unable to exert any real influence. Instead, if participation is to be truly effective it should be carried out in such away that the material influence of young people becomes progressively enlarged. Participation here, is more broadly conceived to be the right to influence, in a democratic manner, processes bearing upon one's own life and the development of local youth policy. This debate relates closely to notions of education versus empowerment and training versus emancipation (de Winter, 1997).

Local places and the political engagement of young people

From the fields of geography and environmental psychology there is considerable empirical support for the view that young people are competent social (environmental) actors, with the capability and adeptness to take part in decision-making which affects their everyday lives (Matthews *et al.,* 1999). For example, both Matthews (1992, 1995) and Hart (1997) have shown that children, from the age of 6 years, have the capacity, ingenuity and motivation to become keenly involved in determining the development and management of local places. Initially, children's horizons are set within a domestic context of care (e.g. care of animals and plants, gardening at home). As they become older so their interests and involvement can be broadened and diversified from taking part in local environmental management schemes (e.g. recycling, weather surveys, wildlife surveys, waste audits) through to a growing range of community-based projects (e.g. school councils, youth club committees, young people's fora). As a result of their involvement children will be drawn into an increasingly complex social and political milieux and gain a sense of moral responsibility. Furthermore, participation of this kind engenders feelings of belongingness and rootedness, which are important dimensions of citizenship (Matthews *et al.,* 1999).

Even with the best interests of children in mind, adult decision-making is likely to be flawed. Because adults have different outlooks and are pursuing different goals, they are often unable to see, much less understand, a child's point of view. Children, themselves, assign and weigh the criteria by which they judge places and events. For these reasons, Hart (1995) contends that we cannot rely any longer on a traditional social science approach which observes children's lives and goes on to report it to policy makers in the hope that they will bring about an improvement in quality. Instead what is needed is a 'more radical social science...(in which)...children learn to reflect upon their own conditions, so that they can gradually begin to take greater responsibility in creating communities different from the ones they inherited' (p 41). However, Matthews (1995) and Hart (1992, 1997) warn against tokenism in child participation. Involvement should not be associated with condescension. Children should be encouraged to participate as equal partners in setting agendas and making decisions about their economic, social and environmental futures, according to their maximum capacity, rather than responding to the interpretation of so-called experts.

Youth councils as forms of local participation and representation within the UK

There are some encouraging signs that at the local level attitudes are changing with regard to the involvement of young people in decision-making. There are a number of associated reasons for such a development. First, the momentum given to young people's rights in general by the UNCRC has been added to by the principles set by Local Agenda 21. Amongst its many declarations for a sustainable future is the view that dialogue should be established between the youth community and government at all levels which enables young people's perspectives and visions to

be incorporated as a matter of course into future environmental policy (Freeman, 1996). Second, local government reorganisation has provided a stimulus for youth issues to be addressed in a strategic manner, partly through a need to demonstrate community consultation and partly to tackle what is perceived to be 'the youth problem' (Griffin, 1993; Wynn and White, 1997). Third, there is the 'millennium factor'; as we move towards the turn of the century there seems to be an emerging sense that the future is for our children (Hackett, 1997; Storrie,1997) and local decision-making is critical to young people's well-being. Part of this movement towards giving young people a *say* has been the development of youth councils/forums. The terms *council* and *forum* are used interchangeably to describe the range of ways in which congregations of young people come together, usually, but not exclusively, in committee, to voice their views about their needs and aspirations (in their social and physical worlds). In this section we review the history and development of youth councils in the UK and consider their efficacy as a mechanism for getting young people involved.

Youth councils have been around for some time. There have been two surges of interest prior to the present day. During the late 1940s and 1950s a considerable number of youth parliaments were set-up throughout the UK, as a means for supplementing the adult-run Youth Service. In 1949 there were as many as 240 youth councils, based largely on 'rotarian' lines (Joseph, 1984). Butters and Newell (1978) identify three ideological pulses behind these developments; *character building,* which aimed to integrate young people into society and so produce mature citizens capable of rebuilding the country; *social education,* which sought to move young people into positions where they could work for institutional reform; and, more radically, *self-emancipation,* conceived as a means to equip young people with the skills and capabilities to challenge and to take control of those organisations (and structures) which effectively disenfranchised them. These early attempts failed, however, partly because of a lack of common purpose, for there was little cohesion between these three strands, and partly because the councils were fundamentally flawed, in that they had been set up by adults with political agendas divorced from the priorities and sensibilities of young people (Crossley, 1984). A second wave of youth councils developed during the mid 1980s. The Thompson Report (1982) on the Youth Service laid great stress on the idea that young people should participate in decision-making and that the best way forward was through youth councils (Paraskeva, 1992). At the time a number of county youth services sought to establish youth councils in each of their major towns (Crossley, 1984). However, few of these councils lasted more than a few years. Like those established in the earlier round, the driving force behind young people's participation was grounded not upon convictions of desirability and basic rights, but on political expediency. Unfortunately, in their rush to form youth councils many youth services made the fatal mistake of creating makeshift structures and constitutions.

The youth councils of today represent a new wave of interest in this form of political participation. A recent survey (Matthews and Limb, 1998) has revealed that there are over 200 youth councils within the UK[2] , although these have developed in different ways. A number of national organisations have played important yet differing roles in their development. A consequence of their varying approaches is an unevenness of provision within the four home countries. In England, the National Youth Agency (NYA) and the British Youth Council (BYC) provide advice and information on request about youth councils. The Wales Youth Agency (WYA) has a similar remit. These are agencies, which although proponents of young people's participation, have limited capacity to support development. Because of this, the development of youth councils in England and Wales has largely been a haphazard one, their form and character depending partly on such factors as the demography, political make-up and traditions of a locality, and partly on existing institutional and organisational structures and charismatic individuals .

In Scotland development is more coherent. Here a partnership between the Scottish Community Education Council (SCEC), Youth Link Scotland and the Principal Community Education Officers Group, which followed four years of research and consultation, gave rise to the 'Connect Youth' programme, launched in 1995. Targeted at 14 to 25 year olds, this programme seeks to promote effective involvement of young people in the decision-making processes which affect their lives and to engage young people in determining their views on services and the development of opportunities for enhanced community involvement (SCEC, 1996). However, these are guiding principles and it is up to individual voluntary and statutory agencies how these ideas are translated into practice. Inevitably, there has been a diversity of outcome. Of major significance, nonetheless, is the development of a network of youth forums throughout Scotland (located in Ayrshire; Clackmannanshire; Dumfries and Galloway; Dunbarton; Dundee; Falkirk; Fife; Lanarkshire; Mid-Argyll; Shetland; and Stirling). To help support the transition of this programme into the new single tier authorities, a number of national initiatives have been developed. These include, the creation of a Youth Training Scheme to recruit one hundred young people to support the work of Connect Youth at a local level and the establishment of a Youth Issues Unit to provide a focal point to collect, collate and disseminate information on issues facing young people in Scotland.

By far the strongest tradition of youth councils in the UK is within Northern Ireland. In 1979 the Department of Education established the Northern Ireland Youth Forum (NIYF), with a brief to encourage the development of a network of Local Youth Councils (LYC). Members of the LYCs were recruited from local youth groups including statutory and voluntary agencies, both uniformed and non-uniformed. Each youth group was eligible to send two representatives aged between 16 and 25 to a LYC. In turn, each LYC elected two young people to the NIYF. In the first ten years of the project between 16 and 20 LYCs were operational out of an initial

target of 29 and these were supported financially by five Education and Library Boards (Youth Service). The purpose of the LYCs was to get young people involved in tackling local issues and to ensure that their voices were heard by local District Councils. The NIYF, on the other hand, took on a broader role and attempted to provide a national platform for young people's issues. In a review of its achievements (NIYF, 1992), the Northern Ireland Youth Forum draws attention to a variation of outcomes. These arose for a number of reasons, including differences in funding between each of the five Boards, a structure which was perceived to be too 'top down' in its approach and emphasis, lack of a clear agenda, and no formal methods of monitoring and evaluating effectiveness. Since then significant changes have taken place. The NIYF now co-ordinates the activities of more than 50 groups and is proactive in campaigning for young people's rights across four major domains: policing; accommodation; employment; and education (NIYF, 1996). As a result of high profiling in the media, young people's views are increasingly valued by statutory providers such as the Training and Employment Agency, police authorities, health trusts and Education and Library Boards. Currently being discussed are proposals to get youth representatives on each District Council and the formation of a Northern Ireland Youth Parliament. Amongst the assurances of the new Labour administration is to send a Northern Ireland Minister to the Youth Forum every year. Nonetheless, given the geographical spread of constituent groups, some difficulties remain (NIYF, 1997). Notably there is a diversity of infrastructure, inequities in support funding and problems in co-ordinating the activities of groups. Furthermore, policy differences between statutory agencies complicate the ways in which young people's suggestions are taken up.

Local participation or another example of tokenism?

Our initial survey suggests that a major problem confronting the development of a coherent structure of youth councils in the UK is both the piecemeal and ad hoc manner in which they are being set in place and the experimental nature of many of the initiatives. At present, unlike many other European countries (see below), there is no single organisation responsible for their inception. Even when national agencies are involved decisions are largely left to individual statutory and voluntary organisations. In consequence, within a relatively small geographical area there may be many types of youth council, rarely drawing upon the experience of each other. Also, as there is no framework which defines the structure of these councils, there is often a sense that these are novel and slightly 'risky' experiments operating outside of the mainstream. Symptomatic of this general lack of organisation is that there is no comprehensive listing of youth councils and only recently has there been any attempt to compile a directory (an initiative launched by the National Youth Agency and the British Youth Council in 1997).

Inevitably, when there are various types of participatory structure, and in the absence of coherent guidelines, some are likely to be more effective than others.

We have drawn attention to the dangers of tokenism, a situation when young people are apparently given a voice but have little choice about the subject, the style of communication or any say in the final outcomes. Unless young people are confident that their opinions will be treated with respect and seriousness, they will quickly become discouraged and dismiss the participation process as ineffective, with all the implications this has for their confidence in democratic processes as they grow into adulthood. We suggest that poor participatory mechanisms are very effective in training young people to become non-participants. The lessons learned from school councils are of relevance here. In many cases these operate as little more than 'ideas groups' (Spinks, 1997), used to disseminate information and to communicate ideas, rather than being concerned with the business of making decisions. Strongly hierarchical and often dependent upon the enthusiasm of individual teachers alone, school councils rarely encourage responsibility for the implementation of new ideas and as such, become settings where young people's involvement lacks an action dimension (Fogelman, 1991). Indeed, as the Children's Rights Development Unit (1994) suggests, there can be few less democratic places than in our schools.

Whether youth councils/forums are effective mechanisms for the incorporation of young people into decision-making processes is as yet difficult to judge within the UK, given the developing nature of these structures. In the absence of well-defined performance indicators there are, nonetheless, a number of important issues facing any organisation claiming to represent the views of young people. These issues relate to the *initiation*, the *process* and the *outcome* of youth participation.

Initiation

Successful youth participation depends in part on the conditions in which it is initiated. There is a need to identify who has initiated the participation and their purpose in doing so. Where adult dominated agencies or authorities initiate participation there may be ulterior motives such as conflict resolution or social control. Even where there is a genuine commitment to participation on the part of agencies and authorities the participatory mechanisms must be examined carefully to ensure that participation amounts to more than tokenism. This requires a clear interface between young people and adult decision makers.

A further significant aspect of the initiation process concerns who is included and represented. The age of youth 'participants' in the UK has generally been in the older age group (16 and above). Yet there are examples in mainland Europe which illustrate the successful involvement of much younger children (see below). The constitution of the group in terms of sex, class, ethnicity and ability is important if youth participation is not to be open to the accusation of elitism. Elite participation may be acceptable if the participants represent the interests of a wider constituency of young people, but there is a danger that participation advances the interests of the vociferous, articulate and confident at the expense of others. This appearance

of youth participation lends legitimacy to adult decision-making and may increase marginalisation among the silent majority of young people.

The initiation of youth participation has implications for training. In order for young people to participate fully in these councils/forums they need to be equipped with the generic skills of communication and versed in the debates about citizenship (Lansdown, 1995). This question raises issues about whether space should be allocated within the school curriculum for these matters or whether by being active and creative members of organisations young people are both developing skills and defining notions of citizenship for themselves.

If youth participation is to be successful, consideration must be given to the setting in which it is initiated. Places where adults meet may not provide appropriate spaces for young people. A committee room in a council building can be an intimidating setting for the exchange of views. Venues and meeting times will also determine levels of attendance.

Process

Where participation has been successfully initiated there are a range of issues to do with how the process of participation might be managed. The agenda of youth councils/forums is an ongoing concern and there is a need to examine how issues are identified and negotiated if adult-directed groups are not to obfuscate the real concerns of young people. This conflict is all the more problematic where the adults concerned are 'experts' on youth matters as there is the potential for them to propose what they consider to be in the 'best interests' of young people rather than enabling them to decide for themselves. This enabling role should ensure that participants have a clear brief. In particular they need information about the range of options available to them, the procedures and processes which control these options and the implications of their decision-making. Yet, for the brief to be enabling it cannot be prescriptive and this balance is not an easy one to achieve.

A further problem with the process of participation relates to the issue of life-span. Young people who engage in these groups are likely to be involved in many other activities and able to participate only on a limited basis. For some, the group may be something in which they are involved for a short time, especially as the 'present' or the 'now' of young people is constantly changing. The deadlines of adult decision-making processes may not coincide with the activity of the group and the rhythms of the local planning process may be discordant to the practice of the group. Many forums arise out of the identification of special concerns which may be both spatially and temporally determined. Once the particular issue has been addressed the need for that type of representational structure may no longer be appropriate. The pressure to prolong the life of a group in the interests of adults who may need to claim that consultation is taking place, rather than those of young people, is something to be guarded against. Where there is commitment on

the part of young people for an ongoing participatory mechanism there will need to be a resource commitment. Without some limited funding or support in kind, such as the provision of a meeting place, most youth forums are unlikely to survive in the long-term.

Outcomes

The value of any public participation is likely to be judged by the outcomes produced and youth participation is no exception. To ensure that such outcomes are meaningful the process must involve genuine communication. Young people need to be confident that their views will be listened to and taken seriously. Without this assurance young people are likely to reject the participation process as another cosmetic exercise. Even where consultation is genuine there is an unresolved issue of power and to what extent participating groups of young people can or should have any authority. There is a danger that youth councils, if not carefully constituted, become little more than sounding boxes capable of making considerable clamour but without the means to bring about change. Yet the devolution of power by local authorities and decision-making agencies raises issues to do with public accountability which must be carefully thought through if participation is to be effective. Where participation does occur, it is important that proper feedback is ensured. Young people have the right to know the outcome of any decision and if these decisions are contrary to their wishes, the reasons should be clearly explained.

Many of these issues resonate with concerns about the effectiveness of public participation in general, but we would suggest that young people are doubly disadvantaged. In the absence of legitimate political rights, any participatory opportunities they are afforded may be perceived by authorities and agencies as optional favours. As such, these opportunities are subject to the vagaries of political fashion and the transitory resource allocation this entails.

Participation and representation within mainland Europe

Beyond the UK there is substantial evidence for the wider development of young people's participation. In this section we examine an European-wide initiative to promote young people's participation in general and look at examples of political structures which engage young people in decision-making at a local level. This review suggests that within many parts of mainland Europe children's political participation has been taken more seriously.

In 1992, the Council of Europe (CE), through the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, launched the 'European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life'. This Charter was an affirmation of the Youth Directorate's (CE) commitment to the social and political inclusion of all children. It advocated that local authorities and regions in Europe implement policies to develop young people's participation in community life, including leisure and socio-cultural activities; employment; housing and urban affairs; education and training; social and health prevention; equal opportunities; culture;

environment; and information sharing. In addition, structures should be developed to assist the processes of representation, co-management and consultation. Five years on, a survey designed to assess the impact of the Charter (Roy, 1997) noted its widespread recognition throughout mainland Europe and only in Greece, Georgia and Lithuania was the Charter unknown. Perceived benefits included greater consistency, improved planning and more coherent structures for young people's participation. Interestingly, within the UK all local authorities were sent a copy of the questionnaire and of the 38 replies only 14 claimed any awareness of the Charter.

At the local level, there are many examples throughout Europe of successful participatory structures involving young people, especially the organisation of youth councils. Like the UK experience, these have largely arisen in an attempt to link young people more effectively to their communities. In many cases though, unlike the UK, the development, organisation and support of these youth councils is co-ordinated by a national agency. For example, within Spain, this role has been taken up since 1984 by the Spanish Youth Council (Spanish Youth Council, 1997). Currently, the Council co-ordinates the activities of 70 organisations, including 17 Regional Youth Councils. A National Assembly is held annually and this acts as a major forum for young people's views. In Switzerland the Association of Youth Parliaments supports 40 organisations spread across the 26 cantons and has an annual budget of 500,000 francs provided by the Federal Cultural Office and the Swiss Association of Youth Organisations. One of its roles is to be proactive in establishing new assemblies and since its inception in 1993, 25 youth parliaments have been established (Ludescher, 1997). In Italy, the National Association of Children's Councils through its 'Democrazia in Erba' programme is active in supporting and promoting the work of over 110 local youth fora. Its Child and Adolescent Council Charter sets out a framework by which each organisation will operate. Guidelines are provided on membership, elections and representation, funding and financial management, and the purpose and functions of the assembly (Castellani, 1997). In Hungary, The Association of Support to Children and Youth Municipal Councils (GYIOT) was established in 1992 to oversee and promote the work of youth councils. At present there are 25 organisations and in 1996 GYIOT encouraged these to come together to form a legally recognised Federation. This was a significant development for up until this time those councils without members aged over 18 had no official status. By being part of a Federation all councils are incorporated into the legal structure of the state (Varzegi, 1997).

One of the most successful and longest standing networks of youth councils is that co-ordinated by the Association Nationale des Conseils d'Enfants et de Jeunes (ANACEJ), which is responsible for Children and Youth Town Councils across France (Jodry, 1997). The growth of town councils has been rapid and widespread. The first was set up in 1979, in response to the International Year of the Child, and

today there are 940 (of which 413 subscribe to ANACEJ). The town councils vary in their age composition, but most fall into one of three categories: 9-13 years; 10-15 years; and 14-18 years. The young councillors are generally elected for two years and the only conditions for nomination are that candidates must attend the local school or live in the locality. ANACEJ recommends 30 delegates for a city of around 25,000 population. The principal goals of these councils are to provide a place for the expression of young people's values, a place where young people are listened to and a place where young people may acquire the skills of citizenship. As part of its mission, ANACEJ has been able to define a strategy for implementation, which includes plans of action, monitoring, training, networking and dissemination. A culture of participation is developing, in which young people's involvement, from an early age, is seen as normal and responsible.

Conclusion

In this paper we have argued that young people' s lack of involvement in the formal political process after the age of suffrage within the UK is both a product of their marginalisation from local decision-making when growing-up and an outcome of a strong sense of disenfranchisement and powerlessness during childhood. Up until the age of 18 years, young people have little opportunity for 'taking part' and are given little chance to make their views heard. In this process children are denigrated to little more than 'citizens-in-waiting', with little recognition afforded to their developing skills and competences. Indeed, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the international body which was set-up to monitor the implementation of the UNCRC, expressed concern in its meeting in January 1995 about the lack of progress made by the UK Government in complying with its principles and standards. In particular, attention was drawn to the insufficiency of measures relating to the operationalisation of Article 12. It recommended that:

> *...greater priority be given to... Article 12, concerning the child's right to make their views known and to have those views given due weight, in the legislative and administrative measures and in policies undertaken to implement the rights of the child.*

and went on to suggest that:

> *...the State party consider the possibility of establishing further mechanisms to facilitate the participation of children in decisions affecting them, including within the family and the community*
>
> *(United Nations 1995, p15).*

We contend that local youth councils provide a way forward, both to integrate young people into their local communities and to encourage feelings of political worth and engagement.

