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MENTORING:
Pitfalls and Potential for Young People?

KATE PHILIP

This paper examines the potential of mentoring as a form of intervention with young people. Mentoring has become a popular form of intervention with youth in both North America and in the UK, across the spectrum of public and private sectors and with politicians, policy makers and practitioners. It is proposed that this interest reflects current fears about and for youth who are making their transitions to adulthood within a context of risk and uncertainty. Planned mentoring is better established within the North American context and has provided a template for many UK interventions: this history is briefly explored in order to outline current issues in defining and implementing mentoring programmes. Distinctions are drawn between natural and planned mentoring and it is argued that existing mentoring frameworks rely on an uncritical reading of the Homeric myth and on developmental paradigms which rely on a 'deficit' model of young people and which are also highly gendered. The article concludes that a need exists for a theoretical framework which can take account of the changing context of youth and which can accommodate the perspectives of young people themselves as active agents.

Youth in Context and the Climate for Mentoring

It is generally accepted that the experience of youth in western societies has changed dramatically in several important respects in recent years (Coles, 1995; Roche and Tucker, 1997). A generalised context of uncertainty is reflected in public and private perceptions of childhood and youth (Archard, 1993; James and Jencks 1996; Lumley, 1998). Young people are simultaneously portrayed as in need of protection and shelter from the dangers and risks inherent in complex societies but also as potentially threatening both their own futures and the very fabric of society by their reckless behaviours. Arguably, such ambivalence is reflected in many of the new government policies towards youth, in which concern for and fears about youth can both be discerned. On the one hand there is an imperative to encourage 'active citizenship' and to encourage fuller participation in democratic structures; on the other fears about the growth of a youth underclass with little stake in the future have led to the introduction of measures designed to remove unsupervised teenagers from the streets (Crime and Disorder Bill, 1998; MacDonald, 1997). The UK, a signatory to the Convention of the Rights of the Child, has been criticised for its grudging and belated compliance with key aspects of the Convention (Smith, 1998).

Within the UK, there have been considerable shifts in policies directed at young people and their families over the last two decades. Restricted entitlement to public housing for 16-17 year olds, (Jones, 1995); the collapse of the youth labour market and shift to youth training (Bates and Riseborough, 1993), the rise in exclusions from schools (Parsons, 1999) and reduced access to state benefits have all radically altered the prospects for independent living for many young people. Taken together these add up to a loss of citizenship and an 'infantilising' of youth, as the period of dependence on the family has become protracted (Jones and Wallace, 1992; Brannen et al, 1994; Coles, 1995). Clearly some groups are especially vulnerable in the light of such social changes: for example, young black males are more likely than their white peers to be permanently excluded from school, to experience racial harassment and to be apprehended by the police. Having been in the care of the local authority is a strong predictor of youth homelessness and other risks and of poor health in later life. The concept of social exclusion, although in danger of becoming a catch-all term, has been used to describe how such inequalities overlap and reinforce each other (Disaffected Children, 1998).

Much recent research suggests that the 'single pathway' to adulthood if it ever existed, is no longer adequate to explain the multiplicity of choices and risks faced in becoming a citizen in such a changing context (Griffin, 1993; Phoenix, 1997). Studies have also shown that adulthood itself is increasingly problematic with some transitions conveying more status than others (Wyn and White, 1998). The theoretical work of Beck (1992) and Giddens (1990) has raised important questions about the adequacy of traditional sources of support within this context of risk: if individuals are free to construct their own biographies, how legitimate are the claims of adults to be able to guide young people in situations remote from their own experience? Giddens (ibid), has suggested that this fluidity can provide an opportunity to reshape patterns of relationships between adults and young people. The blurring of distinctions between childhood and adulthood, the changing patterns of family organisation and structure all suggest that new opportunities exist for supportive relationships between and within generations. Better understanding is required about how different groups of young people construct their social biographies within this context, and how they develop strategies for dealing with the 'risk' society.

Within this context the potential for relationships with adults to support young people in making sense of such change and in negotiating their way to adulthood may be at the same time highly significant and highly problematic. The social networks of young people in general have only recently been viewed as worthy of study in their own right (Gottlieb, 1991). The institutions traditionally charged with socialising young people have become fragmented themselves or may not be as

supportive as previously assumed: for some young people, family support is not available and many young people who go into the care of the local authority frequently go on to experience homelessness, poor physical and mental health and to have difficulties with schooling. There is also increasing evidence that the nuclear family is only one of a range of forms of family organisation (Dimmock, 1997) and that the notion of the 'normal' family conceals complex patterns of social organisation which may be different within varying cultural contexts (Griffin, 1993). For young people from ethnic minorities, the experience of racism from an early age can compound other forms of exclusion (Rogers, 1999). The requirement for better understanding of what forms of public and private support enable transitions to active citizenship has therefore become pressing (Coles, 1995).

Current research about such relationships derives largely from the field of developmental psychology. Consistently studies based on this paradigm have found that young people perceive family members and peers to be the most significant individuals in their lives although youth workers also figured importantly (Hamilton, 1991; Hendry et al, 1992; Quinn, 1995). However findings also suggest that the seeking out of adult support can pose risks for young people (Gottlieb and Sylvestre, 1994). Work on resilience has similarly pointed to the ways in which young people who survive adverse circumstances are more likely to have a consistent long term relationship with one adult (Werner, 1990; Rutter, 1987; 1995). Rutter (1995) has described this as a form of 'steeling mechanism' enabling certain young people to resist misfortune and to make a successful transition to adulthood. Such findings have also prompted further examination of the role of non-parental adults in mentoring young people, particularly those deemed to be 'vulnerable' or 'at risk'. However much of this work is limited in analysing youth in any contextualised way since developmental models take little account of the social settings and networks within which young people are growing up. The emphasis has also been on young people as a problem, such that, for example, the focus on young women defined as 'at risk' is frequently related to teenage pregnancy, and rarely on sexual abuse.

As a result young people are portrayed in highly individualistic terms and as members of a homogeneous group undifferentiated by class, race or gender. Relatively little attention has been paid to eliciting the perspectives of young people themselves as active participants within their social contexts although acknowledgement has been made of the need for more sophisticated approaches to eliciting and analysing these perspectives within other strands of youth research (Alanen, 1995; Shucksmith and Hendry, 1998). Within feminist studies and more recently work on the construction of masculine identities, attention has been paid to engendering 'voice' and in helping young people to reflect on and to analyse their situation (Brown and Gilligan, 1992; Mac an Ghaill, 1994).

The popularity of mentoring

Mentoring in general has become a highly popular concept across a range of fields and disciplines in recent years - within higher education, nursing, business, teaching there are growing literatures and protocols. The development of the European Mentoring Centre and the National Mentoring Network to promote mentoring practice and its incorporation into public and private policy; the organisation of national conferences across the UK; the development of online services and the inception of mentoring journals all indicate a high public profile.

In work with young people, there has been a rapid increase in the number of mentoring programmes in the U.K and this has been strongly supported by the current government (Boateng, 1998). Recently mentoring schemes have multiplied within criminal justice, education, training and employment settings against a backcloth of central government concern about the impact of social exclusion on young people and the implications of this for the stability of the wider society (DfEE, 1999). Support for youth mentoring unites many groups which traditionally have held different perspectives or eschew interest in youth: politicians, policy makers and private sector interests as well as professionals engaged in work with young people have sponsored mentoring interventions. In many ways mentoring lends itself to the current vogue for partnership approaches in that it brings together a wide range of expertise and experience and accords the needs of young people a higher profile. Whether the different sets of values held by the partners are debated or subsumed under a consensus approach will have serious implications for future work with young people. The high visibility of mentoring also attracts more critical scrutiny than other forms of intervention and demonstrates a clear need for rigorous and thoughtful evaluation of the concept as a whole. Within a context dominated by pressure to show 'quick fixes' and fast returns, there is an added urgency for a more critical assessment of the ideas underpinning mentoring. Consequently, the need for a sound theoretical base, some consensus over definition and clarity of appropriate methods, process and outcomes are pressing (Rhodes, 1994; Philip 1999).

What is mentoring?

Many accounts of mentoring are based on a reading of Homer's account of the Greek myth about Odysseus. Odysseus entrusted his son, Telemachos, to the care of his old friend Mentor to guide the boy in the ways of the world and to pass on his knowledge and experience: the relationship is characterised by mutual admiration and an appreciation of the heroic qualities possessed by both and the absent father. The role of the mother is not explored but the underlying theme is that she, as a single parent, would be unable to induct him into the subtleties of the world of adult men, which remain available only to the 'old heads' (Bly, 1990). Similarly,

the nurse Euricleia is mentioned but her advice and support is dismissed as being confined to basic issues rather than to the important concerns of becoming a man. The perceived inadequacy of women to foster 'manly qualities' is reiterated in modern reworkings of such myths by Levinson et al (1978) and Bly (1990) which have exerted a strong influence over mentoring literatures (see for example, Rhodes et al, 1992; Bennetts, 1999).