Youth councils as participatory mechanisms have been tried before within the United Kingdom. They failed because of a lack of clarity of purpose and tokenism. Unless a national strategy is developed, sooner rather than later, the youth councils of today are unlikely to rise above their cinderella status and, like their predecessors, many will be in danger of collapsing altogether. We suggest that the UK has much to learn from the experiences of many parts of mainland Europe. Here, there is ample evidence of effective and well established participatory structures which operate at a grass-roots level. Until strategies are put in place which truly empower young people, supported by a commitment to children's rights rather than being propped-up by populist politics, the majority will continue to remain largely invisible on the political landscape

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Notes

1 Article 12 asserts children's rights to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting them.

2 A directory of youth councils is available from the Centre for Children and Youth.

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'DISAFFECTED YOUTH'- A WICKED ISSUE:
A Worse Label

HEATHER PIPER AND JOHN PIPER

Introduction

As governments, administrators, academics and field workers have sought to come to terms with the steep rise in youth unemployment since the late 1970s, a particular vocabulary has come to the fore. Some elements of this, for instance reference to a youth underclass (Murray, 1990) have been particularly negative and subject to hostile rebuttal (Coles, 1995; Jeffs and Smith, 1996; Holman, 1995; Mann, 1992; McDonald, 1997). The purpose of the present discussion is to focus on some implications of an increasingly ubiquitous and apparently less pejorative definition of the problem, 'disaffected youth', and to raise a number of issues about a particular pattern of response within the context of education and training. It is suggested that the notion of 'disaffected youth' is inherently problematic and unhelpful, and that the present funding and administrative environment predisposes related policy intervention to fail. Worse, it is likely to damage those it is intended to help, and will distract attention from more serious and hopeful alternatives.

This argument does not entail a denial of 'the problem', but suggests the need to define, attribute and respond to it with care. From any perspective, the reality which the term 'disaffected youth' seeks to describe constitutes a substantial and complex problem. In discussing the nature of problems which by their complex and intractable character challenge voluntary and governmental agencies at all levels, Professor John Stewart (of the Institute of Local Government Studies at the University of Birmingham) described them as 'wicked issues' (Stewart, 1995). The phenomenon referred to as 'disaffected youth' clearly meets the criteria suggested by Stewart to be defined as such. Like other wicked issues it is a problem for which neither the cause nor the solution is fully understood; it involves many agencies/departments, each of which will be ineffective alone; and is to a large extent an unintended result of the pursuit of other policy objectives which have disregarded the full range of consequences (Hodgkin and Newell, 1996). Given this complexity and apparent intractability the development of a new authoritarianism in policy towards young people is unsurprising, no matter how retrograde (Jeffs and Smith, 1996). The argument here is that the use of the term 'disaffected youth', and characteristics of the funding and administrative environment within which it is being applied can only exacerbate the status of this particularly wicked issue.

The Nature of Current Responses

Both before and since the change of the British Government in May 1997, a range of varied initiatives has been directed at the substantial proportion of young people who experienced most fully the negative impact of structural and policy changes since 1979. Some of those which are now sponsored by central government (including the proposed 'millennium volunteers' and the 'new deal' and 'new start'

initiatives) have their roots in the report of the Commission on Social Justice (1994) and the notion of a 'citizen's service' to promote citizenship and inclusivity. The priorities identified for the Cabinet Office-based Social Exclusion Unit exemplify similar themes. However, it is not the intention here to consider the merits of these national initiatives or whether they are more than a smokescreen for the alleged new authoritarianism, as identified by Jeffs and Smith (1996). A range of problems associated with what may be described as a hegemonic discourse employing the idea of social exclusion as a central concept have been discussed by Levitas (1996).

The focus of the current discussion is the plethora of locally based initiatives, funded from a variety of quasi-governmental sources and often sponsored by Training and Enterprise Council (TEC)-based partnerships, which employ 'disaffected youth' as a central concept in their mission and operation. Research conducted for the Government Office for the West Midlands (QCSL, 1995) and the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE, 1997a, 1997b) demonstrates the rapid growth of such initiatives. In the West Midlands, TEC-based projects involve collaboration with schools, education/business partnerships, Further Education, Careers Services, employers, training providers, community groups, voluntary organisations and local authorities. Funding is reported as being received from the European Social Fund, TEC Block Funding and Operating Surplus, the Home Office, the Coal Plan Fund, the Single Regeneration Budget, the DfEE, and from the private sector and support in kind from partners (QCSL, 1995). Many of these projects employ 'disaffected youth' as an organising principle and a highlighted title, and the number of such projects demonstrates a national pattern which transcends the wide variation in partners and funding, (DfEE, 1997b). Indeed, the titles of DfEE publications give explicit sanction both to the concept and to the legitimacy of the approach, eg. 'Survey of Careers Service Work with Disaffected Young People' (DfEE, 1997a). However, there are a number of substantial conceptual and contextual issues to be raised about these projects which represent a major growth industry in the borderlands between the Careers Service, Further Education, TECs and the voluntary sector.

Some Conceptual Problems

The concept of 'disaffected youth' has obvious resonance, both theoretical and ideological, and could provoke too many lines of argument to permit a full discussion, but some of the major problems should be identified. Significantly there is an ominous absence of definition about what youth is supposed to be disaffected from, what the characteristics are of those who are not disaffected, and what the cause of disaffection might be. 'Disaffected youth' is an over-generalised 'portmanteau' concept, both opaque and elusive. In the absence of hard criteria (eg unemployment, truanting) it risks being simultaneously vague and pejorative. Even when applied to a specific context such as education and training it may be deceptive. Non-engagement with specific organisations may not indicate more general disaffection, yet time-serving passive attendance would not necessarily preclude it. The fact that the term is 'imprecise and generalised' is acknowledged (QCSL, 1995:p.3)

but this appears to be no barrier to its use and application. Indeed the aim of the research conducted for the DfEE: 'To build on the findings of a previous telephone survey of Careers Service activity with young people in the "disaffected youth" group in order to produce a report on careers services activity with disaffected youth in England' (DfEE, 1997(a):p.1) is informative. No background in deconstruction or discourse analysis is required for the suggestion that the vanishing inverted commas indicate the conscious embrace of a concept known to be problematic. On the basis of the research, the claim is made that 'there is a general understanding of what the term "disaffection" means' (DfEE, 1997(a):p.17) but in reality the claimed understanding is more about agreeing to act as if the meaning is clear.

In contrast, mainstream discussions of Further Education policy have largely avoided the use of such language in identifying the need for inclusive and individually responsive provision (DfEE, 1996; Kennedy, 1997). Indeed, Tomlinson (1996) stressed the need 'to avoid a viewpoint which locates the difficulty or deficit with the student'. Similarly, a report sponsored by the DfEE and the Further Education Development Agency refers to the target group as 'disengaged' rather than disaffected, 'as the range of reasons for their lack of involvement in post-school learning can be very varied' (Reisenberger and Crowther, 1997:p.5). However, 'disaffection' creeps back into the text (eg. p.11), and the suggested exemplary managerial/checklist approach could obscure the distinction between reified categories such as disaffection and standard monitoring categories relating to gender or ethnicity.

When specific indicators of the disaffected condition are suggested, the problem of achieving shared understandings becomes apparent. A survey of projects found the term being applied to young people experiencing any one or more of the following: school truancy or phobia, mental illness, emotional or behavioural difficulties, illiteracy, pregnancy, being in or just leaving care, homelessness, offending or ex-offending, solvent or drug abuse and long term unemployment (QCSL, 1995). The criteria for inclusion or exclusion from such a list are far from clear, and the DfEE survey demonstrated a huge variation in the target group characteristics of projects aimed at 'disaffected youth'. In some cases, merely living in a particular part of town, underachieving at school, lacking 'vocational maturity' or failing to take up training opportunities is the trigger for entry into the disaffected category (DfEE, 1997b). It is not denied here that the lives of many young people would be much improved by serious attention to some of these specific problems, but to exacerbate them with the label of disaffection is merely adding insult to injury.

Youth and the young have always been perceived as a two-edged sword for the community and are often associated with trouble, the threat of which has prompted ameliorative action (Pearson, 1983; Hebdidge, 1988; Muncie, 1984). Thus the potential for moral panic over 'disaffected youth' is obvious and, given the cultural bias towards negative images of young people, so too is the potential for damaging reification. 'Disaffected youth' is a label with the potential to be

superimposed across a range of widely variable situations, with inevitable implications for status and self concept, creating the necessary conditions for a negative career. It defines its recipient as pathological and further diminishes the power of the already disempowered. This is a normal and discriminatory characteristic of any such label. Just as 'scrounger' is more likely to be applied to members of a low income family than to a wealthy tax-evader, those with resources at their disposal are unlikely to be defined as disaffected even when their behaviour is well outside normal expectations.

In much the same way, 'social exclusion' is defined in a range of official publications as being a product of uninvolvement in paid employment, as demonstrated by Levitas (1996), but those wealthy enough to choose not to work are highly unlikely to be perceived as socially excluded. This suggests another way in which the concept of 'disaffected youth' obscures reality. Like 'the underclass' or 'the socially excluded' it suggests that the only pertinent divisions are between those included in full social membership and those who are not. In addition to obscuring inequalities and problems in the *majority,* the *included,* the *overclass,* it implies that only *they* constitute society and that the *minority,* the *rest,* are in some sense detached (Levitas, 1996). This is particularly problematic since the paid employment-based criteria for 'social inclusion' inevitably devalue those who are disabled or who work in any unpaid capacity. The emphasis on employment preparation and training in many projects for 'disaffected youth' raises the same issue.

Arguably, an ad hoc focus on any 'wicked issue', even if not wrapped up in damaging reification, is problematic. The targeted approach itself risks over-pathologising the issue, encouraging a limited vision which obscures the holistic view (Hodkin and Newell, 1996). Criticisms of this type were earlier made of Youth Training Schemes and related vocational training, which risked pushing the blame for unemployment and the responsibility for finding work onto the unemployed (Bates et al, 1984). The means are likely to become confused with the ends as the concentration focuses on the problematic young person with little if any reference to their family situation, the surrounding professional systems and the framework of underpinning policies.

While implicitly blaming young people for their disaffection, through the use of such a pathological concept the structural context of their lives is masked. The transition from youth to adult status and the trajectory followed by many young people has changed fundamentally since the 1970s (Jones, 1995, 1996; Kiernan, 1992). Fractured transitions have produced a negative cycle of marginalisation and exclusion which extends well beyond the scope of education and training (Williamson, 1993; Coles, 1995). Training schemes do more to blur these realities than change them (Battagliola, 1995) and the anticipation of such problems impacts on the expectations and motivation of much younger children. Between 1989 and 1992, for those leaving education at 16, the chance of finding either a full-time job or a full-time training place declined from one in four to one in ten (Policy Studies Institute,

1995, in QCSL, 1995). Given this reality, essentially judgmental and individualistic solutions are inappropriate. There are situations in which it is dishonest merely to urge and help people to try harder. There is an apparent recognition of some of these difficulties (DfEE, 1997a) but the approach precludes any serious attempt to confront them.

Further, the definition of 'youth' which is perceived as disaffected is also problematic. 'Youth' as a concept is far more difficult to pin down than 'child' or 'adult' and the puzzling practical implications of the inconsistent and contradictory messages about the rights and responsibilities of young people have been widely noted (Coles, 1995; France, 1996). The term 'disaffected youth' is used by projects dealing with a variety of age groups (including 14-18, 14-16, 16-21, 18-24) without acknowledgement of the variable and contradictory status of those involved, who may for example, be at school, or old enough to marry but not to vote. In these projects the generalised and negative label remains the same, but the suggested problem and its solution is varied to suit the circumstances. Thus, with local variations at the young end of the age range the issue tends to be seen as 'truancy', in the middle as 'school retention', later as 'education and training', and finally as 'employment'. The priority appears to be the identification of a superficially measurable short-term project outcome as a focus for activity in order to secure funding, rather than ensuring a rigorous application of concepts and criteria.

Finally there are issues arising from this series of conceptual confusions for many of those engaged as professionals or volunteers in these projects. Essentially there is likely to be a disjuncture between the personal/professional self concept of workers and the ethos and practice of the projects in which they are involved. In the past, youth workers (like teachers) have made use of their relative autonomy to modify the official definition of their role. Now, as more posts (typically short-term contracts) are based on achieving specified targets, and particularly when activity is legitimated by a concept like 'disaffected youth', such a strategy becomes progressively less possible. In reality 'workers are increasingly forced into modes of intervention located in a tradition of behaviour modification rather than education for autonomy and choice' (Jeffs and Smith, 1996:p.25). Thus the key concept underlying such projects commits many of those involved in them to working in bad faith, which is not a recipe for success whatever the official performance indicators say.

Problems in the Environment

Beyond these conceptual concerns, a number of features of the environment can be identified which give further grounds for doubting the efficacy of local projects focused on 'disaffected youth'. In part, these stem from the nature of such a 'wicked issue'. For success, the involvement and positive co-operation of a range of agencies is required, but the definition of the problem in different agencies will not be consistent. Such variation reflects differences in professional training and socialisation, which imbricate with managerial strategies and styles, timescales,

normal modus operandi and so on. For funding purposes there are benefits for those projects based on wide-ranging partnerships, but the assumption that it is non-problematic for distinctive agencies and organisations to work together on ad hoc and time-limited tasks is clearly false. There is growing evidence of the costs and limitations attached to even well conceived multi-agency initiatives (Whyte, 1997) but this is not reflected in funding mechanisms which in effect offer a premium on the basis of the number of signatories to a real or paper partnership.

These issues have come into play while progressively tighter constraints have been placed on the ability of local authorities to act on matters beyond their statutory obligations. This has taken the form of legal restrictions and limitations on both fund-raising powers and the level of central grants. As a result, the services which once could have been expected to take a leading role have been constrained and thus more likely to enter specific projects and essentially pragmatic partnerships in order to gain access to funds. Local Authority youth services and career services have felt such imperatives, and since no one agency can mount a credible initiative in relation to a 'wicked issue' on the basis of normal budgets, the nature of the funding mechanism is significant in a number of ways beyond the bias towards extensive partnerships. In a situation where many agencies are dependent on ear-marked project funding to support a proportion of core staff and infra-structure, the imperatives of a bidding culture are hard to ignore. There is pressure to focus on attracting funding from a wide variety of sources through carefully constructed bids rather than on the effective implementation of the project for which the funding was allocated. The emphasis appears to be on winning funding rather than on using it appropriately.

This risk has been recognised in a discussion paper launched by the Minister of State for the Regions, Regeneration and Planning, which refers to the 'danger of paper partnerships, set up to secure funding and little else' and suggests the need to accredit partnerships with appropriate management systems (Department for the Environment, 1997 paras. 5.4, 5.19-5.24). A further complication is the need for bidders to appear to offer something novel and interesting, while homing-in on areas of known concern to decision makers in the funding bodies. This last point may account for the rise of references to 'disaffected youth', a concept which allows implicit blame to be allocated, reveals the need for ameliorative but restricted action, and has been demonstrably attractive to funding bodies.

Other aspects of the prevalent bidding-culture combine to undermine the chances of successful project-based interventions aimed at 'disaffected youth'. Most project-based funding is by definition time-limited, and the time-limits are often quite short, particularly where the initiative is presented as a pilot-scheme. This is often the case, even though the approach adopted may be highly context specific. Having invested substantial resources in winning funds, multi-agency partnerships must very quickly be able to demonstrate successful implementation. As a result, such

projects tend to employ a relatively quick-fix strategy and some quite straight forward (and probably uni-dimensional) performance indicators, designed to produce an early and demonstrable result. To identify this short-termism as a potential problem does not entail a rejection of all time-limited and targeted project-based funding, or an assumption that substantial long-term success will easily be achieved by other means.

The above paragraphs have deliberately employed a relatively broad brush since the detailed characteristics of funding mechanisms, multi-agency collaboration and the dynamics of time limited projects are beyond the scope of the current discussion. However, the general diagnosis will be familiar to many, and the problems arising from the application of the concept 'disaffected youth' are likely to be compounded by the particular characteristics of a key player in many relevant local initiatives, the TECs.

Among the core principles of TECs is the need to co-ordinate policies and target local programmes for community revitalisation as required (Banks, 1992). This is unexceptional and even laudable, but the co-existing emphasis on enterprise, high returns on investment and employer-led initiatives may not equip TECs with the necessary perspectives and skills to lead or support effective responses to such a complex phenomenon as 'disaffected youth'. However, being more expert than most organisations in operating successfully in a bidding-culture, and needing a flow of project-based income to support core functions and staff, TECs have taken a leading role in a majority of such initiatives. Other organisations (such as FE, HE, Careers Service and Youth Service) more used to using money to deliver services than winning it through a bidding process, are frequently involved, at least on paper and often in practice. However, the assumptions and approaches on which projects tend to be based owe most to the TECs labour market-based understanding of the problem and its solution. The paradox is that in order to secure funding the over-generalised buzz-words 'disaffected youth' have been employed, with implications for both theory and practice which go far beyond the training and placement orientation of the TEC or local careers services. Thus, in order to achieve funding the problem has been defined in such a way as to preclude its resolution. This confused pattern of activity has developed outside any coherent national strategy, in spite of the oversight of the TECs by central government through the Training Agency.

It has been argued that initiatives aimed at solving the perceived problem of 'disaffected youth' are unlikely to be effective. This is because the key concept is flawed, and the resulting operational problems are compounded by the funding and management systems on which the initiatives have been based. Precisely because we agree that for many young people the experience of transition into adulthood in contemporary society is less than ideal, this negative diagnosis is solemnly made. The wasted resources and opportunities are still sadder when a range of relatively unheralded and unremarked alternatives are available, based on a much more substantial understanding of the situation.

Alternatives beyond the quick-fix

If those responsible for the initiatives referred to above took the concept of disaffection seriously it would be accepted that such a non-specific malaise is unlikely to respond to highly specific and short-term treatment. It could not be considered as being in essence an education and training issue. Rather, a long-term and holistic approach is indicated and one which goes beyond the conceptual and operational frameworks employed by the youth service with limited success over an extended period. The basis in principle for such an approach is well documented and can be traced back at least to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1979) which the UK ratified in December 1991. Of particular relevance are Articles 12 and 13 which emphasise the right of any young person to participate in all decisions affecting their life, an active participation based on open access to information and responsive decision making structures. The manifold implications of this approach have been more widely discussed in the literature (John, 1996; Flekkoy and Kaufman, 1997; Hodkin and Newell, 1996; Limber and Flekkoy, 1995) than they have been evident in practice in the UK. If disaffection means anything it requires a response as holistic and principled as that signposted by the UN convention. If young people have the right and facility to speak out and impact on critical elements of their lives, a virtuous cycle of raised self esteem can be established, with wide-ranging implications. Significantly, the Children Act (1989) requires that all professional practice with children and young people should stress equal opportunities and citizenship while avoiding marginalisation and stigma (Cannan, 1992; Department of Health, 1991).

In contrast, the ubiquitous projects aimed at 'disaffected youth', with direct and indirect support from central and local government, assume that adults know best and as a result further disempower the already powerless. The simplistic training and employment-based approach, unsupported by any serious consideration of the rights and responsibilities of young people as citizens, ignores the reality that 'disaffection' may be a mature and rational choice (Rosenak, 1983). The manner in which national policy since the late 1970s has redefined the meaning of citizenship for young people through emphasising individual responsibilities and obligations rather than allowing them rights of their own is of critical significance. The 'New Right' model of citizenship, grounded in individualism and privacy rather than a mutual commitment between the individual and the state, has both changed the experience of young people as citizens and increased the scope for intervention and control (France, 1996). Projects directed at 'disaffected youth' are part of this process and are unlikely to have positive effects. Since the early 1980s the state has taken 'less responsibility for providing the benefits of citizenship or for ensuring the full inclusion of its citizens' (France and Wiles, 1997:p.66). This potential for exclusion has been felt most strongly by already disadvantaged young people, and mirrored by their experience of the employment market. In this situation, an unwillingness to accept responsibilities in employment or the wider community is unsurprising (France, 1998).

In the context of the unequal power relations between young people and project workers, and the absence of an appropriate understanding of the wider context of the rights and responsibilities of youth citizenship, many projects directed at 'disaffected youth' will amount to little more than behaviour modification. This concern goes beyond the normal dangers of paternalistic and protective approaches to young people, and is of particular significance to the 16 and 17 year olds whose ill-defined and transitional status between childhood and adulthood is most marked (Barry, 1996). Paternalism justified by seriously pejorative labelling is a dangerous combination.

By claiming to address disaffection, while focusing on much more limited issues and goals, the effect of these projects may in the long run be malign. Given the increasingly problematic relationship between many young people and the wider society, there are high risks from poorly conceived interventions into territory which was originally occupied (with limited effectiveness) by youth work and the youth service following the 1944 Education Act (France and Wiles, 1997). The delivery of social policies aimed at inclusion and the preparation for citizenship requires more than merely encouraging young people into education and training. The relative weakening of the already underpowered youth service in recent years has left the field open for the emergence of 'bid-funded' narrowly focused projects which have learned nothing from the concern for the 'unattached' shown in the Albemarle Report (1960), an outcome of which was the emphasis on social education in youth work practice. While controversial, such awareness and related practice must be central to any serious initiative on perceived disaffection, given the problematic nature of youth citizenship in the 1990s (France and Wiles, 1997). These areas will remain hotly contested following the publication of the final report of the Advisory Group on Citizenship (DfEE, 1998).

Any holistic approach to these issues will require a clear national strategy and also effective multi-agency collaboration (breaking the tokenist and TEC dominated mould), since if disaffection means anything, it is hard to compartmentalise. Holism will generally need to be matched by long-termism so that inputs begin early and the anticipated results are further in the future. A model of the necessary legislative framework and some positive experience may exist in Scotland, where in the 1980s many local authorities established 'Youth Strategies' for co-operation between education, health, social services and the police (Pickles, 1992). The initiative for this dates at least from the Kilbrandon Report in 1963, the significance of which was indicated by its reissue in 1995 by the Scottish Office Home Department, and by official encouragement for service delivery to involve a partnership between agencies and users. While the resulting inter and multi-agency work has still not been problem free (Pickles, 1992; Munn, 1994; Mackay, 1994) this more systematic approach contrasts with the tendency towards ad hoc initiatives south of the border, and the need for co-ordinated responses has been widely recognised and discussed (Crowson and Boyd, 1993; Cohen, 1989; Whyte, 1997). While it may not be simple to point to clear evidence of success, it is reasonable to assume that specific projects will have more chance if an appropriate and

supportive regulatory framework is in place. On a broader international front, the issues of participation and youth citizenship are being addressed by initiatives reported from a range of countries including France, Slovenia, Norway, Tanzania, Germany, Sweden and Denmark, (Willow, 1997; Pavlovik, 1996; Eskeland, 1996; Hodkin and Newell, 1996; Rajani and Kudrati, 1996; Adloff, 1992).

In England and Wales the absence of a broad and principled strategy is apparent, but there is evidence of many and varied locally based initiatives which take seriously the issues referred to above. Others, for example 'Article 12' and the North East-based 'Participation Education Group', operate as umbrella organisations for a range of projects, and some of the major players (the National Youth Agency, National Childrens Bureau, National Institute of Adult and Community Education, Save the Children and Changemakers) are also involved (Merton, 1996, 1997; NYA, 1996; Nevison, 1996; Changemakers, 1997; NCB, 1997). Compatible local and/or participative initiatives have been widely reported (Townsend, 1996; Willow, 1997; Nevison, 1996; Breen, Nyman and Williamson, 1990; Ghouri, 1994; Williamson, 1995). While such developments may be patchy and variable in their long-term effects, they are a far cry from the uni-dimensional quick-fix projects directed at the problem of 'disaffected youth' as conceived by TECs and the careers service.

Conclusion

It should be a source of concern that, while a principled strategy for addressing the problems of some young people can be identified, in practice the field is at risk of domination by projects of a very different type. In place of an approach typified by short timescales, discriminatory language, quick-fix attitudes and uni-dimensional performance indicators, the agenda should be driven by long-term, holistic, democratic and participatory considerations. While positive developments will continue on an ad hoc and unstructured basis, any change to dominant approaches requires a fundamental reconsideration of the problem and its solution, as well as changed mechanisms for funding and structured inter-agency co-operation.

It is reported that in Russia the psychiatric medical establishment and its residential institutions defend the continued application to 'problem' children and young people of such officially sanctioned labels as 'moron' and 'cretin'. Since institutions are funded in part on formulae based on the number of people in such categories that they house and 'treat', they have a clear interest in the continued use of terms which are morally and intellectually indefensible. While the effects of relying on the application of terms such as 'disaffected youth' in the UK context may be less pernicious, in the prevalent bidding-culture a similar dynamic can be identified. The reliance on such terms as organising principles for projects which expend substantial resources, energy and good will is probably doomed to failure. Worse, it deflects attention from more hopeful and principled alternatives. After 18 years of policy which worsened the position of many young people and made the task of remedying the situation more difficult, this 'wicked issue' now requires a more carefully considered response.

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THE PROBLEM OF 'YOUTH' FOR YOUTH WORK

TONY JEFFS AND MARK K SMITH

Surveys have shown that one in five of the workforce plans to take time out to watch the game against Tunisia, with or without permission.

Daily Mail 15th June 1998

The government is setting up a task force to tackle truancy. An estimated one million pupils missed at least one school session without permission last year.

Sue Lloyd-Roberts News at One 16th June 1998

The Cross of St George tattooed on his beer belly, this is a ringleader of the thugs bringing shame to the England World Cup campaign. Far from having an underprivileged background of deprivation, James Shayler (32) has an £80,000 house, an expensive car, a common-law wife and three children, and the money to support them. ... other English supporters were remanded in custody Benjamin Sharpe (25), Peter Bray (28) and Philip Bryan (37).

Daily Mail June 16th 1998

Politicians and policy makers in Britain and Northern Ireland currently tend to talk about young people in three linked ways - as thugs, users and victims. As *thugs* they steal cars, vandalize estates, attack older (and sometimes, younger) people and disrupt classrooms. As *users* they take drugs, drink and smoke to excess, get pregnant in order to jump the housing queue and, hedonistically, care only for themselves. As *victims* they can't find work, receive poor schooling and are brought up in dysfunctional families. Yet so many of the troublesome behaviours associated in this way with young people are not uniquely theirs. As the opening quotations indicate truancy may indeed be a 'youth problem'. After all to be a truant one must be absent from school. However, if it is more correctly seen as absenteeism (unauthorized absence from work), then it becomes merely another example of a phenomenon that crosses ages, classes and backgrounds. Likewise, the classic linking of youth with soccer hooliganism does not make sense when we examine the profile of those appearing in court for 'soccer-related' offences. Yet a view of 'youth as a problem' continues to drive policy discussion and, in the UK at least, is linked to notions of social exclusion. Certain groups of young people are seen in deficit, as a problem - and the 'answer' to this behaviour is to impose more control on the one hand (Jeffs and Smith 1995), and, on the other, to direct 'remedial' resources and interventions at those deemed to be in need.

In this article we argue that 'youth' has limited use as a social category and that it characteristically involves viewing those so named as being in deficit and in need of training and control. We suggest it is the similarities and continuities in the

experience of different age groups that is significant, rather than the differences. It follows that if 'youth' is disappearing as a meaningful social category, then the notions of 'youth work' or 'services for youth' are of little use. In its place we need to look to informal education and to reclaim and extend those traditions of practice that stress association and education. We will return to this in the conclusion.

Control

The perception of youth as a threat has produced a range of policy initiatives during the last decade concerned with extending control and management. Some have involved increased *surveillance*. In shopping areas and housing developments there has been the growing use of close circuit television specifically programmed to identify groups of young people. The use of cameras and security patrols has also spread to school playgrounds, corridors and, in parts of the United States, even classrooms. In addition, the use of continuous assessment has narrowed the curriculum and enables closer monitoring of what they are allowed, and not allowed, to learn. Homework clubs, the use of summer learning programmes (particularly for young people in 'deprived areas'), proposed reductions in the length of holidays, and up to two hours a night compulsory homework are further examples of the way in which surveillance may be expanded.

This 'new authoritarianism' can also be recognized in increased levels of *incarceration*. Here we can focus on three examples. First, schools and colleges have become fortresses surrounded by fences. This is often justified in terms of keeping danger out, but more usually employed to keep young people in. Only recently Quinton Kynaston School in west London spent £300,000 on fencing explicitly to contain students. Such visible restraints are augmented in a number of institutions by technologies such as swipe cards which record arrival and departure at every lesson. Second, there has been a significant increase in secure provision for young offenders and a lowering of the age of imprisonment. Third, and what is potentially a massive attack on the civil rights of children and young people, there have been moves toward the use of generalized curfews. Individual curfew orders (incarceration in the home) are already in place. Now there is active exploration of using general orders, such as those that can be found in many US towns and cities (Jeffs and Smith 1995). In Hamilton in 1997 the first steps towards this were made with the development of a policing initiative focused on removing from the streets at certain times any children or young people who do not have a 'good reason' to be there. More recently, the Government has circulated English local authorities to recruit participants in a wider curfew initiative.

There has also been an *increased emphasis on control within education and training*. The use of surveillance and incarceration in schools and colleges has already been noted. When we then turn to the nature of the curriculum we can see these trends represented in more subtle forms. How much better it would be, goes the argument, if we could teach children and young people to control themselves rather than

having to spend money on costly external constraints. Let's look at what we can do in the National Curriculum. Let's think up schemes so that young people are forced to develop less anti-social forms of behaviour. Let us target specific activities such as drug usage, smoking, and sexual activity, and employ workers and programmes to promote 'healthier' practices (see Hendry, Shucksmith and Philip 1995).

In noting this we are not arguing against a concern with control. Communities require ways of curbing anti-social behaviour if they are to be places where people can flourish. Individual young people do sometimes behave as thugs, users or victims, but it is not the young who solely need to be restrained. There can be no acceptable reason for controlling people on the grounds of their age any more than on the basis of their race or gender. It is even unacceptable to restrict the movements of young people and children on account that they are in greater risk of becoming victims. Those who perpetrate the crimes should lose their freedom, not potential victims. Overall our interest in control must always be balanced with a concern for democracy and justice.

So where does youth work come in?

Unfortunately, the view of youth as a problem has been taken up by many of those who want to rebuild youth work and the youth service. 'Give us the money', the argument goes, 'and we will develop provision for young people that deals with and prevents anti-social and destructive behaviour'. An example of this came in the United Kingdom Youth Work Alliance's manifesto:

> *For some young people the paths to adulthood may be blocked, for example, by the absence of jobs or by their own lack of social skills; some are tempted into crime. Effective youth work, statutory and voluntary, intervenes to help young people to deal with such roadblocks, to develop their potential as valued individuals and to become responsible citizens. (1996: 3)*

A similar cry could be heard in the late 1950s and early 1960s (and, indeed, during most of the history of youth work since the late eighteenth century). At times when there is a crude emphasis on control and private gain, those wishing to protect and promote youth work tend to fall into the trap of making extravagant claims. This is a trend exacerbated by the general withering away of distinctive youth services in many parts of Britain and Northern Ireland. Their non-statutory nature and continuing problems concerning a relative lack of attention to theory, purpose and practice, have combined over time to make them a sitting target for cutbacks (Jeffs and Smith 1988; Smith 1988). In this situation workers and managers have, understandably, responded by trying to sell youth work to funders on the basis of its potential contribution to solving the latest moral panic or policy 'problem'. For all the talk of 'empowerment', the underlying pitch has been around young people as victims, thugs or users.

But something rather significant has also been happening. Young people have been staying away from youth work provision in their droves (Hendry et al 1993:

46; Maychell et al 1996). In many areas youth workers have given up attempting to work with those over 18 (Fitzpatrick, Hastings and Kintrea 1998). Partly in response to demand, but also in order to survive, 'youth workers', clubs and centres have provided more and more 'adult-led organized leisure' for those below 14, as well as hiring out their premises to community groups and commercial organisations. Acceleration of this movement has coincided with a radical shift in the funding arrangements for overall welfare provision, youth work included. Agencies have been obliged to bid and compete for cash from a variety of state, charitable and commercial sources, most of it allocated for specific time-limited interventions. As a consequence youth workers have become Janus-faced. When pleading for funds they tend to emphasize both the dangers posed by unmonitored youth as well as the failings and inadequacies of young people. They have often embraced the concept of 'underclass' and exaggerated the negative, conjuring up a collection of euphemisms for inadequacy such as 'status zero youth', 'at risk', 'disaffected', and 'excluded' (Jeffs 1997). The face offered to young people and colleagues is different. Here the talk is of empowerment, engagement and participation - not control and inadequacy.

New funding mechanisms have eroded many of the historic characteristics of the work, in particular the need for continuity, the educational base and autonomy. Paradoxically this has meant workers recognizing the extent to which these funding mechanisms have provided a lifeline at a time when young people are losing interest in clubs and centres, while at the same time bemoaning the need to respond to the demands imposed by the new funders. The reason for the fall in numbers is not simply demographic, it reflects fundamental changes in the opportunities for leisure; in particular the expansion of home entertainment and the development of the commercial sector (Jeffs and Smith 1990a; Smith 1991). However, the decline also reflects something more - the very basis for youth work, the concept of 'youth', is slipping away.

'Youth' work?

For over 150 years, three elements have fused to delineate youth work and thereby distinguish it from other welfare activities. It has been distinctive only when all these ingredients are present. Remove one and it becomes obvious that what is being observed may possess a resemblance to, but is unquestionably not, youth work. These three characteristics, as we have argued elsewhere, are that:

- *the relationship between the client or participant and the worker remains voluntary, with the former invariably retaining the right to both initiate any association with the worker and more importantly to terminate it.*
- *the work undertaken primarily has an educational purpose.*
- *the focus of the work is directed towards young people.*

Historically the first two of these have been perceived as problematic. Indeed, workers have felt obligated to 'guard the perimeter' lest their professional identity was eroded and the *raison d'être* for their existence removed. Regarding the first, at a macro level, problems generally emanate from the state's desire to manage the public behaviour of young people (Jeffs and Banks 1999). The most comprehensive example of this occurred during the 1939-45 War when compulsory registration with an approved youth organisation was introduced for those under 18. As a consequence relationships between 'members' and 'leaders' often changed dramatically. Many workers found this difficult to enforce and professionally disconcerting. Post-war retention of registration would undoubtedly have ensured generous funding and a defined role within the emerging welfare state for the youth service, but no organisations advocated it. Compulsion was viewed as incompatible with youth work practice. In the 1960s similar resistance to compulsion meant existing agencies refused to dispense Intermediate Treatment for young offenders - resulting in the creation of discrete social services provision. Currently the introduction of the ubiquitous New Deal for the young unemployed has posed an analogous dilemma for youth workers and organisations. However, so complete appears to have been the triumph of Thatcherism that accommodation with popularist authoritarianism is now virtually unquestioned. This has allowed advocates of collaboration with the New Deal an almost unchallenged supremacy, signalled by the absence of any sustained published critique of the programme from within youth work. The absence is marked when compared with the response to youth training proposals in the late 1970s (e.g. Davies 1979; 1981).

Inevitably dilemmas concerning voluntary affiliation also occur at a micro level. Youth workers have, for example, consistently asked whether or not they can in good faith operate in settings where attendance is compulsory. School-based work has, at times, fudged this issue by conjuring up concepts such as 'negotiated programmes' and the use of an agreed 'contract... at the start of the project' (Hand 1995:32). However, much current school-based work is funded to target 'truants', the 'at risk' and 'disaffected' referred by teachers, social workers, parents or education welfare officers. In such cases implicit and explicit coercion makes a mockery of claims that involvement is voluntary. It is not, but in a very real sense it does not matter. For what we are witnessing is the deployment of 'youth workers' as teachers, social group workers or counsellors. It is an example of professionals stepping out of role and using their skills within a different context; a mirror image of a school teacher operating 'like a youth worker' to create an environment where informal education can be encouraged, for example, by organising a trip, activity programme or simply cruising the corridor and playground to engage young people in conversation (Hazler 1998). No immutable rule exists which forbids youth workers from operating as formal educators, trainers, counsellors or advice workers but it is important to recognise that when they are doing so they are probably not 'doing' what has historically been defined as youth work.

The second defining characteristic, educational purpose, has distinguished youth workers from others working in similar ways with young people. Commercial providers of leisure facilities and entertainment want to make a profit from their customers; sporting coaches want to produce winners and top athletes; police officers want to reduce crime levels or secure useful information; and religious or political zealots want to make converts. These 'providers' often operate in ways barely distinguishable from those employed by youth workers. Indeed, many like youth evangelists and youth ministers, may take on the title of youth worker (presumably as they work with 'youth') but their orientation and purpose sets them apart. It is not always easy to see the dividing line, particularly when such providers hire those trained as youth workers to operate on their behalf.

Glib, simplistic clichés which argue that youth work is about 'process *not* product' are dangerous nonsense. Process is important but it can never be divorced from ends. All educational interventions relate in some way to either the sort of individual or world that those undertaking the work wish to achieve. Interventions that do not pay attention to ends, but merely process, cease to be educational in intent.

Historically the first two characteristics of youth work have been seen as problematic. A great deal of the literature has focused on debates around these. The third, a concentration on the needs and experiences of a specific group, has not been systematically questioned apart from discussions around the most appropriate age at which intervention should commence and end. However, we argue it is increasingly difficult to approach 'youth' as a meaningful way of categorizing a set of experiences or qualities. It is now the very concept of youth that poses some fundamental questions. Inevitably this raises the possibility that if something called 'youth work' appeared at a particular historical moment - so it may wither away at another. That is what we may well be witnessing at the moment.

'Youth'

Terms like 'adolescent', 'teenager', 'youth' and 'young person' are often used interchangeably. 'Adolescence', as we know, tends to be linked to notions of personal, private and psychological identity. Thus, we talk of 'adolescent behaviour', 'adolescent angst' and 'adolescent identity'. In so doing we focus on supposedly age-specific developmental problems, and upon insecurity and uncertainty. 'Teenager', however, is more up-beat and often bracketed with what are seen as age-specific forms of consumption. It is linked to words like 'fashion' and 'magazines'. 'Youth' is largely employed where the discussion is centred on the behaviour of young people in the public sphere. As such, we find it commonly linked to words such as 'crime', 'policy' and 'culture'. Lastly, 'young person' tends to be used as a way of denoting status (e.g. 'Young Person's Railcard).