That Mentor was really the goddess, Athene, in disguise only occasionally rates a mention in accounts of the myth, although Colley (1999) has recently explored a challenging alternative explanation. Close reading of Homer's tale raises key questions about the gender and culture blind nature of traditional mentoring. Firstly, the qualities of support and challenge, of constancy, loyalty and nurturing which are strongly prized in mentoring are often stereotypically attributed to women. Do mentoring relationships permit men to take on these qualities without threatening their identities as men? Within the literature on resilience, mentees who challenged stereotypical sex boundaries were defined as successful: thus girls who were described as 'challenging', 'outgoing' and 'adventurous' and boys who were prepared to be 'emotional' and 'sensitive' were most likely to be described as resilient by the adults in their lives (Werner, 1990).

Secondly a growing body of research has shown how expressing emotion poses considerable risks for young men in developing and sustaining a masculine identity. For example, Seidler (1991) has concluded that men are expected to appear in control and to conceal any emotional feelings within the public sphere. Boys are likely to be penalised for expressing feelings described as 'feminine'. The implications for male reputations of such emotional disclosure have been well documented (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Wight,1992; Holland et al, 1993). However much of the literature on mentoring does not problematise gender but rather uncritically stresses the importance of a male role model, especially for those young men brought up by single parents. The assumption that women-centred environments are likely to arrest appropriate male development is often simply left as a common sense statement. Bly (1990) in particular has stressed the need for this and yet it appears that resilient young men are those most able to articulate their emotional needs and abilities.

Finally most of the available evidence shows that despite the search for male mentors, the majority of mentors in both natural and planned mentoring programmes are female. Since mentoring projects are vocal in their claims for success, there is some contradiction in their emphasis on the need for specifically male mentor figures. This gender specific approach to mentoring has been challenged by the work of Gilligan but it retains a powerful hold. The assumption that young men require

male role models has almost become a mantra within rationales for mentoring interventions. It is also the case that, being the child of a single parent is usually cited as, of itself, a demonstration of the need for a mentor (Smink, 1990; Wright, 1992; Benioff, 1997).

This suggests a need to explore the myth of Odysseus in more depth and to look at alternative historical examples of mentoring drawn from other traditions such as women healers and 'other mothers' (Collins, 1990; Philip, 1997).

Natural mentoring

Natural or informal mentoring takes place within a range of settings and may hold valuable clues for sustainable programmes that can engage effectively with the realities of disengaged youth within their own neighbourhoods or settings. The work of Rhodes and colleagues (Rhodes et al, 1992; Rhodes et al, 1994) in the USA has indicated, for example, that support given to natural mentoring networks and processes may in itself help those from disadvantaged and disengaged groups to reflect on their situation and to tackle challenges facing them. Rhodes et al (ibid) found that natural mentors identified by very young ethnic minority group mothers helped to protect them from depression and to support them in dealing with difficulties that they experienced with relationships within their existing social networks. The majority of these mentors were older women who had been known to the young mothers for a considerable time. Rhodes has pointed to the tradition of 'other mothers' within African American families as significant. These women were frequently close to the family but removed enough to be able to act as a confidential source of support and guidance to young women, particularly in relation to sensitive matters such as sexual activity, which were risky to raise with parents. Within the two samples, African American mothers were more likely to choose relatives whereas Latino mothers chose older friends or mothers of boyfriends. This suggests a need to examine mentoring in the context of different cultural and social patterns. Philip and Hendry's work (Philip and Hendry, 1996; Philip 1999) suggests that mentoring may take place within a range of relationships, assuming importance at times of crisis or developing as the relationship matures.

Philip (1997) found in a study of natural mentoring, that young people identified mentoring as taking place within a range of relationships and settings. The notion of a single form of mentoring was contested: in the changing social, political and economic climate, a variety of forms could be discerned and these in turn supported a diversity of social strategies on the part of young people. Thus 'classic' mentoring was most likely to appeal to young men. Team mentoring, where more than one adult or more experienced young people were identified, frequently related to a group of friends or a small youth group. Central to this relationship

was the recognition and acceptance of the group's identity and the existing friendship network. It also applied to young people who were being inducted into illicit activities such as buying or using drugs, where the advice and information from 'old hands' was treated with respect. Friend to friend mentoring was most evident with young women in relation to difficult situations. Close friends, sometimes of the same age played an important role in offering advice and counselling. This went beyond moral support, embodying elements of challenge. Such relationships were defined as reciprocal and highly intimate. Within such relationships, professional or adult advice might be an outcome of the discussions. A characteristic feature of this model was mutual reciprocity with a rough equality of power between the partners and a shared, sometimes implicit understanding that involvement should be carefully planned and negotiated. Peer group mentoring was most evident within groups in relation to 'disapproved of' activity and often acted as a forum for exploring strategies for dealing with authority. Issues about managing acceptable identities were key concerns. Long term relationships were similar to classic mentors where the mentor was more akin to the 'other mother' referred to above. What was different was that the mentor was viewed as deriving as much from the relationship as the mentee. Frequently too the mentors were individuals who had themselves been involved in risky situations and who were prepared to disclose and discuss this with the young person. In this way rules and boundaries were frequently open to renegotiation by both parties.

In Philip's (ibid) study, several key elements were identified by young people as important : these were that the mentoring relationship represented a safe setting in which to explore issues, such that confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed. The establishment of trust was a theme revisited both in discussions with the researcher as a recurring issue subject to recurring negotiation; the element of control was important in that the content and scope of the mentoring was part of a shared agenda. In a similar vein, the belief that the processes of mentoring were reciprocal and that both mentors and mentees benefited was important. In this respect, some professional relationships were identified as mentoring but this was when the relationship went beyond professional boundaries in the eyes of the young person.

Clearly powerful challenges exist in translating natural mentoring into artificial or planned programmes. The perspectives of young people may hold the key to implementing programmes which reach out to young people and which engage with the realities that they face.

Planned mentoring

In relation to work with young people, planned mentoring programmes attempt to replicate such 'natural' or 'informal' mentoring by sensitively matching an individ-

ual adult to act as a guide, teacher, role model, friend, counsellor or a mixture of all of these (Freedman, 1993; Hamilton and Darling, 1989). Thus, mentoring interventions aim to 'manipulate' existing social relationships by introducing a relationship with an unrelated adult into the social world of the young person. This is based on the assumption that the presence of an adult 'mentor' can be valuable in helping young people through the processes of transition (Freedman, 1993; Gottlieb and Sylvestre, 1994). It will be seen from the following brief overview that there are mismatches between how young people have described natural mentoring processes and the development of planned interventions.

Mentoring has been described as a way of helping to ease transitions from childhood to adult status by providing developmental support and challenge from an experienced guide (Werner and Smith, 1982; Hamilton, 1991; Freedman, 1995). In relation to vulnerable young people, the introduction of a mentor is described as a means of compensating for perceived inadequacies in the family, parenting, social networks and education of the young person (Rhodes et al, 1992; Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Planned mentoring in the North American context

Freedman (1993) traces current interest in mentoring back to the 'friendly visiting' schemes of the late 19th century, a period when social unrest had led to powerful class tensions. According to Freedman, the stated aims of 'friendly visiting' were to provide moral guidance, rather than money or relief, in the belief that the latter would merely reinforce the dependency of the poor. Through the establishment of a personal relationship between the genteel visitor and the individual or family living in poverty, it was hoped to educate young people into adopting explicitly middle class forms of activity and aspirations. This explicitly social engineering agenda was undertaken by middle class women volunteers who were recruited to provide an example of middle class styles of behaviour and values. Children were specific targets of such interventions in the belief that they could be 'saved' from falling into the ways of their parents. Clearly the potential mentees were expected to become passive recipients of this 'rescue' process, adapting their beliefs and behaviour in the light of the 'friendly guidance' which it was hoped would offset the 'bad influences' of the street and peers. In this way women were invited to take 'private' issues into the public arena. Unsurprisingly the poor remained unmoved by these attempts, largely preferring to turn to family and friends for advice (Freedman, 1993:27). The movement encountered considerable difficulty in recruiting volunteers and gradually withered away as professional social work was introduced.