These words can be linked to different professions and social groupings. Psychologists and psychiatrists have tended to employ the term 'adolescent' since

G. Stanley Hall's (1904) path-breaking work. Politicians, policy analysts and sociologists orient towards 'youth'; and those affiliated to the entertainment and fashion industry since the 1950s have more frequently talked about teenagers. Within youth work, 'young person' has tended to be used to indicate clienthood.

Male dominance in the public domain, aligned with the assumed heightened threat young men posed to social order, has meant that 'youth' has acquired a predominately masculine connotation (see, for example, McRobbie 1994; Tinkler 1995). Further, welfare provision and services pre-fixed by the term 'youth' have historically been male-oriented. Similarly, terms like 'youths loitering', 'youth crime', 'marginalised youth' and 'disaffected youth' summon up images of groups of young males on street corners or behaving in some unacceptable way. Teenage, by contrast, has a more 'feminine' set of associations. We discuss 'teenage pregnancy' never youth pregnancy. Also, when topics such as 'teenage magazines', 'teen pop' or 'teen fashion' arise we can be fairly certain the emphasis will be on products directed at both a specific age group and young women in particular (McRobbie 1994). It is important to stress that when examining contemporary debates, the application of these terms frequently carries important implications. An examination of the *Times Educational Supplement*, for example, shows how positive images are linked to the use of terms such as 'pupil', 'student' and 'young people'. With the exception of the occasional article on the 'Youth Service', 'youth' is almost exclusively employed to signify discussion of a social problem or behaviour being portrayed in a negative light.

However, before we get carried away with difference, we need to acknowledge what these notions share. First, each implies that what is being discussed is more transient and, usually, of less consequence than the adult counterpart. Adolescent loss, teenage love and youth crime, for example, are generally assumed to be more shallow, less serious and more fleeting than adult equivalents. Youth culture, likewise, is seen as lacking the profundity or longevity of the alternatives. Attaching 'teenage' or 'teen' to anything is virtually synonymous with triviality. Even when affixed to something as important as pregnancy or motherhood, irresponsibility and a lack of maturity are implied.

Second, these three ways of describing young people signal that a contrast is being drawn. Each is relational, standing against notions of 'adulthood' and 'childhood'. They are transitional states located between the two and imply a deficiency. For example, they warn us that we are about to encounter behaviour or attitudes which are 'less than adult'. Each is, somehow, a detached stage during which the individual focuses on preparation. As such they reinforce 'the idea that young people are marginal members of society' (Wyn and White 1997:13). These authors highlight the supposed contrasts in the following table:

Perceptions of youth and adulthood	
Youth	**Adult**
Not adult/adolescent	Adult/grown up
Becoming	Arrived
Presocial self that will emerge under the right conditions	Identity is fixed
Powerless and vulnerable	Powerful and strong
Less responsible	Responsible
Dependent	Independent
Ignorant	Knowledgeable
Risky behaviours	Considered behaviour
Rebellious	Conformist
Reliant	Autonomous

Source: Wyn and White 1997: 12.

Third, implicit in the terminology is a belief that growing-up is a one-way journey, a process of moving on from adolescent ignorance to adult wisdom; from teenage trivia to adult seriousness; from youth training to adult employment. The adult, we are being told, is the finished product, the young person the incomplete prototype. This essentialism built around age, like the equivalent discourses constructed around, for example, gender or 'race', provides a foundation for almost all the literature which comprises the sociology of youth and youth work.

From this brief review we can see that the basis for 'youth' work appears to be entwined with a view of young people as being in deficit. Indeed, it is a state that young people themselves aspire to leave behind. The evidence we have is that most 'young people' want to be treated as adults, and have the opportunity to engage in the same or similar activities to those older than themselves (see, for example, Hendry et al 1993). Youth work was based upon an assumption that adults led young people through a period of 'storm and stress' and danger toward the stability of adulthood. The sociologists of youth tended to work on the basis that youth was problematic and adulthood was not. However, the notion of 'adulthood' needs to be viewed as being as enigmatic as 'youth'.

> *Adulthood which once seemed an uneventful predictable time of life, has more recently come to seem problematic and mysterious, We find ourselves asking whether adulthood is a period of stability or of change, whether adults 'develop' or only drift, whether there are patterned stages of adult development or only less successful responses to external pressures. (Swidle 1980: 120)*

Adulthood is no longer an identifiable destination. Many struggle to hold onto what they see as the positive characteristics of youth into middle and old age - to retain 'youthful' appearance, hobbies and activities. In some cases this will entail behaving in ways that signify the supposedly negative aspects of youth, for example around football support, drug use and clubbing. For Bly (1996) and others, this has

been perceived as signalling a growing rejection of adulthood itself as being an essentialist concept by significant segments of the population. Such rejection involves the individual in a set of complex negotiations around appearance, behaviour and relationships. This occurs alongside teens seeking to adopt certain characteristics of older groups. The result, according to Bly (1996: 44) is that we 'are now living in a culture run by half-adults'. While not necessarily sharing all this analysis, what is clear is that the once 'fixed' notion of adulthood has become fluid.

Problems with 'youth'

However, we can't leave this as it stands. There are further, major, problems with 'youth' and these can be quickly illustrated in relation to the three, central, traditions of the sociology of youth. These traditions are characterized by Wyn and White (1997) as youth transitions, youth development and youth subcultures. The first looks at the way in which youth is 'constructed and structured through the institutions that "process" the transitions to adulthood' (ibid.: 5). The classic processes here involve schooling and the movement into further and higher education and the labour market. In the literature, youth development is often tied into a notion of 'troubled youth' and draws upon psychological understandings of youth. The focus is then on developmental stages, individual differences, moments of stress and risk-taking behaviour. In respect of youth subcultures there tends to be a defining interest in 'the production and consumption of culture and the process of identity formation' (Wyn and White 1997: 4-5). Much of this work has its origins in studies of groupings such as mods, rockers and skinheads that appeared in the 1970s.

Transition

The first problem we encounter is that the concept of transition to adulthood seems to be fast-fading in northern countries. During the last few years in order to keep it alive the notion has undergone constant revision. We have been asked to use the concept of transition in an array of re-constituted forms. 'Delayed', 'broken', 'highly fragmented', 'elongated', 'extended' and 'blocked' transitions have been paraded before an increasingly confused, dare we say irritated, audience. What they each share is a desperation to hold fast to notions of an imagined mainstream in which the majority of young people neatly go forward in a uni-directional way towards some magical moment when adulthood is conferred. As such they are aligned to a predominately economistic view which, particularly for young men, sees full-time employment as the pivotal signifier of adulthood (see Irwin 1995). A good but somewhat grotesque example of this approach argues that to become adult it is necessary to have a job and to make money' (Morch 1997:259). Thus, those who postpone 'life decisions typical for adulthood, such as taking a steady job or building a family' (du Bois-Reymond 1995:79) are perceived as less than adult, less than mature.

It appears that whether we are discussing employment, education, family status or housing there is no longer (if there ever was) a point where 'final choices' are

made. While we may have questions around Beck's (1992) influential thesis, that individuals are becoming less constrained by traditional social forms and his talk of 'risk-biographies', what cannot be denied is that people in northern countries increasingly blend work, leisure and education. For example, they move in and out of educational systems - exploiting modular course structures, credit accumulation and transfer schemes, new forms of assessment (such as the accreditation of prior learning) and distance learning to construct a more individualised educational experience. In so doing they package learning to better suit their needs, home circumstances, employment or finances (Ainley 199:Scott 1997). All this results in a mixing of full-time and part-time study, work and leisure in way that can extend the sphere of autonomy of the individual. 'Transitions', that were previously linked to youth are frequently no longer the sole property of a particular age group. Backtracking, re-visiting, revising and the reversing of earlier decisions regarding life style and content are a growing feature of life.

Youth development

When we start visiting notions of youth development we hit similar problems. There is, initially, an issue with the sort of 'stage theory' that is involved. People are seen as making systematic progression in a certain order through a series of phases. Step by step they move closer to some form of adult status. This movement can be seen as involving developments in intellectual and physical powers (for example around changes in intelligence, expertise and ability to reason); and the impact of life events and experiences. Aristotle proposed a three stage model; Solon divided life into nine seven year stages; Confucius identified six stages; The Sayings of the Fathers (from the Talmud) contain fourteen stages; and Shakespeare proposed seven stages (Tennant and Pogson 1995:69).

There are a number of issues with such theories. The first arises from the sheer scale of their endeavours. By seeking to be universal theories, by looking to explain some aspect of all our development, they over-reach themselves. While there may be some universals of growth, when we come to examine the individual life, things are rarely that straightforward. Second, as Rutter and Rutter (1992:2) comment, by concentrating on stages such theories imply 'a mechanical predictability that is out of keeping with the dynamics of change, the extent of the flux over time and the degree of individual variability that seems to be the case'. As we have already seen, with regard to transitions, the movement through our lives is not so clear cut, there are all sorts of stuttering steps forward, steps back, and pauses. Third, our biographies are likely to show significant deviations from the path laid out by the theories. 'Stages' may be missed out, other ways of naming a phase or experiences may be more appropriate. The reality is that in any of these domains there is no one universal path, nor is there some fixed end point - 'normal maturity'. Detailed studies of socio-emotional development show that children 'take a variety of paths, and that adult outcome cannot sensibly be reduced to differences in levels of maturity' (Rutter and Rutter 1992:2).

There are major problems in attempting to define adolescence in relation to traditional developmental criteria. With regard to youth and physical development then the key moments appear to be pre-teen or early teen (and then they are significant only for a small minority of people) (see, for example, Coleman and Hendry 1990). With respect to emotional development, age is no particular predictor of 'storm and stress'. 'The great majority of young people seem to cope well and to show no undue signs of turmoil and stress' (ibid.: 201). Classically such stress could be seen as arising out of attempts by individuals to resolve two relational processes - attachment and identity. Whether these processes are more problematic during adolescence is a debatable point and requires answering in relation to different cultures and situations. Significantly, neither attachment theory nor social identity theory were developed specifically for the adolescent age period (Cotterell 1996:4-5) and are potentially applicable across the life course. If we then turn to learning (which is key concern for educators), then we encounter no significant differences between the processes engaged in by young people (those between 12 and 18) and those labelled as adult. Notions of distinctive patterns of learning associated with adult experience such as that of andragogy have been thoroughly discredited (Tennant 1997). Indeed, Jarvis (1987:11) concluded that adult learning may be no different from child learning, given the same social situation.

Here we come to a central question - are the various social situations experienced by young people distinctive? If it is possible to establish that young people encounter a unique set of situations and social experiences, then there may be a case for treating youth (or adolescence) as a helpful category on which to base specific intervention. In part this takes us back to the discussion around transitions. Many of the activities associated with youth - taking part in education, entering the labour or housing markets, cohabiting and so on, occur across a wide age range. What is arguably unique is that these things may be encountered for the first time - and that as a result young people are more likely to engage in risky behaviour.

The literature is full of discussions of the various risk-taking behaviours that young people are allegedly more prone to, for example, with regard to drug usage and sexual behaviour. There can be no denying that some young people experience problems, but in these areas the question is whether the 'problem is better approached as a 'youth question' or as an experience shared by people across a span of ages. When we come to look at 'teenage pregnancy', 'youth homelessness', 'youth drug-taking' and so on, few of the pertinent dimensions of the experience relate to any inherent qualities of 'youth'. Some are policy driven, such as the denial of income support to the vast majority of 16 and 17 year olds to reduce expenditure, some are social and others economic. Once people experience significant problems around areas such as these then the case for specialist provision focused on the issue, rather than their age, is strong. It may be that some activities are first encountered between, say, ages 14 to 21 years. However, many of the highlighted

areas of risk, for example around drug and alcohol usage, and unprotected sexual activity, are according to the evidence, in most cases first encountered either earlier or later (see Jeffs and Smith forthcoming). Furthermore, when we examine the nature of welfare services specifically offered to young people these, almost invariably, heighten stigmatization. For example, all the evidence indicates that young mothers, although more likely to be poor due to discriminatory employment and income maintenance practices, are in no way inferior parents (Phoenix 1991; Simms and Smith 1986; Speak et al 1997). Yet separate provision sustains a view of them as inadequate. Discrete services for young people, whether in education, health or care, are likely to be less well-funded, involve lower expectations and apply more stringent conditions upon users.

This still leaves the question of how people are to be prepared or forewarned of potential risks and problems. Education around issues associated with drug usage and other 'dangerous' encounters must surely, if it is to be effective, ensure maximum coverage. This means working with those of all ages, partly to help them to manage their own risk-behaviour, but also to equipment them to be the educators of others. The justification for generic provision is strong. As Hendry et al (1995) point out in their review of health education for young people, there is a need for approaches to take into account the diversity of experiences and cultures. They stress the need to avoid the over-professionalization of health (and other) teaching and to increasingly locate health education within family and other local social networks (Hendry et al 1995: 191-2).

Youth subculture

Another set of questions is posed by debates around youth subcultures. If there are distinctive cultural forms and behaviours associated with youth - then the case for specialist intervention is strengthened. Workers would be needed who are able to engage with those cultures/subcultures, and who have detailed knowledge of, for example, the language, behaviours and clothing associated with the various forms. Much of the youth work literature of the 1960s is shot through with this assumption. The 'blurb' on Morse's (1965) book *The Unattached* provides us with a flavour of this:

> *Resentment, apathy, mistrust - the dead-end job, the Beat sound, and a rejection of the values of adult society. These are the kind of words with which journalists have tried to catch and understand the unattached - the teenagers who don't belong to anyone or anything. What kind of people are they? What are their attitudes, needs, aims or resentments? How can they be approached or understood?*
>
> *In 1960 the National Association of Youth Clubs... (sent)... three young social workers..., each to a different town, under concealed identities, to find and scrape an acquaintance with these particular teenagers. Over*

> *three years, the three, one of whom was a young woman, eventually became the trusted friends and confidants of the bored, the apathetic, the rebellious and the defiant.*

This is reminiscent of the sort of attitude that fuelled the activities of Victorian anthropologists, philanthropists and 'social explorers'. Young people are another country - to be visited, understood and, if we follow the imperial tradition, colonized. There are echoes of this approach in the current government's 'New Deal for Communities' programme introduced by the Prime Minister with a reference to his aim of ending the existence of communities with different ethical and moral values from those found in mainstream society (Hetherington 1998).

Concerns such as these were triggered in part by the appearance of vibrant youth cultures in the United States during the 1940s and the United Kingdom a decade later. Their emergence was closely related to profound social and economic changes. In particular, youth subcultures arose from a long term trend towards far greater age segmentation within western society. A move away from 'an age integrated society towards an age-segregated one' (Chudacoff 1989:27). The pace of these changes quickened during the post-war years as a greater affluence trickled down to young people - leading to the creation of specialist leisure, music and fashion production designed specifically to cater for their 'needs'.

These developments fed into a lively sociological discourse that produced a number of significant explorations of groupings of young people (usually young men) (e.g. Hall and Jefferson 1976; Willis 1977) and a vibrant debate as to the extent to which lifestyles, attitudes and life chances were determined by class as well as age (see, for example: Marsland's [1993] defence of adolescence as 'a real and unavoidable condition'). Later contributions to the debate looked to the degree to which youth subcultures were gendered and determined by ethnic origin. Here we do not want to go into an exploration of the shortcomings and possibilities of this tradition of theorizing, but simply to note that throughout this debate the protagonists held fast to the concept of 'youth' as a meaningful category. If we look at contemporary empirical evidence, the reality in most northern countries today is that:

1. *The vast majority of young people do not belong to distinctive subcultures. There has been a 'splintering' whereby people of all ages are much less likely to adopt complete packages, but rather to 'pick and mix' various elements (Roberts 1997: 9).*

2. *Those 'youth' subcultures that could be said to exist, e.g. around clubbing, embrace a fairly wide age span (see Thornton 1995). Arguably the significant breakpoints in musical and in social tastes come around 10-11 years of age, and then somewhere in people's 30s.*

3 *Youth cultures may well act as bases for proto-communities rather than expressing membership of pre-existent groups. In other words, the bond lies in the leisure taste or activity: the camaraderie and sense of belonging that can be generated in a sport, activity or event (Roberts 1997: 9)*

4 *Despite the impression gained from an encounter with much of the sociological literature 'most young people tend to be fairly conventional in outlook and lifestyle, and to merely dabble in the subcultural realm' (Wyn and White 1997:84).*

Recent British surveys such as the 2020 Vision research programme (Industrial Society 1997) confirms this picture. It shows a commitment amongst the overwhelming majority of young people to family life, the work ethic, the inherent value of education and existing social arrangements. Their concerns about the stability of their communities, future employment prospects and the quality and availability of educational provision dove-tail neatly with the views of their parents' and grand-parents' generation. Similarly their perspective on child rearing, crime and penal policy appears to be remarkably close to those of their parents. They do appear to be, however, far less censorious of the working and single mother than their parents; to overwhelmingly 'support equality between the sexes' (Wiggins, Bynner and Parsons 1997); and to believe that household chores - cooking, shopping, washing and ironing - should be shared between the sexes, although a gap between men and women on this issue still persists (Smith et al 1996:26). Finally, the ways in which leisure time is enjoyed is far less diverse amongst different age groups than might be expected. Young people certainly watch more television than preceding generations. However, they are a difficult audience to pin down and generally 'spend less time watching television than people over 25 or under 12' (Croft 1997:179). For them and their parents watching television remains the most popular form of home entertainment. Outside the home the co-terminosity between those aged 16 to 24 and those between 25 and 60 is remarkable. The percentages participating in visiting a public house, going out to a restaurant, taking a drive for pleasure, going for a short break holiday, visiting an historic house, attending a sporting event and going to the theatre varies little. Not surprisingly going to a disco or night club and the cinema are the exceptions, but the crucial element is the similarity (Trew 1997: HMSO 1997: 220). Above all, among all classes, and to a large extent all age groups, the 'home is the main site of leisure and self-expression' (Twigg 1997: 228) - even for the consumption of alcohol by under-age drinkers (Goddard 1997).

The idea that there are distinctive youth cultures or subcultures is open to considerable doubt. The emergence of 'pre-teens' as major buyers of fashion, music, video and computer games; the involvement of people well into their thirties (and beyond) in music and club cultures; and the spread of consumer cultures to all age groups (Roberts 1997: 8) has brought about a major shift. For those concerned with marketing, 'youth' is more of an aspiration or orientation, rather than an age group. Great care is now taken not to market goods in a way that denies adult status and confirms

immaturity. The recent failure of alco-pops is a case in point. These were produced to hook young people onto alcohol at an age when they might opt for cannabis and other drugs. However, they failed to catch on because they were seen as being 'for kids'. Guinness, on the other hand, have been successful in their re-marketing by carefully seeking to combine the image of maturity with vibrant youthfulness (The Economist, September 11, 1998:33).

The sociology of youth

Accounts of different practices linked to 'youth' have a substantial historical and anthropological standing. However, at different times and within different cultures the relative significance of 'youth' as a signifier of status and identifier of behaviour in the public sphere changes. At some points it may be a useful category, at others it may mystify more than it informs. At this moment it is likely that the substantive changes in the social and economic structure, which have, for example, eliminated the 'youth labour market' in the space of a couple of decades, will have a similar impact to those that Musgrove (1964) wrote about. That just as adolescence was created by social and economic changes wrought two centuries past so we might now be witnessing its demise. Comparative studies increasingly show changes in the sequence and pattern of transition to an extent that the rationale for its use is being rapidly eroded (Jeffs and Smith 1998). As du Bois-Reymond argües we are encountering is a world in which

> *Status passages are no longer **linear** but **synchronical** and **reversible.** The life-course of modern young people does not necessarily follow the model of finishing school, completing professional training, getting engaged to be married, and then beginning an active sex life; instead a sex life may commence while still at school, and a trial marriage may take place rather than an engagement (1998: 66).*

Over a decade ago Frith (1986) identified the absence of any significant developments in the sociology of youth during the first half of the 1980s. Little has changed. This field of study has produced little of substance, and certainly almost nothing fresh or original for nearly two decades. It has become more inward looking. As a sub-discipline it is unlikely to disappear (although perhaps it should) as too many have invested too much in it. It will linger on - not least because governments continue to be concerned about 'troublesome youth' and require people to research into the topic. Despite regular injections of research funding it is likely to become increasingly irrelevant. Exhausted, reduced to picking over the minutiae of young peoples' lives and re-working its own tired models it will stagger on - as a scan of journals such as Youth and Policy testify. Indeed, we can find articles on 'youth' that don't explore young people's experiences in any sustained way (e.g. Gayle 1998). As people seek out difference rather than acknowledging commonality, youth as a meaningful concept continues to slip from view.

Implications

Karl Mannheim, exploring the sociological problem of generations ten years after the end of the First World War, argued that:

> *The fact of belonging to the same class, and that of belonging to the same generation or age group, have this in common, that both endow the individual with a common location in the social and historical process, and thereby limit them to a specific range of experiences, predisposing them for a certain characteristic mode of thought and experience, and a characteristic type of historically relevant action. (1952: 291)*

Certain cataclysmic events such as the Holocaust, Hiroshima or Cherynobl can change the way those who witness them view the world. This is not merely a youth phenomenon as the example of the First World War demonstrates. It not only changed one group of young men who fought in it but also their families, friends and subsequent generations. The impact of such events can fade, but their shadow lingers - and informal educators do a great disservice when they ignore this. However, the experiences we have been mapping in this piece show that we cannot assume that people belonging to the same generation or age group will have a characteristic mode of thought or behaviour. This, again, undermines the notion of 'youth' work. We need to look to the possibilities of building upon shared experience rather than tapping into an assumed generational response. For example, post-1970s mass unemployment had a profound impact on many, young and old. That said, it left large swathes of the population relatively immune to its effects. Rising house prices, the growing spread of inheritance, the appearance of new industries and the shift in the basis of taxation ensured many experienced the time as one of rising living standards and growing opportunity. The job of the informal educator is to explore this with a proper regard to both commonality and difference.

If, as we have argued, there is little intrinsically unique about youth as an age-related process or age state, then what is the basis for intervention? Why have youth workers if young people learn in the same way as adults, have similar aspirations, and encounter similar problems? Writers like Coles (1995:6) stress difference, arguing that young people are treated neither as children nor adults. They are, according to him, 'regarded, in part, as both independent choice-making human beings, but also as dependent on other people (especially their parents) for care, guidance and support'. There may be some mileage around this, although we do not believe this to be the case. Dependency is not specifically a 'youth' problem. Many young people do not see the world in this way (and would be insulted if it was suggested they are inferior and dependent), whilst others of all ages may see themselves as only partial citizens - as the current advocates of the concept of social exclusion argue. Those concerned with children's rights and participation might want to dispute the distinction drawn between youth and childhood (hardly surprising given that the Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as any person under 18

years of age). In part, the problem is the cultural specificity of many of the arguments - after all, most people in the world have entered the workforce by 15 years of age. The issue here may not just be the exclusion of young people, but the position of both children and young people. Both are excluded from fundamental rights and opportunities around, for example, voting, income (support and minimum wage) and the expression of their sexuality. Work around such exclusions is a possibility - but it only makes sense when linked to wider questions. After all, childhood and youth are escaped with time. The struggle must be to extend and universalize rights and to make connections between the experiences of different groups. If this is the route educators wish to take, and some are highly sceptical of such extensions, then those rights (many or few) must be applicable to all. There may be rights that relate solely to those exceptionally dependent on others for their material needs. However, these should not be linked to age but rather to condition. For example, we can see commonalties in the experiences of all with regard to living in residential care or access to medical treatment. The strength of the children's and youth rights movements lies in their capacity to expose inconsistencies in treatment on the basis of age. Their weakness consistently flows from a flawed desire to secure privilege on the basis of age (Franklin 1986, 1995). Youth workers have historically often made the same mistake - pleading for special treatment for those they identify as their clients, while overlooking the more acute needs of others - as currently exemplified in the debate concerning the supposed benefits of having a Minister for Youth. Our concern here is to argue for the elimination of inconsistencies of treatment on the basis of age, and to avoid the creation of privilege. If we are seriously interested in addressing questions around exclusion, citizenship and power then we must look to the general as well as the specific and this means moving beyond the experiences of one group.

Furthermore, and linked to the earlier points, there are few aims or objectives for working with young people that are peculiar to that group. Just about all of the social problems that have been identified with respect to young people (crime, drug usage, housing need, pregnancy) are also shared by older people. Whether by accident or design, this view appears to be shared by those centrally concerned with the UK government's current interest in social exclusion. When looking to work specifically with young people around crime, for example, the result can all too easily be to stigmatize all those characterized as young in a community. It isolates, and casts a spotlight upon, specific forms of crime and behaviour and presents these as deserving special treatment. Alternatively, it can encourage the creation of 'privileged' victims who on account of age are seen as more deserving of sympathy and the attention of professionals than others. Both are highly divisive. Perhaps, therefore, what we need to do is examine crime within communities.

All this adds up to the need to come to terms with the fact that the notion of youth work has a decreasing usefulness. Those seeking to hang onto it as an operating

idea appear to be harking back to understandings that have more to do with the 1950s and 1960s and before than with contemporary experience. 'Youth workers' need to unhook themselves from a focus on 'youth' and 'young people' and instead look to people's experiences and aspirations in the totality. This entails coming to understand themselves, first and foremost, as informal educators. This is not a dramatic shift, it means simply connecting with the two other defining dimensions of youth workers' earlier experience. It means looking to voluntary association, democracy and the nature of associational life (see, for example, Elsdon 1995; Jeffs and Smith 1996); and exploring and developing understandings of informal education; of fostering learning in life as it is lived (Jeffs and Smith 1990b; 1996). Current concerns with lifelong learning offer one possibility in this respect; interest in linking formal and informal approaches e.g. around health, another. This is a trail already blazed by many outdoor educators who have moved away from a narrow focus on capturing young people and inducting them into the joys of a Spartan life. Realizing the futility of this and the limited potential it offered for their own development, there has been a shift to notions of 'personal growth through adventure' wherein a strong focus on age-specific activity has been abandoned (Hopkins and Putnam 1993). A similar trend is emerging in arts work (Matarasso 1997) and in counselling.

The counter-case

In the course of discussing these themes critics have raised six main points:

1. *'Youth' remains a useful sociological concept.*
2. *Failure to highlight youth will lead to a further erosion of resources not just for work with young people but also community education, leisure and other welfare services.*
3. *Moving away from 'youth work' involves abandoning rich and productive traditions of practice.*
4. *A focus on informal education will remove an incentive to make provision for 'difficult young people'.*
5. *Young people want to be together and we have a responsibility to respond to that need.*
6. *There are practical difficulties around organizing and administrating services presently included under the umbrella 'youth work'.*

In response to the first of these, we would simply point to the problems of the 'sociology of youth' literature that we have already identified. If the concept does have some vibrancy one would expect to see this reflected - but it is not there. There is an increasing obsession with minutiae, an exaggeration of difference and a conscious blurring of boundaries between youth and adult, and youth and child.

Regarding the second objection, we have to be honest. Denigrating young people and over-playing the supposed threat they pose to order and social stability has in the past, and undoubtedly in the future will, pay dividends in terms of funding (although not necessarily to a substantive degree). However, this has to be set against the extent to which such funding strategies add to the difficulties already faced by particular groups (through stigmatization, for example). It also ties funding to moral panics (and so effectively excludes the many) and its Janus-faced nature heighten tensions in practice for the educator. Honesty is a risky strategy in politics. However, even politicians beginning to realize that investing in specific youth services furthers disjointed and faulty provision, with people falling in and out of entitlement and obliged to negotiate a maze of competing agencies as they age. The current moves in the UK away from notions of youth service toward ensuring substantive forms of provision (e.g. around housing, education and crime) which address social exclusion fits in with this concern. There is, also, a further question of social justice here. If a case cannot be made for the specific needs of an individual (as against others) why should resources flow their way on the basis of age?

The third objection, the abandonment of a rich and productive tradition, does not stand up to examination. We are arguing that the concept of youth, once so helpful, now is deeply flawed in terms of organizing and thinking about practice. It now constrains rather than fosters the creativity of workers. Historically youth workers have been at the forefront of the development of informal education. Increasingly the tie to 'youth', however, has led them away from education into other traditions of control, management and organized leisure. Quite the reverse of abandoning a particular tradition, we are seeking to reclaim it and extend it.

In respect of the fourth objection, we need to begin by saying that youth services have consistently avoided sustained work with 'difficult young people'. They have generally been left to the tender mercies of social workers, prison officers and the police. As before, we do not want to see the continued isolation of 'young people' who present problems to their communities and to service providers. When we come to examine specific cases it quickly becomes clear that people's difficulties rarely flow from age but, rather, from poverty, family circumstances, health and the like. Once this is recognized the inappropriateness of age-specific provision becomes apparent. Their needs are often long-term and the causes of their difficulties deep-rooted. They can only be tackled in the context of comprehensive and on-going action. Short-term, age-specific intervention may make a bad situation worse.

The fifth critique can be answered simply. We are not arguing that we should not work with people in particular age groups. Groups of people may well define themselves as 'young' or 'old' and organize around that. Informal educators need to respond accordingly. Similarly, people will find themselves in systems such as schools where they are managed according to age. Informal educators have to work with that experience creatively, and not try to impose unhelpful categories

upon people. Those operating in the school setting, older persons centre and student hall often recognize and seek to undo the damage of isolation, to build bridges with the world beyond, and offer 'inmates' the benefits of conversation and association with those of a different generation and background.

Lastly, there are always 'practical difficulties' standing in the way of reform. Some organizations and forms of provision may disappear. Indeed, people who have consistently and simply defined themselves as youth workers may well have difficulties shifting from such a mindset. Certain organizations likewise. We have to recognize that changes in social attitudes and processes lead to the decline and disappearance of certain activities and jobs. Youth work, much like whaling or lamp-lighting, is no longer required as a discrete activity.

As informal educators we need to reconnect with a concern for democracy and association. We cannot provide instant solutions to the current moral panics around crime, drugs, sexuality and schooling. But by fostering conversation, building communities and encouraging people to open up the opportunities for learning in daily life we can do something that is of a more lasting significance. We may actually help people to live more fulfilled and connected lives. And here we see the incredible folly of policy makers who cutback such work. In pursuit of an extra-ordinarily narrow idea of what education is, they turn their back on community and on association. We need to work alongside people so that they may learn and organize things for themselves - so that all may share in a common life. This was the vision underpinning the Albemarle Report on the Youth Service: 'To encourage young people to come together into groups of their own choosing is the fundamental task of the Service' (HMSO 1960: 52). The resulting development of provision singularly failed to address this. We need to ask whether 'youth work' hinders the emergence of a common life. It is our belief that it does. Jettisoning the obsession with age-specific activity allows us to focus on education and association and, in so doing, helps all to create for themselves, in the words of Margaret Simey, 'a life worth living'.

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DEBATE

An open response to the concerns of the Centre for Social Action in Issue No.60

MONICA BARRY, ALISON DAVIES & HOWARD WILLIAMSON

In a somewhat belated response to an article written by Monica Barry in 1996 (Issue No. 54), three members of staff of the Centre for Social Action (CSA) at De Montfort University - Jennie Fleming, Mark Harrison and David Ward - take exception to variations on the theme of social action (Issue No. 60). Whilst we have concerns about the fact that their article includes what are tantamount to personalised and organisational attacks in order to secure the moral high ground, this is not the appropriate medium through which to confront these; instead we wish to concentrate here on addressing (we hope in measured and neutral tones) the issues they raise regarding 'social action'.

There is no definitive version of the concept of social action and therefore no one correct method of social action groupwork. One form of social action which emerged in the early 1970s was depicted by Paulo Freire's Latin American treatise (1972) on educating revolutionaries in oppressed countries about the need to similarly educate, politicise and revolutionise the people. Freire was writing in the context of a particularly repressive Third World dictatorship. Little wonder that such a method of empowerment may often seem irrelevant to young people on a peripheral housing estate in urban Britain in the 1990s. Another form of social action emanates from the USA, where self-generated groups come together 'to wrest power resources from established individuals and institutions and create change' (Mondros & Wilson, 1994: 1).

The version of social action characterised by the CSA combines the philosophy of Freire with the learning from community work and methods of social education. It encourages disadvantaged young people to take collective action for themselves, facilitated in part by skilled workers who strive to challenge inequality and discrimination and to help young people understand the macro factors associated with politics, the economy and the wider environment which often further disadvantage and marginalise them.

The version of 'social action' adopted by Save the Children aimed to be realistic and practical to the different groups of young people with whom the organisation worked: it tried to accommodate young people's more short-term, often apolitical agendas, acknowledging the limitations of encouraging young people to change the world when their own circumstances were so constrained and restraining (yet often nothing like as oppressed or repressed as in Third World dictatorships or indeed in crisis-ridden former Soviet countries).

However defined, social action in itself is an imposed agenda; it is a method of working devised *by* professionals *for* group participants. It has not evolved through

the efforts of those it purports to empower (i.e., marginalised, oppressed or otherwise disadvantaged groups), but was developed 'by practitioners, educators and policy makers', to use Fleming et al's own words in Issue No. 60 (p. 47). The method *per se* is seen as non-negotiable to some of its supporters and in our experience, many young people find such rigidity difficult to manage. As Monica Barry openly admits in Issue No. 54, participants in her projects had some negative, but nevertheless constructive, criticisms to make of social action methods. Such concerns have not only been voiced by Save the Children project participants, but also by social action participants in other projects, including, ironically, those developed and evaluated by the CSA itself (see, for example, Harris & Harrison, 1995; Harrison & Ward, 1994). These concerns can be summarised as follows:

- *disadvantaged young people tend to want to address local rather than national, and personal rather than political issues;*
- *they prefer more directive, practical and emotional support from workers;*
- *any identified goals should be realistic and achievable to them in the short term; and*
- *social action methods which are predominantly self-directed may be too demanding of a young or inexperienced age group.*

In our experience, and we would respectfully suggest in the CSA's experience as well, young people often prefer working alongside others in a 'participative' way, rather than alone in an 'empowering' way. They do not want to *change* the world so much as *join* it. Once they have gained confidence and self-esteem through working cooperatively with others, to then unrealistically raise their expectations within the confines of a heavily constrained socio-political environment is akin to leaving them as beached whales. The kind of professional imperialism suggested by 'pure' social action often does no service to disadvantaged, marginalised individuals; as professional workers, we have a responsibility to enable them to make the best of the opportunities credibly available to them. Once their own house is in order, then it is fair enough to help them understand 'why' their situation is as it is, but *their* priorities must come first, not ours.

All too often, social action is seen as the solution, but rarely is the problem defined, least of all by young people themselves. For many disadvantaged young people, the problem is managing to survive day to day, finding a job and/or having constructive activities and support networks. Their long-term prospects are often bleak and they are constantly reminded of how 'set apart' they are from so-called mainstream society. *That* is the 'problem' for young people and 'social action' *per she* is seldom seen by them as the obvious solution.

Proponents of 'social action' as described by the CSA, for example, need to be more accommodating of young people's local, personal and short-term needs,

even if this means putting off the 'why' question in the interim. Those working with young people should also consider the possibility of injecting their own ideas into the debate with young people; for example, their role could be about more than just ensuring anti-discrimination and facilitating self-direction, it could be about sharing with young people innovative and pro-active ways of improving their situation. The fact that the project referred to in Issue No. 54 had a subsidiary agency aim, openly negotiated with young people, to influence legislation affecting those appearing in court (a form, it could be argued, of problematization and conscientisation) should not detract from the overall focus of the project, namely, to help marginalised young people to hold more sway within society - *if that is what they wanted.*

What Monica Barry attempted to argue in her article was that people working collectively in groups was indeed the ideal scenario in terms of 'social action'. Where she differs with the CSA is in what constitutes a group - the CSA argue for people who lack power to constitute the group; Monica Barry argues for all interested parties, both with and without power, to work in partnership as a group. Whilst the CSA and others may be sceptical about such collaboration ever taking place, such consensus building and joint decision making should not be dismissed out of hand; it has yet to be tried and tested, and where better than in the settings where other forms of social action flourish. In societies which are highly polarised, such as Brazil, a wholly radical agenda may well be the preferred route. However, in societies such as the UK, despite some stark extremes, more diverse agendas for action might be more appropriate.

If one were to consider the article in Issue No. 54 in its entirety, without taking sections out of context or misquoting it, then one might recognise the author's total support for the principles of social action as listed on p. 47 of the CSA article. Whilst her version of 'social action', as described in Williamson (1995), may not conform to that advocated by the CSA, it was nevertheless collective action by young people towards their own goals. Her concerns lay in the lack of communication and cooperation between all stakeholders in the more purist method of social action and the blinkered and rigid way in which social action methods were often implemented and sustained, irrespective of the aspirations, experiences and needs of the young people with whom such proponents were working. If we as professionals are to seriously take on board the wishes of young people, we need to work with them at their pace and with their agenda. As Fleming *et al* concur:

> *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 (p. 48).*

This is precisely what Monica Barry and others have been trying to do within a youth work context, however defined, but without imposing any precursors about

problematisation, conscientisation or politicisation of those setting the agenda. However, we acknowledge the need, as does the CSA, to sharpen our intellectual conceptualisation of what social action means to both young people and professionals. Virtually no research by independent and non-aligned evaluators has been undertaken into the philosophy behind, and the operation and effectiveness of, social action projects, even though the reviews that have been undertaken are highlighting similar issues and concerns for both participants and workers alike. Such research is also becoming increasingly necessary given the sensitivity of some of social action's primary advocates to criticism and open debate.

We believe that a real debate is needed about social action youth work and indeed about youth work more generally, especially as it becomes harnessed more and more to wider public policy. There needs to be support for a broad church of intervention in the lives of young people, recognising different purposes, processes and outcomes. 'Social action' youth work may be one approach, and one still to be defined and positioned within the wider repertoire of youth work. Demeaning one perspective on 'social action' in order to enhance another is hardly 'best practice' in academic debate. Nor may social action - however defined - necessarily be 'best practice' for disadvantaged young people. Best practice demands an attuned listening ear, not the precious imposition of ideas imported from another time and another place. Fleming et al themselves state that they neither have, nor wish to gain, the monopoly on the social action approach, and are still learning from their experiences. Learning from others - who themselves are still seeking to make their own sense of the meaning of 'social action' - rather than belittling those ideas and experiences, would indeed be a start.