The irony of sending such an 'army' of middle class women, whose own children were cared for by a battery of servants, to minister to the 'moral welfare' of chil-

dren of poor families cannot be passed over lightly. The belief on the one hand that middle class women were incapable of work outside the home seems at odds with such a potentially dangerous mission. It could be interpreted as a strategy for women to be 'set up' against each other within a structure in which both classes of women and children were viewed as a form of property. The efforts of American women to secure the vote and to have the right to earn their own living was also gathering pace in the teeth of some fierce resistance. Viewed in this context, friendly visiting was a stern reminder to middle class women of the difficulties that would befall them if they lost their status as good wives. On the other hand working class women were shown as personally responsible in failing their children by not providing them with the social or economic capital to make their way in the world. Clearly parallels can be drawn between this and the second wave of mentoring in the USA.

The spectacular rise in the popularity of mentoring in the USA during the seventies and eighties has been well documented (Flaxman et al, 1988; Freedman, 1993). As with the first wave, the appeal of the concept cannot be divorced from the wider social and political climate and the dominant discourses of monetary economics. Disillusionment with macro measures to combat poverty led a move away from grand plans embodied by the American War on Poverty to a quest for smaller scale interventions and a shift of responsibility for social welfare from the state to individuals and families. At the same time, demographic and social changes provoked renewed debates about appropriate models for the rearing of young people.

Freedman (1993) reports on Dorothy Gilliam's dramatic call to arms to challenge the 'power of the drug dealers' who she claimed had become the mentors for inner city youth in the USA in 1989. She saw middle class adult volunteers as having the resources to offer such an alternative particularly for young black males growing up in the inner city. Hamilton (1991) summarises the context as follows:

> *the loss of the opportunity to form close and enduring attachments with unrelated adults combined with frightening levels of problem behaviour among youth...make a compelling case for mentoring, particularly in view of the research on resilient children indicating an association between having a mentor and avoiding these threats to healthy development. (Hamilton, 1991:2).*

Mentoring was viewed as offering the potential to tackle some of the massive problems facing inner city youth through a personalised approach which brought successful adults into contact with vulnerable young people. Gambone (1993) in reviewing interventions for at-risk youth states,

> *The presence of a caring relationship with an adult is often what distinguishes youth who surmount the barriers associated with maturing in impoverished environments from those who do not. Many of these youth are in need of what amounts to 'reparenting'*
> *(p 46).*

In some cases this led to what Freedman (ibid) has described as a 'fervour' without infrastructure by which mentoring was seen as capable of redressing all the ills of society.

> *Mentoring is a strategy for teaching and coaching, for strengthening character, improving social harmony, promoting social change, assuring quality education for all, and creating opportunities for personal empowerment (White-Hood, 1993:78).*

A number of programmes targeted pregnant teenagers and very young mothers but the overwhelming emphasis has been young men. Such projects provided an opportunity for young people to develop caring relationships with adults outside the confines of the family (Higgins et al, 1991). Under this umbrella, interventions aimed to match adult mentors with young people living in single parent families, minority youth, truants, street children.

> *Mentors for adolescents must help compensate for inadequate or dysfunctional socialisation or give psychological support for new attitudes and behaviours, at the same time as they create opportunities to move successfully in new arenas for education, work and social life. In fact mentoring can be said to include both psycho social and instrumental aspects. (Flaxman et al, 1988:2)*

A further appeal was that it appeared to be a relatively inexpensive option and one which could attract the support of business in ways that less glamourous youth work interventions had signally failed. For example, the *I Had a Dream Foundation* combined sponsorship of college fees for disadvantaged youth with a mentoring element. Set up by a millionaire, it is run as a private foundation and has expanded on a franchise basis, to work across the USA, seeking funding from the private sector.

Mentoring within these frameworks hinges on the notion that the person being mentored is lacking in some way: either they need development, or they have been inadequately socialised, they lack self-esteem, they have no acceptable role models or are reliant on peers to guide them. From this it is difficult to see where young peoples' own perspectives become salient, how existing social networks interact with mentoring interventions or the place of community based mentoring.

Many mentoring programmes are highly individualistic: this emphasis on private relationships is at odds with the premise that mentoring interventions have the potential to combat the problems of isolation which young people face in making the transition to adulthood. The contradiction is explained by the view that the aim is frequently to help the young person to 'move up and out' of adverse settings and neighbourhoods, rather than look for support within it. In this way community relationships may be set against achievement of personal success. Some commentators are explicit about this social leverage element of mentoring programmes,

> *Mentoring can be a tour of middle class life for a young student who wishes to rise above the temporary inequalities of childhood and see into other lives and greater opportunities*
> *(O'Hare, 1995:1)*

For the *National Drop Out Prevention Centre*, mentoring provided a link between business and education, improving the chances of young people within a competitive labour market,

> *When mentors come from the business world, a valuable link is forged with the often isolated educational community. Schools and businesses can work together toward common goals, such as developing basic skills and instituting local workforce-oriented training. As more young people emerge from high school with the skills they need to get and keep jobs - strong work ethics, solid basic skills, and attitudes attractive to potential employers, society's costs are lowered*
> *(Smink, 1990:4).*

Five key principles are evident in rationales for mentoring programmes:

- *young people are 'at risk' due to their age, lack of experience and stage of development*
- *young people have less access to 'appropriate' relationships with adults than previously*
- *this is a result of changing family structure, particularly the role of women and the rise of female headed single parent families, the break down of community, changing working practices*
- *It is particularly important for young men to have adult mentors since they may pose a threat to themselves or to the wider society through their risk taking behaviours and 'peer pressures'*
- *schools no longer fulfil the needs of young people and these are not met elsewhere because of wider societal changes*

- *these problems are exacerbated by poverty and young people are the 'innocent victims' but they may become a disruptive force.*

Flaxman et al, (1988) sum up this perspective:

> *For disadvantaged and at-risk youth who are victim to the deleterious influences of street life, this isolation {from adults} is particularly devastating: many of them avoid or drop out of society. Further, the schools which may once have had the power to help, failed to be an adequate substitute for the home and community for this population.*
> *(1988:9).*

The emergence of youth organisations in the UK paralleled the development of 'friendly visiting' in the USA: both forms of intervention were influenced by urbanisation and industrialisation (Jeffs and Smith, 1990). Nevertheless significant differences exist between mentoring and youth work and these have important implications for how mentoring has been framed and understood. 'Friendly visiting' was seen as an individualistic intervention where one individual would 'reach' out to another while youth work interventions were aimed at both individuals and groups of young people. Furthermore from the outset youth work interventions took a variety of forms and provided a space for young people to introduce their agenda and to take some measure of control over the process (For a fuller discussion see Philip, 1999).

The poor theoretical base of mentoring

The theoretical base of mentoring remains poor in general (Harnish and Wild, 1994) and particularly in relation to work with young people (Monaghan and Lunt, 1992; Rhodes, 1994). Definitions of mentoring abound as do typologies of definitions (Healy and Welchert, 1990). Such diversity demonstrates the appeal of the term but can lead to confusion and even vacuity since there is little consensus about the meaning of the term. An example of this is in how gender has been understood in relation to mentoring.

It is frequently noted that gender is an important factor influencing how young people experience transitions to adulthood. However there are important contradictions in the reporting of gender and mentoring. Much of the lack of clarity hinges on a gender-blind analysis of Homer's myth as demonstrated above. Freedman touches on how women and young women are excluded from historic tales about mentoring and suggests it is difficult to locate mentoring stories involving women and girls (Freedman, 1993:35). This reinforces Flaxman et al's conclusion that, discussion about mentoring has tended to overlook how gender interacts with mentoring processes,

> *Contrary to the recent rhetoric that mentoring opens up closed social structures, historically mentoring has been a relationship between two white men. (Flaxman et al, 1988:15)*

Hamilton and Darling (1989) found that young women are more likely to identify unrelated adults as 'significant others' but less likely to describe these as adult mentors than their male counterparts. Sullivan (1996) has proposed that the term 'muse' should be used in preference to mentoring for young women since mentoring suggests a more instrumental relationship which does not accurately reflect young women's own descriptions of mentoring. However it seems more likely that such different definitions point to a different style of mentoring given the findings from Philip's study (Philip and Hendry, 1996).

Flaxman goes on to claim that the emerging literature on gender and mentoring has revealed some of the ways in which mentoring might require to be reformulated to take account of the needs of minority groups whose experiences and expectations of mentoring are rarely documented within mentoring literature. However his review is limited to professional mentoring and reflects the low profile of reviews of youth mentoring interventions.

The subordinate position of women has itself generated alternative models of mentoring. The processes inherent in such relationships are of value in examining mentoring in relation to young people, since women mentors have largely struggled with the constraints of linking the public and private worlds and it is in the interlinking of these that transitions to adulthood have to be effected.

Concluding comments

In this paper current debates about mentoring have been explored. It is argued that there is a need to address fundamental issues about how mentoring is framed and understood if the potential is to be realised. In particular there is a need for a theoretical framework which can take account of the complexities of youth transitions and which frames young people as active agents in the processes of transition. Lessons from the North American experience of mentoring have to be extended to take better account of emerging work on young people's perceptions of natural mentoring processes. In many important respects, the processes of mentoring can assist young people to develop their own 'voice' and to articulate their experiences. In this way mentoring processes can build on existing youth work practice to develop a more focused approach to work with young people in transition.

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DOES IT WORK?

Arrest referral and drug use: a case study

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Not unreasonably, the obvious question that interested observers will ask of an arrest referral scheme, such as the one discussed here, is: does it work? Drawing on the findings of a recent evaluation of this scheme, this article analyses the ways in which the question can be approached. On one level a scheme can be said to 'work' if it is capable of delivering a range of outcomes that satisfy the criteria associated with the various agencies involved. This is explored by assessing these outcomes from the point of view of three perspectives: criminal justice, welfare and business (cf. Dorn, 1994). A criminal justice perspective may, for instance, emphasise the re-deployment of law enforcement resources; a welfare perspective the avoidance of stigmatisation and social exclusion on the part of an 'offender'; and a business perspective 'value for money' and the savings accruing to the criminal justice system. However, because of the nature of the arrest referral scheme described here, and all schemes of this sort, these beneficial outcomes, even in combination, cannot ultimately constitute a justification or rationale for the scheme's existence. Contained in all public statements, and providing an overarching logic, there is an implicit (and sometimes explicit) suggestion that the scheme will have an impact on subsequent drug use. Until there are changes in the legal, political and cultural parameters within which responses to drug use proceed, the lenient and non-punitive features of such schemes, based on notions of health and harm minimisation, need to be justified by reference to this primary outcome. Ostensibly, then, a scheme 'works' if it has a significant effect on drugs-related behaviour.

The growth of arrest referral schemes

By the late 1980s a number of arrest referral schemes had already been established in this country, but their numbers grew rapidly following the publication of the 1995 White Paper *Tackling Drugs Together* (Lord President, et al., 1995), which recommended the setting up of 'an arrest referral scheme by which the police can refer drug misusers to appropriate treatment services'. The result is that most police forces are now involved in some sort of arrest referral scheme:

> *Our survey shows that arrest referral schemes now run in all or part of 37 of the 43 police force areas in England and Wales. In a significant proportion of cases these are still at the planning or pilot stages, but there are few forces that do not have any plans for such schemes. (Newburn and Elliott, 1998: 11).*

And the government has announced recently that an extra £20 million is to be provided in order for arrest referral schemes to be available in all police custody suites by the year 2002.

The White Paper created an overall framework within which illegal drug was to be tackled by emphasising the need for vigorous law enforcement, accessible treatment, education and prevention and, in line with current fashion, inter-agency co-operation. It did not, though, provide any specific guidelines regarding the nature of the scheme to be implemented. Neither did the follow-up White Paper *Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain* (Lord President, et al.,1998), though this did address perceived weaknesses in the previous White Paper.

Thus whilst arrest referral schemes are commonplace, many different types of scheme have been established. However, Edmunds et al., (1998) have, in broad terms, identified three types, each based upon a particular model. The most basic of these, the 'information model', simply involves police officers giving arrestees[1] information about services available to drug users in their area. A 'proactive model' generally concerns itself with those described as 'problem users'; here drug workers are given direct access to arrestees in order to provide various sorts of assistance and information. Finally, there is the 'incentive model', which offers a reduced penalty, or no penalty at all, to those arrestees who are willing to participate in a local, drug-related assistance programme.

The Durham and Darlington Scheme

A radical, and unique, arrest referral scheme based upon the incentive model was designed by the Durham and Darlington Drug Action Team (DAT), and began operating in 1997. This article develops and analyses the findings of a recent evaluation of this scheme (Alred, et al., 1998), paying particular attention to the issue of *does it work?*

The most striking feature of the scheme is the non-punitive response by the criminal justice system to individuals who have admitted committing what are seen in law as serious criminal offences, indeed, offences that could attract lengthy prison sentences. That criminal justice policy distinguishes between these and other offenders is a key dimension to this analysis, and raises important issues regarding changing perceptions of drug users.

Briefly, the arrest referral scheme operates as follows. Anyone arrested for the offense of simple possession of a drug controlled by the Misuse of Drug Act 1971, providing that they admit the offense at the police station, is offered the opportunity to participate in an education and information session. These sessions are provided locally by a voluntary agency, the North East Council on Addictions (NECA).

If the offer is accepted, arrestees are subject to police bail, which is cancelled following attendance at, and satisfactory completion of one of these sessions. Thereupon no further action is taken by the criminal justice system. We were informed that the scheme is not used by the police as a vehicle for intelligence gathering. Anyone failing to attend their designated session is given a second chance, though this time they also receive a police caution. The scheme is available only for those arrested for simple possession; those arrested for a trafficking offense are excluded. However, class of drug involved, or previous convictions, or age do not disqualify arrestees from participating in the scheme. The evaluation mentioned above covered the first twelve months of the scheme's operation. During that period 659 arrestees, out of 808, were referred. Most of these (62%) were aged 17-24, and 91% were male. Cannabis (75% of cases) was overwhelmingly the most common drug involved; the next most common (9% of cases) was amphetamine.

Outcomes

Assessing the success of any arrest referral scheme necessarily requires a consideration of:

(i) *those outcomes that satisfy criteria associated with the agendas of each of the participating agencies, as represented by three key perspectives, and*

(ii) *those outcomes associated with arrestees' subsequent drug use.*

The use of three perspectives - criminal justice, welfare and business - as the basis for appraisal was first suggested by Dorn (1994), in his broadly based overview of arrest referral schemes. Each agency participating in a scheme will tend to give primacy to one of these perspectives, and hence develop their own criteria against which to assess a scheme's success. Therefore, and importantly, Dorn argues that analyses of arrest referral schemes need to consider any perceived benefits from the point of view of all three perspectives, and not in isolation from each other:

> *In summary, police referral schemes that are promoted on a welfare basis need to be appraised not only in welfare terms... but also from the perspectives of criminal justice... and from the perspective of the social market. (Dorn, 1994: 33)*

Whilst this approach offers a useful framework within which to examine the Durham scheme, it only addresses outcomes from the point of view of 'i' above. Although it is mentioned, there is no attempt to engage with what is ostensibly the primary goal of all arrest referral schemes: to have a significant impact on arrestees' subsequent drug use. This dimension will be returned to following a discussion of the three perspectives.

Criminal Justice

A criminal justice perspective on arrest referral schemes directs attention towards issues of legal rights and the potential tension between due process and crime control. Beginning with the crime control/law enforcement aspects, two key points regarding the scheme in Durham are worth noting.

Firstly, whilst the 'welfare' dimension is referred to, and seen as important, public statements from Durham Constabulary are at pains to stress the police's continuing crime control function, and thereby attempt to pre-empt any suggestion of 'going soft' on drugs. This is well illustrated by this reference to the arrest referral scheme in its *Police Service Charter* (1996):

> *But in an effort to turn people away from the use and dependence on drugs, we have developed, in conjunction with other agencies, a policy where people found in possession of illegal drugs, may be diverted from appearing in court, if certain requirements are met and they are prepared to accept counselling and advice. This policy is not about taking a soft line. There will be no let-up on the war against those who profit from the illegal use of drugs.*

Not surprisingly, such comments are designed to present the scheme, and the police's role in it, in such a way that it creates and sustains broad public and media support. At its core this requires the careful management of criminal justice and welfare (as well as business) imperatives. It is appreciated that, as we say in the evaluation, some may see the scheme as 'decriminalisation by the back door' (Alred, et al., 1998: 24). However:

> *It would be a mistake to argue that the scheme decriminalises the offense of simple possession. This is because it is based fundamentally upon the existence of a legal censure. The fact that simple possession has* ***not*** *been decriminalised underpins the scheme; it is its key ineradicable feature. The possibility of punitive legal sanctions being applied for non-compliance provides the coercive instrument. However, there has been a qualitative change in respect of the legal subject. The scheme is based on the conditional* ***suspension*** *of the application of a criminal label with regard to a specific type of* ***offender****, rather than offense.*
> *(Tierney, forthcoming)*

Secondly, the police members of the local DAT, official police documents, and the custody officers interviewed all emphasise what they see as the crime control benefits accruing from the scheme (though there is no evidence that this interfered with the principle of due process). Thus the scheme was congruent with a shift in

law enforcement strategies, whereby resources have been re-deployed towards the apprehension of those supplying drugs, via a stress on surveillance and intelligence gathering. Since the scheme began, there has been a steady increase in the number of seizures and arrests for trafficking offences. However, there has also been an increase in the number of people arrested for simple possession too. It is likely that the advent of the scheme led to a net-widening process as far as simple possession is concerned, reflecting the attendant decreases in post-arrest costs.