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WORKING SPACE

COUNSELLING:
Behind Closed Doors - Providing a Service for Young People

HEIDI DOUGLAS & GILLIAN PATTON

Introduction
The Parkhouse Project is based in Howdon, North Tyneside and provides sexual health services for young people across the borough. The aim of the Parkhouse Projects is,

> *To respond to the needs of young people by providing services which will enable them to achieve awareness and increased control of their sexual health and so reduce the risk of unwanted pregnancy, HIV, and other STDs.*

To work towards meeting this aim the Parkhouse Project utilises many strategies and methods, including the provision of a counselling service for young people under 25. This runs alongside and complements medically staffed sexual health and contraception sessions. Both of these services work on a drop-in and self referral system.

This working space aims to explore the potential ethical dilemmas which can arise when providing a counselling service for young people under 16 years. Its main focus is to explore counselling practice, confidentiality, child protection and consider how these issues are informed by Parkhouse policies and procedures. These policies and guidelines have been developed through reflection and discussion stimulated by ethical dilemmas arising from existing practice.

Adopting a Holistic Approach
Sexual health can not be compartmentalised; the project adopts a holistic approach, not merely within the confines of contraception and the medicalisation of sexual health. The needs of the client are paramount and this is reflected in the numerous strategies available to the young person. There is a choice of service which includes potential referral systems, long/short term support, counselling and/or information giving. There are many re-occurring issues presented by young people; physical and sexual abuse (past and present), pre and post termination issues, relationship conflicts, perceived peer pressure and sex education needs. The young person chooses the route they want to take regarding the potential resolution of the issues they present. Structured counselling sessions is one of the choices available to young people.

Providing a Counselling Service in a Youth Work Setting
Counselling can be perceived as a very contentious area of work. There are many myths surrounding what counselling is and the process is often 'dressed up' and mystified. Good practice is guided by the British Association of Counsellor's (BAC) code of ethics and is underpinned by the principle of 'doing no harm' which has very specific boundaries. The counsellor has a professional and moral accountability.

The concept of 'moral accountability' is a tangible one, as the counsellor does not project their own moral stance/beliefs on their client. Clear boundaries, contracting (ground rules) with the young person, creating a safe space and being young-person-centred are all key issues when counselling young people.

Many of the main components in counselling are similar to those identified in good youth work practice, despite the youth work profession having no code of ethics. However, there is a difference in the way that youth workers facilitate an empowering and enabling process with young people. Youth work is predominately based in group work and/or a youth club environment. Good practice normally denotes that there is more than one worker present in order to ensure both the safety of the young people and the workers. This means that the counsellor is obliged to follow these guidelines and is accountable for what is said or conveyed within the counselling space. In the group work or youth club situation it is likely that the definition of any 'counselling' taking place will be based on basic counselling skills such as active listening, observing non-verbal communication and asking open-ended questions. The environment cannot be an individual's own space as other young people will be present and resources rarely allow for the creation of a space to enable a more structured counselling session. It will happen on a more ad hoc basis, possibly evolving from engaging in dialogue; although the worker is aware that they are utilising and drawing on counselling skills, the young person will be unaware of this process. In the structured counselling session it is imperative to good practice that the young person wants to be in the counselling situation and a formal contract is in place. Integral to this is the understanding that the complaints procedure exists for their benefit.

The Principle of Confidentiality

The counselling process is one which is based on trust between the counsellor and the young person. Confidentiality is one of the key issues concerning young people who access the Parkhouse Project. Young people want to know that the workers they have trusted and confided in will not talk about them inappropriately and that the information they disclose to a counsellor will not be passed on to other agencies (such as GPs, Education Services, Social Services) without their permission. Therefore, it is essential that clear policies are established in order to protect a young person's right to confidentiality. It is also fundamental that these guidelines are accessible so that young people presenting themselves fully understand the operational framework of counselling. This is ideally communicated to the client in the pre-counselling agreement or contract.

All clients have the basic right to respect, confidentiality and to be treated as an individual and this is no less so for young people under 16. Moreover, it could be argued that a counselling service for young people should be at an even higher standard. Many mainstream and specialised counselling services have an age limit of when a client can be referred, this is normally at 18 years and above, so successfully

avoiding the potential legal grey area of the child protection issue. The result being that many young people who are in need of counselling services may be inappropriately directed to mental health focused agencies. Moreover, this could have a long term affect on their development and life strategies. It may expose those young people to psychological, physical and emotional harm, affecting future relationships, imparing development of interpersonal and communication skills, heighten self criticism and trigger paranoia.

Providing a Confidential Space

Involving parents or guardians in cases where young people are under 16 would be against Parkhouse policy. This is despite the often well meaning parent or guardian ringing the project to check that their son or daughter has turned up. Our notion of confidentiality is constantly set against the possibility that removing this principle would stop young people accessing counselling services and would move the counsellor outside contractual limits. In 1985 the House of Lords in a direct response to the Gillick case drew up the Fraser Guidelines. This was to enable professionals working with young people under 16 years to do so in an environment where information on and access to contraception was treated with respect and confidentiality. This is supported by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 6) which outlines the child's right to life and to develop fully and the Children Act (1989) which shifted the emphasis from the rights of the parent/guardian to the needs of the child where their welfare is concerned.

The other side of this is whether we inform young people that parents have made contact or have visited the project inquiring about them. Dilemmas such as this rest on the worker maintaining trust with their client, gathering background information on the quality of the relationship between parent and young person and making a judgement on what would be least harmful before deciding to inform the client or not.

Child Protection and Counselling: The Dilemma of Breaking Confidentiality

The potential areas of conflict in counselling and professional ethics normally arise from child protection issues with under 16s, which is the area where the boundaries become blurred. The statutory duty to protect the child on paper is rigid, the professional realities and systems for the protection of under 16s are not. The counsellor is working with the young person in an environment where the young person's experiences and voice is valued. Disclosure, by the nature of the therapeutic environment is encouraged, often this being the first time a young person has been given permission to express themselves so explicitly. The professional and legal duty of the worker is to protect the young person, so if a disclosure of abuse (physical, mental, sexual) is presented the worker must inform their manager and then possibly the local child protection team.

Parkhouse views confidentiality as respecting and valuing the information a client discloses in the professional relationship. However, this right is not absolute and a young person is never given the expectation that a worker will maintain 'blanket

confidentially'. This is often limited by the rights of other individuals and the rights of the agency. Information may be shared with other workers within the project so there is a co-ordinated approach and workers are fully informed and prepared to deal with any re-occurring issues; for example, the potential of a concealed pregnancy. This also enables discussion which draws on others' experience and develops strategies for good practice. Moreover, it is Parkhouse policy that one worker does not have the sole responsibility for processing a disclosure. If a worker feels that there is a potential child protection issue which may result in a formal concern being placed outside the agency it is taken forward for discussion in the multi-disciplinary team setting.

The ethical dilemma occurs when there is a potential conflict between making a judgment on the elements of 'risk' and 'harm' present in that young person's and possibly other young people's (siblings and other family members under 16 years) lives. If the team regards the scenario as not needing any further action, the individual worker still has the option to register a concern with the Child Protection Team. Ideally, before any information is divulged the young person has given their permission, is fully informed and supported. This decision may have been reached via a very positive process, with the young person taking ownership and controlling the course of events of the disclosure. However, this is not always the case and the young person may not want to make a formal disclosure to external agencies.

When breaking confidentiality there are two main concerns. Firstly, as a counsellor there is an emphasis on being non-judgmental, young-person-centred and seeking to jointly find enabling strategies with the young person; all these notions of 'good practice' may be distorted. The second dilemma arises when the actual young person who is perceived to be at risk is not your client but a friend or family member related to your client.

Conclusion

The notion of child protection is based around the imminent safety of a young person while the underpinning values of counselling is to 'do no harm'. Both are concerned with safety yet, ironically, can be in direct conflict when a counsellor breaks confidentiality, makes a referral or discloses to external agencies. Who then owns the agenda? Does counselling now become support and advocacy? Moreover, keeping the young person 'safe' is constantly juxtaposed with the potential emotional risks of entering into the inter-agency obstacle course of child protection services.

Gaining trust is the essence of our counselling; it is based on a shared understanding, that the young person will be respected and believed. If a young person does not trust a service, their use of that service will be jeopardized. At present over 5000 young people access the Parkhouse Project in some capacity, all presenting with diverse needs and levels of support. The young people who use Parkhouse understand when the project can and cannot maintain confidentiality. This is made clear to

every young person the very first time they visit the project and is reinforced throughout. by both medical and youth work staff.

Within Parkhouse workers practice from a clear value base and follow policies which are continually used as a framework to inform decisions. Key child protection guidelines and policies are vital, as are guidelines on when it is appropriate to break confidentiality and an acceptable framework within which to do this. Scenarios are often complicated and policies and procedures are continually used as a tool to stimulate discussion and inform decisions within the inter-agency team.

Heidi Douglas *and* ***Gillian Patton*** *are Project Workers for The Parkhouse Project, Howdon, Tyne and Wear. Tel: (0191) 262 0122*

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REVIEWS

The Carnegie United Kingdom Trust
The Carnegie Young People Initiative: Years of Decision
Youth Work Press
ISBN: 0 86155 169 9
£16.95

Merle Davies

This collection of 3 papers is an excellent exposé of the current situation in which young people currently find themselves.

The first section,'Youth in an Age of Uncertainty' is a review of recent research findings on the position of young people in the UK. It covers areas such as employment, health, education, citizenship and crime and the justice system. This has input from a variety of sources such as Howard Williamson and David Coleman who all give a highly readable commentary on the life of young people today. One of the topics, 'Citizenship and Democracy', discusses young people and their current disinterest in politics and highlights the widening gap over the past 10 years between young people's increasing disillusionment with politics now as opposed to then. They also point out that full citizenship is postponed for many young people who are unable to achieve economic independence until a later age than the legal age of adulthood.

When discussing 'Leisure and Lifestyles' the information given about Youth Service uptake is interesting although predictable. One third of 11-15 year olds use the service compared to only 4 per cent of 22-25 year olds using our facilities. The reasons they gave for no longer participating were also fairly predictable, 'I grew out of it' and 'boredom' were the two most common reasons. Interestingly, the writers identify take up as divided equally between youth clubs and centres and voluntary groups or organisations. Under sport it was interesting to read that their research had indicated that soccer is only the third most popular sport amongst young men aged between 16-24 with snooker/pool taking first place and, much to my surprise, walking coming in between. The information provided could be used, alongside local investigations, by youth services to raise questions regarding the range of provision on offer.

The second section covers the 'Legal Framework' and the way in which it affects young people. Christina Lyon considers in detail the effects that the law has upon young people and the way in which society views them. It is encouraging to read such an article which discusses the systems in Scotland and Northern Ireland as well as in England and Wales. She argues quite succinctly that 'there is no Citizen's Charter for children and young people and yet these are the citizens of tomorrow'. Much of the

law is aimed at giving parental choice. It is to the parents that the authority is obliged to provide information, not the young person. She also considers the way in which other countries enable young people to be involved in the decision making processes within schools and discusses the positive impact this has. Her arguments regarding young people entering Higher Education and the system of student loans is even more relevant with the advent of tuition fees under the new Government. She argues that a system of loans will discriminate against young people who come from families with limited means or who do not come from a background of being used to loans and suggests that they may not be able to find it easy to adjust to the notion of a high overdraft. The writer also speaks concisely regarding the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 and the effects it will have on young people. This particular section was extremely interesting and gave much food for thought.

The third and final section is a 'Statistical Map' and Margaret Bone provides detailed statistics across a variety of areas. Her observations on living circumstances during the years of transition include interesting statistics on the living arrangements of young people by age and sex and housing breakdowns of young people under 30. The educational statistics provide valuable information for the Youth Service along with information on the economic activity of young people by age group and sex. The health statistics are a valuable source of knowledge and one of the most interesting areas focused on psychiatric disorders among young people aged 16-29 living in private households in Great Britain. Many of the statistics could be used when considering priorities of work and enabling youth workers to add to local knowledge when considering project work in specific areas.

The papers are a very good resource for youth projects as much of the information is delivered in a readable format and information is easy to locate for use. The spiral binding format I found comfortable to use and fitted in well with the style of the document. Overall a fairly good resource document for any youth project.

Merle Davies *is Head of Youth Service in the London Borough of Bexley.*

REVIEWS

Bernard Trafford
Participation, Power-Sharing and School Improvement
Educational Heretics Press 1997
ISBN: 1 900219 10 7
£9.95
pp 98

Ted Harvey

The Marxist analysis of schools as agents reproducing the class structure and preparing children for the inequalities of capitalism has always seemed a persuasive one to me. Most secondary schools are noticeably lacking when it comes to any sort of genuine democracy permeating the whole institution. This slim volume is the fascinating account of one man's attempt to democratise his school from the traditional position of the arch dictator - the headteacher.

The school in question - an academically selective independent - provides what might appear to be an unlikely setting for such an undertaking, although progressive practices often find homes in such environments, where some might say they constitute little threat to the status quo. However, this blow-by-blow account reveals much in common with any large secondary school in the country, whether the ripples outside the school would have been more problematic for a state comprehensive must remain open for discussion. Bernard Trafford records candidly the minutiae of his attempts to democratise, and the book has an immediacy and sense of reality that is both appealing and refreshing. The misunderstandings, wrangles and conflicts which arise when people are asked (or, on occasions, not asked enough in their opinion) to take part in decision making are many and various, I was left admiring Trafford's courage and determination in carrying on in the face of so many difficulties.

The analysis is couched in the terms of school improvement and Bernard Trafford has some penetrating comments to make about empowerment and raising standards, especially in the face of the top-down approach which we have lived with in education for the last twenty years, however this is the aspect of the book which left me with some problems, whilst not wishing to undermine the overall message in any way.

While reading this book I often found myself remembering that phrase about democracy being the least bad form of government. While democracy is undeniably crucial in any institution it seems to me that the concept cannot carry by itself all the issues of leadership, management and development which need to be addressed in a school, at least not in the form in which it is commonly held and as utilised here.

The notion of a school as a democracy is flawed from the start, it is clearly not a community with clear boundaries, the different groups - pupils, teachers, ancillary staff (and parents - where do they fit in?) do not share a common interest in the totality of the institution, nor does it have an equal impact on all their lives. Moreover where does that dreaded word accountability fit in? It could be argued that a democratic community should and would take all these issues into account but it cannot be assumed to do so. Perhaps it is unfair to make these criticisms when a deliberately narrower focus is the subject of this book, certainly the exploration of what it means to be democratic is illuminating and helpful not to say stimulating and courageous.

There is a great deal of writing on the issue of empowerment - much of it coming from America, some of the strategies suggested are at least as radical as those advocated here and may be more effective in terms of individuals' lives and institutional development, it would be interesting to see a debate between these two approaches which clearly share a great deal in common and could learn much from each other to provide an alternative model of school improvement to the current failing orthodoxy.

I have no doubt Bernard Trafford's school is an interesting one to work in both as a pupil and a teacher, he has taken some substantial steps in a climate which is generally hostile to real empowerment - especially of that terrifying group of wayward rebels - the young. I hope he continues in this direction and wholeheartedly applaud him for doing so.

Ted Harvey *is Assistant Warden of a Cambridge Village College.*

Tony Sewell
Black Masculinities And Schooling:
How Black Boys Survive Modern Schooling
Trentham Books
ISBN: 1 85856 040 3
£14.95

Horace Lashley

The issue of black boys in education continues to be a topic of some major concern and this book contributes substantially to the discourse on the main constituent elements. In order to review this book and to do justice to the issue I find it necessary to draw out some of the main points that the book has highlighted within the wider context of black youth in British society.

Black male youth seems to have been made into the 'sick man' of Britain as he has been taken through a process of demonisation. This has been

reinforced by the majority of social surveys and social science research relating to that group as a part of British society.

The results of such surveys and researches have provided a catalogue of negative stereotyped results relating to the group. They are generally portrayed as 'educational failures', having 'poor economic prospects' and invariably within the 'realm of social catastrophe'. Insensitive readers of such studies are unavoidably left with the view that these conditions are self induced and somehow characteristic of the group. The globalised view from much of those works is that black male youth are a dangerous species that need to be feared and as a result controlled. In consequence much of the related research material and statistics point to their removal from mainstream society in significant numbers in order to protect the rest of the society and almost as though to protect themselves from themselves with some emphasis on the emergence of black on black violence amongst black male youth.

Typical of this trend is the way in which school exclusion, massive unemployment, disproportionate imprisonment and mental labelling seem to act as processes of stringent social control and a selecting out from mainstream social interaction and competition. This in effect ensures the creation of a substantial black underclass and ensures the perpetuation of a cycle of poverty and deprivation. Sewell's work provides a microcosmic view of how this process is systematised in British society for black youth.

Sewell therefore sets out from very early in his thesis that black boys are in a no-win situation within the school context, which can be argued is replicated in their wider world life experience, by being seen as both 'Angels and Devils' in British (and American) schools. Their 'Angelness' revolves around them being, 'heroes of a street fashion culture that dominates most of our cities'. However within the official socialisation domain of the school they are perceived as a plague of and to teachers and class-rooms. Black boys therefore fail to fall within the framework of the 'ideal teacher type' The consequence of this non-ideality as Sewell argues is that, 'they experience a disproportionate amount of punishment in our schools compared to all other ethnic groupings'.

In Sewell's study school exclusion was featured as a major instrument of social control for black pupils. They were disproportionately excluded very often under spurious circumstances and under conditions which were possible to be seen as overtly racist and racially discriminatory. This observation of Sewell fits well with that of others. It has been consequently argued that in the current climate of school league tables a further move to lessen the disruptive influence of some pupils is to award them higher levels of school exclusions. Sewell argues however that often the exclusion

process is initiated more because black male pupils are perceived as aggressive and threatening rather than because of actual transgressions against the rules. In the work of Cecile Wright (1986) which was under taken at a period well before that of Sewell she had observed that the school equally manipulated black pupils from the principal areas of school success appropriation through the use of adverse forms of retributive punishment administered by teachers through the use institutional mechanisms.

The national picture with regards to the way in which school exclusions impact on black pupils was emphasised by a recent OFSTED Report (Gillborn and Gipps 1996). The report indicates that it is six times more likely for African-Caribbean pupils to be excluded from school than other groups. It also pointed out that two thirds of these pupils never go back to school and that the problem of exclusion is just as likely to affect primary school as secondary. The consequence of this process is that there is a significant gap between the goals of equality of opportunity for all and the actual experience and wider opportunisation outcomes for black pupils.

Sewell also explores in his study the wider issue of racism within schools. Although he points to significant examples of the machination of racism from teachers, they however significantly denied its existence. In the process they transferred any difference in treatment meted out to black pupils to the cultural conflict that black pupils displayed against the culture of the school and that of the process of schooling. This was therefore seen as a major stumbling block to the educational success of black pupils and not an aspect of institutional and personal racism engendered by the social construction of schooling.

He constructed four different pupil types from his black student sample. His typology consisted of:

1) Conformists 2) Innovators 3) Retreatists 4) Rebels.

The response to social integration was the major operant determining the particular categorisation. Black pupils therefore seemed in his study to be constantly plagued by the dilemma of fitting in, which produced two main response strategies. One of those responses was the desire to fit in. This group consisted of those who 'naturally fitted in' and those able to make, fitting in adjustments. The other group consisted of those who were unable to fit in but however regularly attended school and didn't use truanting as a method of avoidance of not fitting in. This dilemma obviously produced a problematic dynamic which inevitably resulted in the educational dysfunction of the black males in Sewell's study which can be universalised for black pupils in other British schools.