Turning to the due process aspects, three issues emerge. Firstly, and as mentioned earlier, arrestees must admit guilt prior to the offer of a referral being made. A custody officer would contravene the 1984 Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) if he or she were to induce someone to admit guilt by offering referral (and, eventually, no further action) as a 'reward'. Clearly, this can, and does, place custody officers in a difficult and sensitive position. At times they will be faced with an arrestee who refuses to admit guilt, but who nonetheless is seen as someone who would benefit from a referral. None of the custody officers interviewed said that they had used the scheme to encourage a guilty plea, but the temptation to do so should be recognised (in fact, an officer not involved in the evaluation did admit that he occasionally informed arrestees of the scheme's existence prior to them making a plea). There is another dimension to this, which was the subject of close legal scrutiny when the scheme was being designed. Acceptance of referral means that the arrestee is then given police bail. However, according to the conditions laid down in the 1976 Bail Act, bail is only available for those persons *charged* with an offense. With the Durham scheme a solution was found in the shape of Section 47(3) of PACE, which allows bail without charge. Whilst this was originally introduced in order to give the police extra time in which to gather evidence prior to charging, the wording of this section of the Act was deemed flexible enough for application as part of the referral scheme.

Secondly, although custody officers have to sometimes tread carefully with arrestees who are reluctant to admit guilt, it has to be recognised that with the passage of time an increasing proportion of arrestees will be well aware of the scheme's existence and its implications. Indeed, this was confirmed by custody officers and NECA staff, the former stating that some arrestees introduced the scheme into conversation, inquiring if they could participate. Information about the scheme is now widely available, being mentioned in, for example, the force's *Policing Plan and the Performance Review Report* attached to the Chief Constable's *Annual Report*. However, and this will be returned to, it is interesting that these references tend to skirt around the non-punitive response lying at the core of the scheme. Wider knowledge of the scheme, though, may have implications for due process. Custody officers themselves admitted that an innocent per-

son who had, for whatever reason, been arrested for simple possession, might admit guilt simply in order to avoid a court appearance, or at least a police caution. There is little that can be done about this by the police, of course, but in the longer term it is an issue that needs considering seriously.

Thirdly, there is the distinction that has to be made by the police between 'simple possession' and 'intent to supply' (which determines whether or not the scheme is made available). Whilst custody officers felt that in general this decision was clear-cut, because of the amounts of illegal substances involved, together with the circumstances facing an arrest, in some cases it is, as one officer put it, 'difficult to draw the line'. Amounts used for personal consumption can, of course, vary considerably.

Welfare

Working within Dorn's framework, under this heading attention is given to how health and welfare interests influence police decision-making *vis a vis* particular offenders. This involves an examination of the tension between law enforcement demands, and more lenient responses based upon notions of treatment and assistance. Additionally, it involves looking at the extent to which arrestees are willing to travel down a welfare path.

While criminal justice agencies continue to draw on a 'war on drugs' rhetoric, recent official statements have increasingly made reference to issues of health and education (as examples, see the 1998 White *Paper Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain*, as well as reports from the office of the UK Anti-Drugs Co-ordinator). In our evaluation we found that whilst the police gave priority to the law enforcement dimension, non-police DAT members, community workers, and the NECA staff who provided the sessions, gave priority to reducing stigmatisation, preventing social exclusion and encouraging problem users to seek further assistance. A major strength of the scheme is that it manages to accommodate each of these primary agendas.

However, and as stated above, the police had to tread carefully when it came to presenting the scheme to the public and the media. After all, here is a scheme that invites someone who has admitted a criminal offense to attend a short education and information session, in return for which all action by the criminal justice system will cease. Hence the stress on maintaining a hard anti-drugs stance, linked to the targeting of traffickers. This, though, still leaves the possibility that simple possession offenders might be seen as being 'let off'; as a consequence, public statements by the police had also to emphasise the welfare dimension. Thus, for instance, Durham Constabulary's *Annual Report* for 1996-97 says that the scheme 'offers the drug user an alternative to prosecution... this takes the form of counselling', and HM Inspectorate in his 1997-98 *Performance Review Report, Durham*

Constabulary indicates that the scheme 'aims to provide counselling'. Although the notion of 'counselling' might well suggest that the sessions represent vigorous attempts by trained professionals to convince arrestees that they should cease to use drugs, these sessions are, in fact, not organised as explicit attempts to get participants to 'say no to drugs'. NECA staff argued strongly that to do so would be counter-productive.

The prudence displayed by the police is, of course, understandable, but it is likely that their involvement in a scheme which obviously reflects a more liberalised approach, was aided by an increasingly more tolerant and realistic public and media. Indeed, the fact that the police felt able to participate suggests that they recognised this.

One of the points made by Dorn is that many of the then extant arrest referral schemes had low take-up rates. In his view this resulted from two major factors: 'lack of police effort' and 'the unwillingness of the vast majority of drug possession arrestees to play the role of an addict needing treatment (Dorn, 1994: 17). The Durham scheme, however, has so far had a relatively high take-up rate. This appears to reflect both police acceptance of the scheme, and the nature of the education and information sessions on offer; importantly, they are not based upon notions of 'treatment' or 'therapy'.

Business

The business perspective directs our attention to issues of 'value for money', savings, and a social market approach to social policy. The local DAT has produced the most detailed, and at first glance compelling, estimates of the savings made in criminal justice expenditure because of the scheme. Taking the first six months of operation, the estimates are described as 'tentative', though 'reasonable', and are worth quoting at length:

> *The overall cost of bringing a case before a magistrate court has been estimated by the Magistrates Association of being between £2,000 and £3,500. If we assume that the 80% attendance rate evident at six months is maintained over the year then courts in County Durham will see 500 fewer cases in this year. Using the above estimates of court costs five hundred appearances would incur costs of between £1,000,000 and £1,750,000 of public money...*
>
> *To this figure could then be added the costs of compiling pre-sentence reports. If we were to assume that one-tenth of these five hundred clients would be subject to pre-sentence reports, and that the average cost of compiling these reports were £350, then an additional saving of £17,500 is made...*

> *There are additional savings for the police. Whilst officers are not required to attend court if a guilty plea is proffered they are required to fill up to 140 forms for every case. If we assume that this sort of paperwork takes one working day to complete then we might expect 500 cases to require 500 working days of work. Or, put another way, the scheme saves the work of 1.8 full-time workers in form filling alone. (In NECA, 1997)*

Additional saving relating to the health service and community safety are also included (putative savings based upon possible reductions in acquisitive crime are not estimated).

The way in which these supposed savings are presented, and the assumptions on which they are based, perhaps indicates the importance nowadays of achieving 'value for money' in matters of social policy. They posit a best case scenario, where it is assumed that in the absence of the scheme all participating arrestees would have made a court appearance. Most offenders, and especially first time offenders, would in fact have been more likely to receive a police caution. Nonetheless, significant savings will have been made. However, as with any beneficial criminal justice or welfare-based outcomes, in itself saving money cannot be used to justify the scheme's existence. After all, turning a blind eye to all criminal behaviour would save the criminal justice system huge amounts of money.

Concluding analysis: the impact on drug use

Any attempt to assess the success of the Durham scheme in terms of its impact on the subsequent drug use of those arrestees who have participated in it will, clearly, be fraught with difficulties. To begin with, a definition of 'impact' may include a reduction, or alteration in drug use, and not just a cessation. Although a small number of arrestees were interviewed, the evaluation was not designed to explore this avenue and, because of the timescales involved, such research would not have been productive at that stage. What we do know is that according to police figures, in the first twelve months only 32 participants, out of a total of 659, had repeated their offense, though for obvious reasons this statistic has to be treated with some caution.

In this context the nature of the education and information sessions looms as a key factor. The sessions can last for up to three hours, but more normally are of around one and a half hours duration. The NECA taking these sessions describe themselves as 'facilitators', who provide information relating to health risks and the legal and financial implications of drug use. They pointed out that many of the young people they saw were far less knowledgeable about these matters than might be anticipated. Importantly, they avoided any explicit attempt to apply 'counselling skills' (though they had counselling qualifications) in an effort to get

participants to stop using drugs. In themselves it is unlikely that these sessions will have any effect on serious, 'problem users'. They do, though, offer an opportunity for further referral into treatment (but at the present time there is a scarcity of treatment facilities in the northern region).