Sewell concludes the book on a positive note by providing model solutions for the gross wastage and destruction of human resource that is processed at the

school that he studied, and the numerous other schools where the experience of black male pupils is replicated. His solutions cover a wide area of activities across the process of schooling. Most importantly their implementations would necessitate a fundamental rethinking in the way that black pupils are perceived by the system. The most important factor in redressing the situation of wastage as it currently stands is the acceptance that we do have a degree of intolerable wastage here of human resource.

***Horace Lashley**, The University of Reading.*

Caroline Sharp and Karen Dust
Artists in Schools: A Handbook for Teachers and Artists
National Foundation for Educational Research 1997
ISBN 0 7005 1413 9
£10.00
pp 108

Danny Gilchrist

When I first picked this book up I did what I normally do with handbooks or resource material, I flicked through the pages from back to front. I do this with the majority of books of this type, I then put them down to read later. Every now and then one catches my attention long enough to make me stop and read a page or a portion of a page and if I am really hooked I go to the beginning. What attracted me to this handbook was not only the layout and the use of boxed text to highlight case studies, examples and checklists but the no nonsense headings and sub-headings for each chapter, i.e. 'What you need to know about education', 'Funding your project', 'Setting aims, objectives and success criteria', 'Preparing pupils' and 'Sharing the project'. This is a handbook that guides artist and teacher alike through the trials and tribulations of project work.

This is the second edition of the book, the first having been published in 1990. Having never come across the first edition I have nothing to compare this publication to. From a practitioner's viewpoint having spent the last twenty years working on arts projects in schools, various youth related organisations and community settings, this handbook is a boon. Although in many ways this is a beginners guide to setting up art projects in schools, it is also a practical resource that can be used as a checklist for those who have taken part either as practitioners or clients. It is written clearly and distinctly taking both the artist and teacher step by step through the process of how and why an arts project should take place.

From both the artist and teachers point of view the handbook looks at the benefits of artists in schools, planning and starting the project - clarifying and agreeing aims and objectives from all sides - how and why to evaluate and then a whole list of information on national, regional and local contacts and relevant publications. It also looks at the pitfalls attached to artists in schools, budgets, fund-raising and health and safety issues.

This edition contains questionnaires for both the artist and the teacher. The first question for the artist is 'Why do you want to work in schools?' followed by a list of choices. There then follows an in depth list of questions for the artist to answer, and if answered truthfully will turn back those who would view such work as an easy option and way of making money.

From here on there are questions for the artist to ask the teachers; uncomplicated questions that are obvious when seen on paper but are all too often forgotten about when meetings take place; questions which clarify the aims and objectives of working in this way. i.e. 'Has this school worked with professional artists before?' ' If this is not their first experience of working with artists, check how the teachers experience with other artists have shaped their expectations of the project.' Simple, obvious, but one of those areas forgotten about until it's too late and the commission has been accepted.

'Are all the key players at the meeting? Are they committed to the project?' All too often you find that there are people who aren't at the meeting who are going to be your regular contacts. And if they are not committed to the project or view artists in a hostile way then you will have problems.

For the teachers some of the questions will act as reminders i.e. 'Who will take responsibility for co-ordinating the project?' I would add to this the question 'Have they agreed to this?' 'Have you found the best artist/company for the project?' It pays to shop around. There are more specific questions such as 'How might your work be a stimulus or model for work with our pupils?' and 'Why do you want to be involved with this particular project?' Questions around training and experience and how the artist will approach the work are all there to assess the artists suitability not only to the project but to the overall work of the school.

This is an easy to follow handbook that takes the reader step by step through all of the processes needed to consider and then run with artists in schools. It is easy to read and understand and offers intelligent, comprehensive advice on setting a project up and evaluating the outcomes.

Although it is written for artists in schools it could very easily be adapted for artists in youth settings, probation service, juvenile justice, health service in fact anywhere an arts project can be visualised. As a resource for both the artist and customer this is a must, if only to act as a checklist for all those

who are currently involved in this field and a reminder as to why and how the arts can compliment the existing school curriculum and work in other areas.

Danny Gilchrist, *Youth Programme Co-ordinator for Northumbria Coalition Against Crime.*

Mark Webster (Editor)
Finding Voices, Making Choices: Creativity for Social Change
Educational Heretics Press 1997
ISBN 1 900219 02 6
£9.95
pp 90

Danny Gilchrist

When community art as a movement developed over thirty years ago it did so in order to bring art to 'the people' it also wanted to promote art within the community, encourage art by the community and fight back against the controlling elite of the art world.

So how far has community art lived up to its expectations? Has it made art and culture more accessible to the populace? Has the promotion of community art countered the domination of egotistic aesthetics?

In *Finding Voices, Making Choices* I was hoping to find some answers to these questions. However, what I found was even more questions. Should I have been surprised? I suppose not, for even thirty years (a short time, historically) after the Association of Community Artists was formed, Community Art it seems, is still struggling to find a reason for existence.

This struggle is evident within *Finding Voices.* In part it is a celebration of Community Arts within Walsall since 1989, but it is also a record of the frustration and guilt of a movement which 'despite its claims to be a movement responding to the needs of its participants, it is a movement that is funding-led as much as it is needs driven.' (p.22)

In this book therefore, we find the editor and contributors locked in a debate of process over product, '...you balance the quality of the process and the quality of the product.' (p.49) and with Mark Webster arguing that the debate is more important than looking for answers (p.45)

Through focusing on the Community Arts Team in Walsall the editor sees this book as a way of explaining 'the Community Arts process through the eyes of some people who work with the Arts, to bring about positive changes in communities.' He sees the themes within the book as being 'uni-

versal' and that the writings 'highlight issues of contemporary practice that will be relevant to anyone interested in the development of Community Arts.'

There are seven chapters - the first is a brief introduction to Community Arts and the Community Arts process. The other six are each dedicated to exploring a given theme. The themes are 'Empowerment', 'Participation', 'Access', 'Quality', 'Partnership' and 'Change'. Each of these six chapters is preceded by a 'keynote' piece written by the editor and intended to introduce and explain the theme. The theme is then developed further by referring to current work.

I must say that I would have preferred to see some acknowledgement of the history of Community Art either within Britain or Walsall, in order for the reader to put into context how the movement and the theories have developed; especially when it is stated that Walsall 'contributes something new to the developing history of Community Arts' (introduction), and that the current team was 'building on a history of Community Arts provision in the Borough' (p. 5).

One of the problems with the Arts and Arts practitioners is the all too often common failure to acknowledge history and development within their field. To ignore these is to ignore that which makes a community - namely a common history and a common need for development.

It frustrates me as a practitioner to read that communities develop through a particular group, agency, department or activity. Work in communities does not happen in isolation. But all too often specialised activities, i.e. Community Arts, are held up by their practitioners as the saviour of an individual or a group. Why does this happen? Why does it seem to be happening within the pages of *Finding Voices?*

One of the reasons it happens is because of funding. As Glen Buglass puts it in Chapter Six, it is the need to chase 'The precocious Funding Fairy'. Because we are practitioners within what are termed non-essential services we are at the end of the day funding led, and must therefore justify our own existence. We must show that there is a need out there for the type of work we do. We must have the funders view us as an essential service.

But are the Community Arts an essential service? Well, *Finding Voices* argues that they are. In Walsall they see themselves as a 'development service' and that '...the Community Arts activities and methods work to change lives and to transform communities' and this service therefore '...works to foster and sustain this change.' (p.70)

However, *Finding Voices* falls into the trap of looking like a rather grand funding application. And the problem with funding applications is that you must sell your product, because you are in competition. But *Finding*

Voices is not a funding application (is it?), therefore it annoys me when I see Community Arts held up as the be-all and end-all of work within a community inside a book, by practitioners who should know better.

I have seen the benefits an Arts-based project can have within a community for both participants and audiences. But as practitioners we should beware of the emperors new clothes for haven't we seen similar benefits within a community garden project, a community business project and outdoor adventure?

The fundamental principles that provide the basis for the arts policy adopted by Walsall Council through their Community Arts Team (p.7) - *Empowerment, Participation, Access, Quality* and *Partnership* - are the same fundamental principles that when broken down will cover all community-focused services. Therefore there should be a real partnership between all services and more than just fleeting acknowledgments to the historical links with community work (p.9) and the influence of youth and community work (p.44).

So, I came to this book expecting various answers. I was disappointed but then I should have known better. I know the Arts can be powerful but then I don't need convincing. Those that are 'uninitiated' (introduction) may well need more than this to be convinced. Kate Grant and Jim Morris tie it all up nicely in Chapter Four:

> *Yes, the Arts are a powerful tool but beware of being given money for arts projects to solve magically what are very complex problems. Community Arts are in danger of being used to solve people's problems, but which people? Those of the community group? Or the funders?' (p.42)*

I would add to this - or the Community Artists?

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Nick Davies
Dark Heart, The Shocking Truth and Hidden Britain
Chatto and Windus
ISBN 0 701 16351 8
16.99 (hbk)
pp 306

Pat Ainley

Filed under 'fiction' in the large bookshop where I found it, that is where this book may unfortunately remain for many academics. Worse, as far as

they are concerned, it is written by an investigative journalist without references, bibliography, statistical tables or a single use of the word 'discourse'.

In its succession of human interest stories - following the short career of a strangled 16 year old from playground to street, finding evidence in the debris of a fatal housefire of the thousands living by candlelight disconnected from electricity they cannot afford, tracing the connections in the lives of one family between crack cocaine and gangster violence - there is no pretence at pseudo-scientific objectivity. It is unashamedly partisan.

With its quotations from Booth and Mayhew, it follows in the tradition of middle-class commentators on the conditions of the poor and as such it will be condescendingly dismissed by those who imagine that their supposed understanding of society somehow makes them not 'middle class' themselves.

Moreover, the book is politically incorrect in admitting to the epidemic of child abuse raging in many poor white communities or that 'numerous young black people... have succumbed to a life that is infested with drugs and pimping and crime' rather than joining 'well-meaning defenders of the poor [who] mask the truth about what is happening [and] insist on being positive'.

And yet, it is all here. Everything is sustained by ample evidence. A complete picture of 'the hidden country of the poor' is built up from individual witnesses, like the woman driven from her home by hooded hordes of spitting youths because she made a stand against their joy-riding and burglary. Her story is then contrasted with that of the youths themselves whose lives had been emptied of purpose to the extent that 'the nearest they have to role models are junk heroes from pulp fiction', living and acting like objects.

Beginning with the author's conversation with two twelve year-old boys selling themselves outside a public toilet in Nottingham, the book maps the wasteland of Britain today. At its dark heart are the battered council housing estates of a hundred cities but its borders encompass also the rural poor of Sussex and Gloucester, abandoned mining areas and the ports of forgotten fishing fleets.

The journey that the book takes the reader on is one that is above all well written as the best of journalism. There is no abstruse theoretical posturing, methodological apparatus or other tortuous academicisms. Expert testimony comes from outreach GPs, social and youth workers, teachers and others who know at first hand what they are talking about.

Statistical support comes from reports for local councils, civil servants, university departments of social administration, national charities, international economic surveys. Even though not listed in a formal bibliography, all can be followed up for further information.

These statistics show remarkable agreement that the end of full employment and the dismantling of the welfare state had by the late 1990s reduced nearly 14 million men, women and children, not merely to relative but to breadline poverty. Many in this country of the poor are malnourished and destitute. This absolute poverty is however relative to a carnival of conspicuous consumption in the rest of British society which has grown richer during the same period. This is 'poverty on a scale... and of a kind that has never been seen before'.

On the basis of these figures and the individual stories illustrating them, Davies advances what is also too often absent from academic texts, a simple and total explanation for the human tragedy that he describes and for the ignorance of it in the everyday life and perceptions of the majority of the population. Simply, through ending progressive taxation and selling shares in public utilities, 'the new wealth of the rich was paid for entirely by the new poverty of the poor'.

This explains also damage worse even than the maelstrom of emotional conflict and physical deprivation to which the poor are subjected. Davies calls this spiritual damage and it is symbolised by the closure of so many churches - 'as if the church weren't interested in the people any more'. For this is 'a two-way relationship. A mainstream society that is losing its humanity is willing to create a poor country... as deliberately as the great penal colony of Australia was planned and created by politicians in London nearly two centuries ago... but the destruction which sweeps through this undiscovered country then causes a new cycle of damage to the affluent'.

The new middle-working class lives in disdain and fear of the new poor 'underclass' into which accident or illness, redundancy or the lack of sufficient qualifications and connections can so easily pitch them. Thus human values are replaced by economic ones, commercialising human relations and reducing individuals to objectified commodities. So in brothels and other torture chambers which are the 'perfect symbol of exploitation', the rich directly and physically exploit the poor, 'encapsulating the truth about their relationship'

This reality is overtly endorsed by theories that are now politically mainstream and which blame the poor for their own poverty. In particular, 'Labour thinking takes no account of the damage which has been inflicted on the poor in the past twenty years'. Indeed, the government explicitly endorses Mrs Thatcher's achievements and shares the same ignorance of their consequences, not realising for instance that 'To cut the benefits of young people is like running a recruitment campaign for the nation's drug networks'.

Consequently, as Davies concludes, 'There is no crusade against poverty in Britain. No leading politician demands full employment... or insists that the wealth which was taken from the poor should now be returned. There is only the immense jabber of the powerful who are surrounded by the victims of their affluence and who yet continue to know nothing of the undiscovered country of the poor.' This book is a counterblast against that immense jabbering. As such it is a lesson to us all.

***Pat Ainley,** University of Greenwich*

John Huskins
Quality Work with Young People:
Developing Social Skills and Diversion from Risk
Youth Clubs UK 1997
£25.00 (+£4 p&p)
pp 170

Chris Trueblood

This handbook has been developed over many years from management support and training materials used in crime diversion programmes in general youth work situations. Moral panics and debates concerning social exclusion, crime prevention and community safety provide a clear background for community based services and projects to consider developing effective diversionary youth activities. This requires creating opportunities for personal growth, social skills and development training. The purpose of this book is to address society's concern about young people through a holistic approach. Huskins argues that credibility is necessary if community and youth work is to secure adequate funding to provide services in this setting. Youth work needs to operate effectively. Systematic methods and management issues are outlined in accessible sections which discuss, targeting, progression, monitoring, recording and evaluation. These are well designed, informative and should be used by practitioners to support ongoing programmes.

Overall the text demonstrates that quality youth work can and should address young people's involvement in risk behaviours. Huskins has written discussion papers on school failure, truancy, exclusion, drug misuse, sexual behaviour, depression, suicide attempts and crime. However there appears to be a lack of substantive case studies of good practice in voluntary organisations, youth projects or within community based services. Similarly there is a lack of direction in addressing issues of anti-discriminatory

practice, particularly relating to race, gender, sexuality and disability. Community involvement and partnerships are discussed which can demonstrate the vast potential for multi-agency working and community development. The handbook can be used for practice development in interventionist strategies for group-work and prevention initiatives.

Strategic advice is available here to enable youth workers and managers to become more accountable in terms of demonstrating learning outcomes and behavioural change as a result of their own practice. The real difficulty in developing innovative programmes is that they do require funding. Different sources exist, but as local authority budgets become tighter there is a need to have an understanding of the costs of planning and delivering these programmes. The section on business plans is a constructive aid to this process.

Finding training materials which are jargon free and suitable for volunteers and part time staff can be time consuming. This handbook meets these needs and should be used by teachers, informal educators, community and youth workers and those in allied professions who wish to develop their practice.

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Anders Nyman and Borje Svensson
Boys - Sexual Abuse and Treatment
Jessica Kingsley Publishers and Radda Barnen
ISBN 1 85302 491 0
£14.95 (pbk)
pp 171

Sandy Hobbs

Radda Barnen is the Sweedish branch of the organisation know in Britain as Save the Children. In 1990 it set up what appears to have been the first clinic in Sweden specifically for boys who had suffered sexual abuse One of the authors, Anders Nyman, is a psychologist, whilst the other, Borje Svensson, is a social worker and psychotherapist. Both of them have been associated with the clinic since the beginning. The book is based on their experience there, with occasional attempts to relate their work to the findings of other people who have dealt with sexually abused boys.

Before discussing the substance of the book, it is unfortunately necessary to point out that the British publishing company does not seem to have done as much as it might have to make the material, which was originally published by Radda Barnen in 1995, accessible to a wider audience. Two minor examples are immediately obvious. Neither of the titles employed 'Boys-Sexual Abuse and Treatment' (on the title page) and 'Boys Sexual Abuse and Treatment' (on the cover) has quite the correct feel in English and surely the latter should have 'Boys'' rather than 'Boys'. The references follow Swedish conventions rather than English ones. A book referred to in the text as the 'memoirs' of the boxer Bosse Hogberg, appears in a section of the references headed 'fiction'. More serious is that there are a number of clumsy sentences, for example, 'No matter how the problem is approached, problems arise'. Worst of all is when the translation leaves the meaning cloudy. Thus on page 13 we find:

> *Patrick, 14 years old. Sexually abused by adults...with this heading on a folder showing a picture of a lone boy leaning against a tree on the cover, we tried to reach out to sexually abused boys...*

Is 'folder' the right word? If so, what was in the folder? or is it perhaps the word 'leaflet' which is intended? This has been quoted out of context, but a careful examination of the context failed to help. It is easier to be sympathetic with a translator when the tricky matter of conveying slang arises. A group of boys preparing for a therapeutic meeting with a male homosexual compiled a list of questions. Some are quoted as employing terms such as 'butt-fucked', 'ass', and 'horny'. There may be sound commercial reasons for using American rather than British slang, but the reader is left wondering what the nuances of the original Swedish terms were. Perhaps only an explanatory note could handle such a question.

Putting these distractions aside, we may note that the main text of the book covers around 150 pages divided into 25 chapters varying in length from 3 to 10 pages. It is difficult to discern the authors' overall plan. After a brief preface by Lisa Hellstrom, an official of Radda Barnen, the authors in Chapter 1 plunge straight into a case study of a ten year old boy assaulted by a bogus policeman. Chapter 2 is a brief general account of the clinic's work. Chapter 3 has two further case studies with a little general discussion. The book proceeds in this seemingly haphazard manner. Some chapters are theoretical, others deals with specifics such as 'a letter from a paedeophile'. Some topics are dealt with superficially, paedeophile rings being an example. Occasionally, there are pleasant surprises. Chapter 11 turns out to be an account of the treatment of the case first met with in chapter 1 and, although, the therapy was only partially successful, it is better to be told what subsequently happened to the boy.

The authors seem more at home describing individual cases and are rather more tentative with their interpretation and analysis. Sometimes this seems justified by the facts that they give, as when they write (page 163):

> *We have not found any typical abuse syndrome or a pattern of symptoms that indicates with certainty that a child has been subjected to sexual abuse.*

On other occasions they offer telling insights:

> *Children who have close emotional relationships with the abuser and who are contemplating whether they should disclose the abuse are relieved if an adult informs them that the abuser will be able to get help for the 'disease' that makes him subject children to sexual abuse (p 166).*

However, the authors seem disinclined to offer many general conclusions. They appear to be particularly uncomfortable in dealing with the views of others who have worked in the field. Opinions and theories are quoted or summarised with little comment. This leads to disappointment for the reader. After a page and a half summarising the differences which investigators have found between boys and girls who have been sexually abused, for example, there is a one sentence comment (p 161): 'Nothing in our work with sexually abused boys refutes these hypotheses'

In English this is anti-climatic. Perhaps it sounded better in Swedish. Despite these criticisms, this book is recommended for those concerned with the area. The work the authors are doing is important. Their concern for the boys shines through on virtually every page, and the many case studies are illuminating, if inevitably also harrowing.