Potentially, the sessions themselves are more likely to influence the future behaviour of young, recreational drug users and, indeed, the typical participant is a male cannabis user in his late teens to early twenties. However, it would be unrealistic to expect dramatic changes in patterns of drug use. Whilst the non-coercive, non-moralising character of the sessions encourages the participation of arrestees, it does mean that any changes in drugs-related behaviour have to be in response to what is presented as objective, factual information and advice. Thus any expectation that this will lead to a cessation, reduction, or alteration in drug use is necessarily predicated on the assumption, or hope, that such information and advice is in itself capable of fulfiling that function. The difficulty here is that for recreational drug users the consumption of drugs is only one, among many, activities where risks are involved. The risks connected to cannabis and other drugs, including legal risks, may, within the social, cultural and psychological context of their lives, strike participants as risks worth taking. Furthermore, there is the possibility that wider knowledge of the scheme's existence, and of what it consists of, may encourage some newcomers to risk using illegal drugs. One of the community workers interviewed said that they were aware of at least one instance where a dealer had informed a potential client that, because of the scheme, 'nothing will happen', even if one is caught.

Apart from re-arrest figures from the police, we have no useful information on the impact of these sessions, or the scheme as a whole, on subsequent drug taking. In fact, in the absence of any definite criteria against which this can be measured, it is impossible to judge the scheme's success in this sense anyway. What, for instance, does a 'significant' impact mean? How many participants would have to cease using drugs? Precisely what changes in behaviour would make the scheme 'successful'? And analyses of this sort could become almost metaphysical - for example, an individual may not alter their behaviour as a result of attending a session, but be influenced in such a way as to affect the behaviour of others.

Incentive model arrest referral schemes in general

Leaving the Durham scheme to one side, some final, general comments may be made about arrest referral schemes based upon an incentive model. Clearly, any serious analysis of the success of these schemes has to appreciate the enormous complexities involved, and face up to the *realpolitik* of social policy. Whilst there is no suggestion that this has occurred in the case of the Durham scheme, there is

always the possibility that outcomes perceived as beneficial from the point of view of some or all of the three perspectives discussed above, are seen as sufficient. Put another way, social policy may proceed according to a tacit understanding among the agencies concerned that the original, primary goal (meaning in this case the future drug use of arrestees) need not be achieved in order to justify a scheme's existence. Thus, for example, saving money, or suspending the criminalisation of drug users, or being in a position to re-deploy police resources, become in themselves worthwhile outcomes. This is obviously a possibility with respect to individuals working within particular agencies; but it can also occur at a corporate level.

Either way, it is clear that there is a need for greater clarification of exactly what it is that arrest referral schemes are seeking to achieve, together with appropriate research aimed at assessing the extent to which these objectives are achieved in practice. But there is also a need for the agencies concerned to play a proactive role in stimulating political and public debate about the overall logic informing social policy relating to the different sorts of illegal drug use. It is probably the case that members of the public are much more realistic and liberal in these matters than often over-cautious politicians and criminal justice managers assume.

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Note

1 Following Dorn's (1994) reasoning, those arrested and taken to the police station are defined as 'arrestees'.

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CAPTURING THE FIRST TIME VOTERS

An initial study of political attitudes among teenagers

LISA HARRISON AND WOLFGANG DEICKE

Concern appears to be growing within the media and other institutions regarding the attitudes and interest of young people today in relation to politics. This concern has become manifest in the belief that young people are politically disillusioned and disinterested, creating a potential crisis for the future health of democratic participation. Articles frequently report of a generation who have grown up highly individualist, primarily driven by economic security and materialism (see, for example, Wilkinson & Mulgan, 1995; Toynbee, 1997; Millar, 1998). The process of socialisation has significant implications for political participation, and by the time of the last British General Election various reports suggested that first time voters in particular were voting with their feet, not the ballot box - they have grown up into a generation of political cynics (Leonard & Katwala, 1997; Ward, 1998). Furlong and Cartmel (1997) suggest that political interest is tied to age, education, gender and socio-economic background, although 'recent changes' in education and work trends and a shift towards 'life politics' have unique implications for political socialisation and participation (p.97). Similarly, Park (1995) claims that the factors which determine political interest are party identification and household income, as well as gender, age and education. One possible explanation for a more individualist approach towards politics concerns the changing nature of employment and trade unionism, which means that one traditional way into political participation is on the decline (MacDonald & Coffield, 1991). What we can witness in its place is an increase in post-16 education. Political cynicism may be also linked to disaffection due to a lack of opportunities for young people.

The term 'youth' itself necessitates clarification. Existing studies have employed various age ranges, which in itself makes comparative analysis difficult. For example, electoral analysis begins at the age of 18, the *Millennial Generation Survey* conducted by MORI in 1998 focused upon 16-21 year olds, and The Industrial Society (1997) study *Speaking Up, Speaking Out*! focused upon young people aged between 12 and 25. In our analysis we will be focusing upon 16-18 year olds only. Within this paper we will compare conclusions reached by earlier studies with the findings we obtained from our own research carried out in September 1997. This research consisted of a questionnaire distributed among sixth formers in four schools in the Northampton area, and as a result 235 questionnaires were completed. This is not, therefore, a representative sample of teenagers who will constitute the next first time voters, but should perhaps demonstrate a group of young people who are the most likely to have some political interest and knowl-

edge. Our sample was drawn from four schools who had agreed to participate in the project.[1] The questionnaires were completed in school time during a class, and students had no prior warning of what to expect. The questionnaire itself contained 22 questions and was a mixture of closed and open ended questions in which we tried to avoid providing alternatives which we might 'expect', thus allowing participants freedom to express their own interpretations. The questionnaire covered three broad topics: political participation, political interest and political knowledge (though this in itself is problematic as will be discussed later). Our findings suggest that the next first time voters are neither strongly disengaged, nor likely to engage in collective action.

Generation X, Thatcher's Children or neither?

A review of the literature surrounding youth in Britain in the 1990s suggests that there is widespread agreement about the fact that we are looking at a distinctive generation of first time voters. The 'Winter of Discontent', for example, holds little relevance for the under 25s. In fact, by the time of the last general election 40% of voters barely remember[ed] a Labour government' (*White, The Guardian* 2/7/96). Existing literature focuses upon three descriptions of young people and politics. First, we can identify a 'pessimistic' outlook of youth and politics as we approached the end of the century. *In Freedom's Children*, Wilkinson and Mulgan suggest 'For many young people in Britain today politics has become something of a dirty word' (1995: 98), with young women being less politically active than young men. People under 25 are more likely than any other age group not to be registered to vote: 69% of eligible 18-24 year olds voted during the 1987 election, and this was reduced to 57% voting in the 1992 General Election (Cole, 1997). Evans (1997) claims that turnout among this age group in 1997 was 70% (and thus close to the national average) whilst Leonard and Katwala (1997) suggest it was closer to the 1992 level. Failure to vote is, according to Wilkinson and Mulgan, an attribute of a 'politically disconnected' youth who are unable to identify themselves with political institutions and actors, and which is reflected in liberal democracies elsewhere (such as Germany, France, America, Canada and Australia). Rather than this being a 'normal' trend in young people, the evidence used to support this approach claims that such disenchantment is long term and growing.

Possible explanations for lessening participation in mainstream politics are that young people are now 'too busy', or that they are generally more satisfied due to the increased material affluence compared to their parents and grandparents. However, other influences may derive from the fact that mainstream politics is generally unrepresentative of the population - the majority of MPs in the UK are still middle-aged, white and male. Added to this is the more recent accusations of sleaze, both personally and professionally - MPs are increasingly seen as being

untrustworthy and open to corruption, which does nothing to attract young people to the main parties. Marsh (1990) suggests that the young are more likely to turn to protest activity than adults e.g. membership of the National Front, a view supported elsewhere by research conducted in the 1980s (Cochran & Billig, 1983; Banks & Ullah, 1987).

The trends in terms of young people and party membership do not suggest that mainstream political action is flourishing. The Young Conservatives (now Conservative Future) and Young Socialists (now Young Labour) have experienced a dramatic decrease in credibility and membership numbers since the 1970s (Cole, 1997). The recent study *Speaking Up, Speaking Out!*, published by the Industrial Society (1997) claims that in the run up to the last General Election, only 2% of 16-25 year olds felt 'an affinity to a political party', whilst 11% of 12-25 year olds had been on a march or demonstration. The Report suggests that young people are protesting, but in a less public way e.g. 70% had signed petitions on issues such as human rights, and 60% had boycotted goods (pp.36-38). The Report's general findings were that politics is unrelated to young people's lives and policies do not include or reflect young people's views.

Is such a portrayal of youth and political disengagement justified? The second existing explanation suggests that young people are more interested in issues than in politics *per se*. Far from young people being completely apathetic, Wilkinson and Mulgan found that they do care strongly about certain issues - particularly environmentalism, animal rights and health issues (such as AIDS) (1995:102 see also Evans, 1997:112). It may be that the young are more likely to become involved in less mainstream forms of politics, such as protests and demonstrations against road expansion, animal exports and the Criminal Justice Act and Jobseekers Allowance, than in 'traditional' political activities.