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John Kremer, Karen Trew and Shaun Ogle
Young People's Involvement in Sport
Routledge 1998
ISBN 0 415 16650 0
£14.99 (pbk)
pp 278

Ken McCulloch

This is a most impressive book, largely based on an extensive and sophisticated empirical study of young people in Northern Ireland. The approach is

detailed, the structure well thought out and the presentation is well up to the standard expected from a leading publisher. One might almost stop there, simply adding as an aside that the strength and beauty of the work is in the detailed and multifaceted analysis of a large and complex body of data, and the main doubts are in respect of the generalisability of findings derived from such a particular context, and the usefulness of the authors' theoretical stance in relation to some important and problematic questions about young people and sport.

The research on which the book is essentially founded was commissioned by the Sports Council for Northern Ireland and mainly took the form of an extensive survey undertaken during the early 1990s; data from this survey forms the basis for much of the argument and analysis. The various authors focus on particular aspects of the data in order to develop themes such as gender issues, or age and sport participation, or differences associated with 'community background' which is a construct used to represent the Protestant/Catholic division. In addition to the survey component, the study also undertook some qualitative investigation of the views and experiences of young élite sports people and their families, looking at perceptions of benefit, the roles of schools, of coaches and of parents.

Typical of the interesting findings reported was that related to the number of different sports young people 'taste' during their careers. The concept of 'top sport' is usefully deployed to identify both the preferred choice where one existed, and in relation to the different levels of participation. Despite the very long list of possible activities available to the young people studied, there were only eight which had been attempted by 20% or more of the sample. Popular common sense views of young people and their social world may foster the belief that participation in sport among young people is in fact much more common than this text suggests. In common with most studies in this area we find that among those surveyed there are a small proportion who participate extensively, a large mass who spend a little time each week on sport and a significant minority who do no sport at all.

These are precisely the kind of facts that this book is packed with. It is the product of a highly quantitive and positivistic approach and seemed to me to have, as a result, several key weaknesses. Firstly the style is more than a little impenetrable; the number of graphs, tables and numbers might appeal to some readers but I found it a difficult book to engage with precisely because of this, despite the very great care and attention that had clearly gone into it at all stages. Secondly, sport as a concept or as a 'social good' is treated as more or less unproblematic. It keeps you fit and healthy, therefore it is a good thing. Drop out from participation in sport is treated as a prob-

lem, rather than a problematic phenomenon. This is somewhat surprising given that the authors do supply evidence of some problematic manifestations of sport as a socio-cultural phenomenon. For example we learn on page 115 about the crucial differences in approach in Catholic and Protestant Schools; cricket, hockey or rugby on the one hand, and hurling or Gaelic football on the other serve as components of the cultural divisions central to understanding of Northern Ireland life. I make the observation not out of some kind of opposition to sport, but arising from a concern that research should do more than report the facts. Intriguingly, the technical report reveals that 'schools were not happy about the [parental] occupation question being asked of children' (p 233) and that therefore another key variance, that associated with social class and sport, could simply not be addressed. While the authors cannot entirely be blamed for this yawning gap in the research, it is surprising that the issue is not discussed at much greater length. It is possible that the Northern Ireland context would indicate social class as being a particularly important determining variable in young people's lives, particularly when overlying the matrix of religious difference; my own view is that it is almost always crucially important whatever the other contextual specifics may be.

The final and most important weakness my reading uncovered was either the result, or more likely the underpinning for the previous two. It is the lack of a serious attempt to theorise, to explain, to uncover the meaning of these involvements and activities. In an attempt to deepen my own understanding of the issues arising in the course of this review, I re-visited Jennifer Hargreaves' (1994) *Sporting Females.* This was a complete contrast both in style and content, exploring as it does the meaning and significance of sport as well as setting out some of 'the facts' about women and sport. What I would hope the editorial team for 'Young People's Involvement in Sport' might consider for the future is the possibility of a study which examines the ways in which sport and participation in sport shape and influence young people's lives and understandings of the world. By complete coincidence I found myself working with a group of young people from the north of Ireland for a week during the course of writing this review, and that encounter left me quite convinced that sport was deeply significant in many of their lives, but not only in the ways in which this book explores. It will be of very considerable interest and utility to a rather specialised readership but would not be high up the 'must-have' list for anyone outside the fields of sport psychology and sociology or physical education.

References

Jennifer Hargreaves (1994) *Sporting Females: Critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sports* London; Routledge

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REVIEWS

Stella Dadzie
Blood, Sweat and Tears
Youth Work Press 1997
ISBN 0 86155 171 0
£8.50
pp 107

Louise Winstanley

This book is a straight forward account of a good piece of youth work practice. Unfortunately we don't often see this quality of youth work in the field today which results in the project attracting the word innovative. This is an account of a three year anti-racist project funded by a Youth Work Development Grant from the NYA to do anti-racist work with young people in Bermondesy, London. The project was a detached youth work project based at Bede House. It is a practical rather than theoretical account. It intertwines actual situations recorded by the workers making it easy and interesting reading.

The book sets out to be a practical resource, and contains a range of information from safety guidelines developed for the detached workers to contracts signed by the young people.

The political climate today of short term funding often works against this kind of project. This is because attitude changing takes time. Here we have a clear description of the way workers built relationships, being creative in thinking about meeting and talking with young people particularly the girls.

This book shows the capacity of young people for change. However, it is not without its disappointments and struggles. It reminds us again that youth workers need a tremendous capacity for disappointment. This the workers certainly had, but alongside it they had a commitment to carry on and work with the situation.

An additional problem in today's climate, in doing anti-racist work, is the pressure to *be seen to* challenge. The project outlines some of the creative approaches used by the youth workers to promote thinking and challenge attitudes in an exploratory rather than confrontational way. I liked the example of taking the group to France and the difficulties in customs when one lad had no passport 'he was quite blasé about it... believing that anyone could get into Britain, that they didn't need papers and that they just swan into the country with no hassles or controls' this experiential learning was one of the methods that proved to be effective in getting the young people to question the basis of their beliefs.

Another method used was to listen to the young people, a definitely under rated quality in youth work today. This enabled the young people to explore their attitudes, the workers then asked appropriate questions to further this exploration. The workers were able to bring the factual information and drew on the historical Irish background of some of the young people. This enabled them to make connections between the Irish reception and the reception that black people receive in Britain today, in an effort to get them to empathise.

They found the young people moving from 'provocative statements designed to entertain...or negate the worker's view...to...genuine questions'. The book gives an account of the responses of various individuals and how they started to challenge the racist attitudes of their peers.

The team often targeted the leaders in the various groups seeking also to influence the young people through their peers. Various accounts in this book show the commitment of the workers and their concern for the people they worked with. I have no doubt this was also picked up by the young people.

The project placed particular importance on having youth workers and instructors who are black. The racist views the young people held were challenged through the interactions they had with black and minority workers. There are some issues the book touches on but fails to explore in any detail. One of which was the impact of this work on black workers.

Another area of work hinted at and not developed in this book was that of work with the community. Working in tandem with the community, using a community development approach, as well as with the young people, would have been innovative. It was disappointed not to see this area developed further. There are hints at the beginning and end of the project of local involvement. To what degree is unclear. It mentions local involvement in the steering committee. However, in looking at the make up of the committee I could only see one or two members who appeared to be local people, the rest were a variety of professionals.

There is a sad indictment of our society and political system that pieces of work that are as effective as this have to struggle to get further funding. The climate of wanting to fund new pieces of work rather than support existing work that has a proven track record, is one that makes long term work particularly difficult. It took this project a year to establish itself in the area, they had to build the relationships needed. A question I would like to ask funders is why waste a year funding a new project, when there are good pieces of work in need of contunied funding.

This is a book for a wide range of readers, it is clearly aimed at people involved in anti-racist work. However, it would be particularly useful to use in training for new workers and as an encouragement to those of us who have been in this field for a while.

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Tracey Skelton & Gill Valentine (eds)
Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures
Routledge 1998
ISBN 0 415 14921 5
pp 383

Gill Millar

> *A culture includes the 'map of meaning' which makes things intelligible to its members. These 'maps of meaning' are not simply carried around in the head: they are objectified in the patterns of social organisation and relationship through which the individual becomes a 'social individual'.*
>
> *(Clarke et al 1976, quoted in Skelton and Valentine 1998)*

This book takes a geographical perspective on the diversity of young people's lives, using the theme of youth cultures to place 'youth' on the geographical map. Much of the book is devoted to an exploration of case studies of elements of young people's lives from a wide range of geographical settings, taking in Europe, America, Asia and Africa. Skelton and Valentine provide a helpful introduction that examines some of the ways in which youth is defined, often in terms of 'trouble', but sometimes in terms of 'fun'. They note that the concept of youth tends to be relative and ambiguous, defined by others, rather than by young people themselves. Importantly, they recognise that youth must be understood in relation to other identities such as race or gender, and this is emphasised through many of the case studies in subsequent chapters.

The geographical perspective of the book is expounded through the structure Skelton and Valentine adopt, dividing the book into four parts exploring in turn *representations of youth,* in particular the ways in which the media have contributed to the redefinition of youth; *matters of scale,* looking at relationships across geographical boundaries; *place,*

exploring young people's experience of different everyday locations; and *sites of resistance,* examining ways in which young people have resisted other people's definitions and renegotiated urban and rural spaces.

Coming to the book from a youth worker perspective, I found the range of cultures explored in the book very useful. In particular Claire Dwyer's chapter on young British Muslim women, which looks at the construction of new and diverse identities for young women as active agents rather than passive objects of identities construed by others, was made more real by drawing directly on young women's own voices and experiences. In the same section of the book, David Parker's chapter on British Chinese identities explores the influence of Hong Kong media on young Chinese in Britain and gave and insight into a group who are largely absent from mainstream youth provision.

In the section on *matters of scale,* Doreen Massey's contribution on the spatial construction of youth cultures draws on examples from Britain, Mexico and elsewhere to show global, national and regional interconnections and differences between youth cultures in very different locations. Cindi Katz, in 'Disintegrating Developments' argues that global economic restructuring has had adverse effects on young people in rural Sudan and in Harlem New York, but sees the growth of community based self help initiatives in both areas as a positive source of resistance to global trends. Luke Desforges' chapter on young people from western nations travelling to less developed countries suggest that the travellers see their 'trips' as a form of personal development, in which they collect 'cultural capital' through having been to exotic places as an independent traveller. In doing this, he shows that they make 'others' of the residents of the countries they visit, doing little to contribute to a sharing of cultures or wealth.

The section on *place* explores sites used for the development of youth cultures. Sara MacNamee's chapter on the home investigates the extent to which the growth in popularity amongst young men of computer games is making the home, once the domain of young women, a contested space as siblings argue for use of space and resources there. Shane J Blackman's chapter on the school provides an ethnographic study of a group of girls and the forms of resistance their culture takes. In 'The Club', Ben Malbon examines clubbing as a 'separate' youth culture, creating its own space which is not shared with other elements of the dominant culture. He suggests that it is possible to view 'clubbing' as a post-modern form of tribalism.

The final section on *resistance* aims to show that rather than accept dominant cultural norms, young people find a range of ways in which to resist them. Fiona M Smith shows how youth cultures in East Germany have been sites of resistance, both before and after reunification, drawing on

examples where young people have worked together to develop new ways of living and working collaboratively. M M Breitbart's chapter draws on three American youth work and youth art projects which have contributed to young people's redefinition of the urban spaces they inhabit, while Kevin Hetherington's discussion of New Age Travellers explores conflicting utopian views of the countryside, contrasting the traveller's views of the countryside as common ground for all to use with the views of a static, rustic paradise held by many country residents. The resistance here, he argues, is through movement challenging notions of 'place'.

Overall, the book makes a valuable contribution to the literature on young people, taking the discussion of youth cultures in new directions and recognising the diversity of young people's lives at the end of the twentieth century. The layout (including maps and photographs), helps to make it accessible to a wider audience including students, youth workers and perhaps young people themselves. It is possible to dip into the book, as the chapters all can stand alone, and gain access to some up-to-date and analytical explorations of young people's lives.

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Sue Roffey, Tony Tarrant and Karen Majors
Young Friends: Schools and Friendship
Cassell
ISBN 0 304 32989 4
pp 185

Don Blackburn

This book addresses a rather underdeveloped area - friendship among young people. It is built around psychological research into the nature of friendship and the way in which it develops , particularly in the context of schooling. The consequences is a set of arguments and ideas which are both rooted in research findings and also provide a useful set of proposals for those who are working with children and young people with the aim of enhancing and supporting the development of friendship.

The book is founded on an examination of the meaning of friendship to children themselves. It is also refreshingly free of that rhetoric about the 'need for consensus' and 'togetherness' which is particularly expressed in the nauseating banalities of New Labour rhetoric. The book explicitly

argues for a recognition of regarding friendship as the foundation of critical relationships. The emphasis is placed on examining the importance of friendship to the development of discriminating reflection rather than prescribing activities and ideas which emphasise conformity and harmony.

Friendship is also seen as offering a counter to the family, providing alternatives and positive support when this is lacking in the family, but also providing a more critical form of feedback where the family may be overprotective or overindulgent. The authors argues that friends 'provide a better framework and reference point for a social reality than adults' (page 2). The book also makes a key point that these alternative perspectives from friends are crucial to the development of objectivity and the ability to see things from different perspectives, together with the promotion of understanding in all areas of knowledge.

It is also the case that schools are places which often operate to undermine self esteem or ignore racism, bullying or other destructive behaviour. It is in these cases that friendships play a vital role in offering support and help to young people. Clearly where friendships are not possible, or where they have not developed, the negative effects of the institutions are much worse

Another point that is well made is about the nature of the relationships between young people in their teenage years. The authors point to the fact that the quality of young people's friendship is often of a high order and provides support and help where institutions and organisations fail. This is a point well made, there is a contemporary tendency to demean young people's friendships - for example through the concept of 'peer group pressure' which has become something of a demonising phrase in attempting to explain the responses of young people to various social institutions. For example it is constantly used in a negative way to attempt to explain the 'failure' of young people in the education system. As such it offers another nice diversion from paying proper attention to the quality of young people's experience in schools or examining properly the abysmal level of resourcing in the state school system. It sits easily alongside those other well used excuses - which blame parents and carers for 'lacking interest' in the school system.

A welcome theme throughout the book is the emphasis on the social nature of the school experience, and the way in which this can be built upon and developed through processes such as group work in classrooms and the support for the development of a sense of social responsibility among young people. However it is difficult to see how they can be facilitated in many classrooms with the escalating emphasis on 'whole class teaching' and the detail of classroom syllabuses and processes being increasingly imposed from central government.

In many ways the book says little that is startling or new - at least to those who have retained some commitment to the needs of children and young people. However what it does have to say is worth restating frequently. The thrust of the book is unlikely to appeal to the present group of training aparachniks in the DfEE and OFSTED who appear obsessed with work, discipline, obedience, conformity, order, instrumentality and so forth. The personal developmental needs of children and young people are the last things that appear on the agenda. One suspects that the book would be mined by Blunkett and company for possible ideas about how to increase the efficiency of the classroom or increase the degree of adult control over children and young people. They would be less interested in those parts of the book which seek to support the development of autonomy, independence of mind and confidence. Fortunately they would be disappointed in their quest, and it is precisely for that reason that the book ought to be read.

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Hazel Kemshall and Jacki Pritchard (Eds)
Good Practice in Risk Assessment and Risk Management 2
Jessica Kingsley Publishers
ISBN 1 85302 441 4
pp 327

Di Barnes

This reader in the 'Good Practice' series edited by Pritchard is the second volume on risk assessment and risk management. It follows the same pattern as volume 1, in bringing together developments from practice and academic research, but while the first collection published in 1994, covered the practical implications of carrying out risk work in a range of social work and probation settings, volume 2 concentrates on the principal dilemmas currently facing staff and managers in risk decision making.

At a time when the public perception of risk is bound up with the notion of harm and dangerousness, the practitioners are having to answer the call for greater accountability and public scrutiny and yet retain a user focus in their work. They are having to balance the duty of care with the user's right to choose - the right to protection with the right to take risks. They are having to prioritise the often conflicting rights of neighbours, carers, workers and users, or to consider the rights of parents and the wishes of workers against the protection of the child. Solutions cannot always be found in the legislation as much of it is open wide interpretation which is leading to serious inconsistencies in implementation but can lessons be learnt from

REVIEWS

emerging practice? Are skills and practice transferable across different settings and care groups?

This book addresses these questions exploring issues of protection, rights and responsibilities in settings as diverse as children's homes, street level addiction projects, mental health homeless hotels and prisons. It considers users of all ages, looking at traditional social work functions such as fostering and adoption, residential care services for older people and the support of long-term mentally ill as well as newer areas of practice such as domestic violence. It also investigates risk in probation settings where users are compelled to use the service such as in prison, and on parole, and where policy forces priority to be given to the rights of the public and the victim rather than the offender.

Attention is drawn to the striking and perhaps shocking fact that many of these settings carry with them an inherent risk for the service user, whether the user is a child in a children's home or foster care, an older person entering a residential care home, a mental health service user or a prisoner, they are put at risk simply by entering the service. The risk may be of loss, abuse or harm, but whatever its nature, it should be assessed, recognised and managed.

The range of settings discussed is both a strength and weakness of the book. It is a strength because clear themes emerge across practice. In all settings risk assessment means working with inadequate information. It is described as 'predicting the future' or 'doing detective work'. In building up the picture, use should be made of the growing body of knowledge to be found in theory, research findings and tools such as indicators of risk, notions of risk, pathways to suicide. Lessons should also be learnt from homicide and abuse enquiries.

Good preparation is essential when approaching a risk assessment. Many of the papers present a checklist of questions which should be considered in advance and it is stressed that sometimes it might be necessary to ask the 'unaskable' to gain an understanding of the risks posed by, or experience by, a user. The individuality of risk is also emphasised as it will be percieved differently by every user. Understanding these differences can be helped by the assessor going to the user and seeing them on their own patch, in the environment in which the risks are reality. This can help comprehension of the gains and losses which risk management impose. Preoccupation with the negative aspects of risk, and the fear of negative outcomes, can mask the positive role risk can play in ensuring quality of life, opportunities for learning and personal development.

Another common theme is the management of risk to staff. Interestingly, this is discussed in all the contributions, while the risk from staff is mentioned in only a few. Good practice requires adequate training with appropriate resources and time made available to ensure this takes place. Stress is also put on team work, a multi-disciplinary approach and co-working. Robust arrangements should be made to give staff support when things inevitably go wrong.

The weakness of this collection is that the range of settings discussed is so diverse that readers are unlikely to be interested in more than a few of the contributions. The topics covered cut across the specialisms which now divide social work and probation services, and extend beyond the usual boundaries of generic work. Also, there is a certain amount of repetition as many of the papers are structured around the assessment and risk management process with similarities in approach and practice.

Despite that, the book is very accessible. It has a very comprehensive introduction by the editors, the papers are very readable with useful case studies, exercises, checklists and scenarios, it is an easy book to navigate around and has a good index. Essentially it is of relevance to practitioners and would be practitioners but it will also be of value to managers of risk work, helping them compare the work they undertake with other practice in the field, and to make the links between theory, research findings and lessons from experience.

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