Our research seeks to elaborate on these theories and also to examine the third explanation of youth and politics - whether today's teenagers really are Thatcher's Children. A problem arises with defining the term Thatcher's Children - are they the voters who received much of their formative political education in the period 1979 to 1990, or those who were born during this period? Certainly, those who are the next first time voters will have few personal memories of Thatcher as Prime Minister, making her as much of a 'historical' figure as Churchill. Heath and Park (1997) define Thatcher's children as those born after 1960 who have been predominantly socialised in the late 1970s and 1980s. They found that, as a group, they were less likely to support the Conservatives than older generations, supporting earlier made claims that the young are usually more left wing than the average, and gradually move to the right with age (reference is also made to these studies in

MacDonald & Coffield (1991) and Furlong & Cartmel (1997)). They also found that Thatcher's Children' are the least likely age group to be interested in politics e.g. 46% claimed to be not very interested or not interested at all. Heath and Park claim that attitudes towards some issues (e.g. the monarchy and Europe) have changed across the population as a whole, whereas any evidence of generation differences are really down to life cycle trends, rather than being specifically 'Thatcher's Children':

> *our findings hardly provide any ringing endorsement of the theory that the Thatcherite values of the eighties had any profound influence on the generation who formed its political and social values during that period... Thatcher's crusade for a fundamental change in values spectacularly failed to hit the mark.' (pp.18-19)*

The question is, however, whether the influence of 18 years of Conservative government would necessarily be as direct as implied here. Whilst Denver and Hands (1992) claim that the majority of first time voters during Thatcher's period of office voted Conservative, Russell, Johnston and Pattie (1992) demonstrate that political attitudes were not consistent among new voters in 1979, 1983 and 1987. Rather, they identified; '...substantial variations among the younger voters according to the political milieux in which they approached their enfranchisement' (1992:756). For example, the 1983 intake tended to be more liberal than the 1979 and 1987 intakes on issues such as law and order, although all three groups tended to be hostile to trade unionism and supported the idea of an enterprise economy.

In the two most recent general elections, support among 18-24 year olds in 1992 stood at 38% for the Conservative Party, 34% for the Labour Party and 22% for the Liberal Democrats, by 1997 these figures stood at 22%, 57% and 13% respectively. In fact this age group demonstrated the largest swing in favour of New Labour (Gallup Poll data cited in King, 1997). The findings discussed here and the 1997 General Election results suggest that young people today may not be naturally Conservative supporters, or Conservative in ideology. We believe that what has occurred instead is that their values have changed as a result of the Thatcherite crusade against 'society' (i.e. they have become 'more' individualistic without necessarily becoming 'greedy'), and that New Labour represented this individualism in 1997. We will now outline our findings in relation to the three areas of political participation, political attitudes and political knowledge, and relate them to existing debates surrounding policy change.

Political Participation

Elements of the media portrayed Britain's youth as being uninspired by the 1997 General Election: 'It is just not hip to vote. Not voting is a fashion statement. Not voting is cool' (*Toynbee, The Independent*, 28/4/97). While one could argue that

voting has little to do with fashion statements, the most recent attempts to increase political participation among young people have focused upon exactly that - making voting more 'hip'. For example, in order to encourage more young Americans to vote in the 1992 presidential election, the Rock The Vote campaign was launched - involving celebrities such as Madonna urging young people to register their political opinion. This campaign purportedly saw a 20% increase in the youth vote, primarily benefiting Clinton (Cole, 1997). A British project of the same name was launched in the UK in February 1996 at the Ministry of Sound nightclub.

As the teenagers we studied were not yet eligible to vote, we sought to identify other forms of political participation, in the broadest of senses. As a result, we asked our teenagers about the sort of political activities which were generally acceptable, and which they may have experienced themselves, and began by ascertaining whether they identified with a political party:

Table 1: Party Identification

I strongly identify with a party	
Yes	*No*
22% (51)	78% (179)

If yes, please state which party			
Lab	*Con*	*LibDem*	*Other*
58.5% (31)	24.5% (13)	13.2%(7)	3.8% (2)

Actual number of respondents in brackets. **Response rate 97.9%.**

If we compare our findings to King's (1997) data on 18-24 year olds in the 1997 General Election we can see that levels of support for the three main parties are very similar. Party identification for this age group does, however, differ from the trend for the overall population which stands at; 36% for the Conservative Party, 41% for the Labour Party and 16% for the Liberal Democrats (BES data cited in Crewe & Thomson (1999)).

We also wished to identify whether our group of 16-18 year olds were generally supportive of political activism. Bynner and Ashford (1994) claim that activism and protest among young people (e.g. the anti poll tax movement, CND) is not generally seen as an alternative because it is mainly engaged in by the most highly educated (see also Roberts & Parsell, 1994). Active involvement, such as attending meetings and writing to MPs, is rare. We provided our sample with a list of eleven activism alternatives which ranged from fairly passive and quick actions to more active and also illegal action, and also asked whether any of these actions had been taken by our sample. The findings are outlined in Table 2:

Table 2: In order to achieve their aims, people can take a number of different courses of action. Which of the following forms of political action would you consider being acceptable?' *(you may choose more than one)*

Action	Acceptable (%)	Done (%)
sign a petition	83.6	47.1
write to MP	79.3	2.6
collect signatures	71.6	5.8
donate money to a cause	68.1	14.3
member of a party or group	60.3	-
stand for election	53.9	5.8
take part in a march/ rally	50.9	1.6
go on strike	41.4	-
refuse to pay taxes	19.0	-
occupy land/ buildings	15.5	-
openly defy authority	12.9	0.5

Response rate 98.8%

Note that several teenagers claim to have stood for election. This refers to activities within school, such as school council representatives.

Table 2 holds few surprises at first sight, with levels of support for 'conventional' types of action being much higher than for 'less conventional' or 'illegal' behaviour. What is interesting though, is that amongst those forms of action which register strong support (the first seven listed in Table 2), more 'individualistic' and 'passive' types of action (e.g. signing a petition, writing to an MP and donating money to a cause) rank higher than those which require some sort of collective activity (the exception is collecting signatures, although this is not really an exception as the analysis of 'actions taken' shows). We might also note that, for a supposedly apathetic generation, there appears to be a healthy residue of support for both 'conventional' and even fairly high risk 'unconventional' types of political action - in theory at least.

When it comes to analysing the actions actually taken by our 16-18 year olds, however, one quickly realises that this is a largely hypothetical picture. 19.6% of our respondents stated that they had committed 'none' of our listed actions. While the preference for quick, 'low cost' forms of political action is self-evident, the contrast between the high theoretical approval of 'collecting signatures' (71.6%) and those who profess to actually having engaged in such activity (5.8%) could be seen to offer further support for our earlier point on individual/ collective types of action: what, in theory, looks little different from 'signing a petition' in practice requires a far greater degree of commitment, involvement and interaction with others. Our responses show that, while fairly apathetic when it comes to active politics, their hypothetical views show that they can and do differentiate between different types of action, with the result not suggesting anything 'out of the ordinary'.

Our final question in relation to political participation looked at the discussion of politics.

Table 3: I talk about politics at home

often	sometimes	hardly ever	never
5.1%	38.3%	38.3%	18.3%

We can see from Table 3 that the home is not necessarily a source of political information for teenagers. Almost a fifth claim that politics is never discussed at home. Whilst our data is inconclusive, this might mean that our interviewees are not all that different from their parents in terms of general levels of political interest. What does become clear, though, is that through the absence of political discussion in the home, the first link in the chain of political socialisation may already be broken.

Political interest

Of course, political participation itself is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of measuring political involvement among young people. Those under eighteen cannot vote and may face other hurdles in terms of taking an active role. What does our study tell us about political interest among the next first time voters? We first asked our respondents to rate their own level of political interest.

Table 4: I am interested in politics

strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree
3.4%	39.9%	43.3%	13.3%

Whilst this supports the thesis that politics is not an attractive topic for the next first time voters, our findings here differ from results elsewhere. Park (1995, p.45), for example found that 12% of 12-19 year olds had 'a great deal or quite a lot' political interest (higher than our study) but also that 27% had 'none' (maybe due to the greater age range). In comparison, Banks & Ullah's study of political interest among employed and unemployed 17-18 year olds found that 33.5% of the employed group and 41.7% of the unemployed group claimed to be 'not at all interested'. Hence, our sample report higher levels of interest, possibly due to the influence of continued education. We then asked our sample to rate their knowledge of current affairs:

Table 5: I have a fair knowledge of current affairs

strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree
4.7%	58.5%	32.9%	3.8%

In contrast to not being very interested in politics, Table 5 shows that these teenagers did not admit to lacking knowledge about current affairs. Obviously, the two are not the same because 'current affairs' includes many other topics which, strictly speaking, are not necessarily political. The fact that many of our sample

claimed to 'never' talk about politics at home of course raises the question as to where do they learn about politics and current affairs?

Table 6: I get my information on current affairs/ politics mainly from...

TV	radio	newspaper	school	family
77.7%	10.2%	8.4%	2.3%	1.4%

Overwhelmingly, television is the main source of information about politics, whilst Table 6 reinforces the earlier claims that politics is not discussed at home by many teenagers. We also attempted to measure political interest by asking our respondents which issues they thought were important in contemporary society. This was an open ended question which provoked a quite varied range of responses. Respondents were able to list as many or as few issues as they wanted. As a result we only coded the first three issues (although only a small number of teenagers provided more than three responses anyway), and table 7 lists the most frequent responses by school.

Table 7: Which issues are dominant in British politics in the 1990s?

School A *Ireland*	School B *Education*	School C *Education*	School D *Education*
Education	Economy	NHS	Economy
Europe	Employment	Europe	NHS
NHS	NHS	Economy	Employment
The election	Europe	Ireland	Europe

As the respondents were free to write down what they wanted, we have had to group together certain topics. For example, we classified 'European relations' and 'single currency' into one group. Education covers both standards and the issue of University fees. NHS covers a range of responses which generally identified waiting lists and funding. We can see that, generally speaking, the issues viewed as being dominant are very similar for each school, although the priority given to particular issues varies. When we visited School A, the situation in Northern Ireland was a heavy feature of that week's news, but had become less prominent in the following weeks. Leonard and Katwala (1997) claim that; 'MORI data from the [1997] campaign reveals education, health and unemployment (in that order) were the top three issues for young people' (p.110). This appears to apply to our survey too - political issues from earlier in the decade rarely made an appearance. We followed this question up by asking our sample about policy change:

Table 8: If you could get the government to change one thing immediately, what would that be?

Education (funding)	Taxation	NHS (funding)	Crime	Drinking age
37.6%	10.6%	9.5%	4.2%	2.6%

Response rate 80.4%.

As with the responses to the question about dominant issues in British politics we, to some extent, grouped together similar answers. Unsurprisingly, the majority were concerned about education in general, but the introduction of university fees in particular. A much smaller group were concerned about growing crime rates and suggested tougher sentences. 'Taxes' was a popular choice for what should be changed, although it was not always clear what should be changed about them. It was interesting to see that no one in the girls' school mentioned taxation, but rather there was a concentration on social issues such as homelessness, animal welfare and poverty, suggesting a potential gender difference. We were also interested in measuring whether these teenagers were 'switched off' by politics - was it the case that growing bad publicity in recent years was the cause of lack of political interest, rather than pure lack of political knowledge?

Table 9: 'Please describe in a few sentences what you think of politicians today'

unrepresentative	corrupt	good & bad	negative	removed	break promises
14.8%	13.3%	12.3%	9.9%	8.9%	5.9%

Response rate 86.4%.

Again, we had to group together similar responses as this was an open question. The six most frequent responses shown in Table 9, and in general the response was negative. An additional 2.5% stated that politicians were 'boring'. Some did acknowledge that there were good and bad politicians, but generally the feeling was that they were unrepresentative and self-centred – an image no doubt reinforced by the media in recent years. We followed this question by trying to find out what, or more precisely who, made a 'good politician', and the five most popular responses are outlined in Table 10:

Table 10: If you had to choose one political figure (dead or alive) as a leading example for a good politician' who would you choose?

Thatcher	Churchill	Blair	Ashdown	Major
28.5% (43)	17.9% (27)	15.2% (25)	4.6% (7)	4.6% (7)

(actual number of responses to our questionnaire in brackets). **Response rate 64.2%.**

For those teenagers who responded to this question, Margaret Thatcher was by far the most popular, and the distribution of responses were fairly evenly spread across all schools. Therefore, the teenagers in our study may not be 'Thatcher's children', but they certainly see her as an example of a good politician. Finally, in this section we asked whether there was a party which represents young people's interests:

Table 11: 'Which party best represents young people's interests?'

None	Lab	LibDems	Greens	Cons	Ref. Party	Others
33.1% (41)	32.3% (40)	18.5% (23)	6.4 (8)	4.8% (6)	3.2% (4)	1.6% (2)

(actual number of responses to our questionnaire in brackets). **Response rate 64.2%.**

This question was only asked in three schools. Clearly, many young people feel that no political party represents their interests (many adding that it was because they could not vote, therefore parties were not interested in them). There is, however, an obvious distinction here between the party perceived as representing young people, and party identification as outlined in Table 1. The Conservative Party is more popular among those expressing a party identification than this question demonstrates - an issue which needs researching further.

Political knowledge

Our last theme concerns levels of political knowledge among young people. This is potentially the most difficult area to analyse, due to the problems of defining political knowledge itself. For example, what depth of knowledge do we expect? Are we interested in knowledge about political institutions or political issues? Certainly, discussions with some of the students we studied showed that although they claimed to have little political interest or knowledge, they quite freely discussed issues which were important to them and which certainly have political links. Park's study demonstrated that political knowledge improves with age and education, with males performing better than females. Furthermore:

> *statements referring to current political issues or personalities proved on the whole to be easier, while those referring to more technical constitutional issues proved more difficult (1995, p.44).*

A MORI poll (1998) conducted on behalf of The Institute for Citizenship/ Natwest showed that 82% of young people claim to know 'just a little or less' about the way parliament works. We attempted to measure political knowledge in two ways. First, by asking respondents to name those parties with seats in the House of Commons and other parties that are not represented. The second question asked respondents to name the members of the current government and, if possible, their cabinet post. Tables 12-14 gives the mean scores for these questions for each school, by gender:

Table 12: How many parties are represented in the House of Commons (please list them)

	response rate	male	female
School A	78.6%	3.4	3.0
School B	97.2%	3.9	3.3
School C	80.3%	3.0	3.2
School D	100%	3.6	3.5

We can see that the response rate varied quite dramatically between the four schools, and also that the males on the whole were slightly more "knowledgeable" than the females (except in school C where only four of the sample were male). The mean scores show that most sixth formers were able to name the three most prominent parties (Labour, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats) only. How do they fare in naming parties which are not represented in the House of Commons?

Table 13: Are there any political parties or groups you have heard of which are not represented in Parliament (please list them)?

	response rate	male	female
School A	19.0%	1.5	-
School B	67.6%	2.5	2.1
School C	39.3%	1.0	1.3
School D	95.1%	2.0	1.8

In relation to this question, we can see a much more dramatic variation in response rate between schools, and again we can see that the mean scores for males are higher (except in School C again). However, in each school the means for both genders is lower than for naming parties in the House of Commons. In fact, many teenagers tended to answer the previous question with a list of parties which included the Green Party and the Referendum Party, which meant many could not answer the question on parties excluded from the Commons. Our final question asked respondents to name 'members of the present government' and their position. We purposely did not use the term Cabinet, although this is the criteria we used for measuring how many names each respondent could get right.

Table 14: Please list the names of as many members of the present government as you can think of and, if possible, state their position in brackets.

	response rate	male	female
School A	69.0%	1.5	1.1
School B	97.2%	4.0	2.2
School C	72.1%	2.6	1.8
School D	100%	3.4	2.3

The response rate again varies (with School A having the poorest response rate to all three knowledge questions), and again the males have a higher average mean than the females - this time in all four schools. Most teenagers could name Tony Blair, but then knowledge decreases dramatically. What was interesting was the range of 'wrong' answers. Many respondents listed William Hague and Paddy Ashdown (and got their posts right) and there were also frequent mentions for John Major, Michael Portillo and the two local MPs (neither of whom are Cabinet mem-

bers). This is interesting insofar as it suggests that a great number of the teenagers in our sample perceive the word 'government' as an all-encompassing term for all those elected to the House of Commons, sometimes even including individuals who are no longer there. The political knowledge of our sample group therefore appears to be highly personalised and limited to include those leading political figures who get regular exposure in the media (reinforcing the earlier emphasis upon the centrality of the media as a source of political information and also claims made by Furnham & Stacey (1991:25), but does not stretch to a more abstract, theoretical grasp of the political system as such.

Further Analysis

As we found some evidence of a relationship between gender and political knowledge, we analysed whether there were significant gender differences for other variables we had sought to measure. By employing a chi-squared test we could identify no significant relationship between gender and self rating on political interest statements. We have already shown that our sample tend to not be interested in politics and do not discuss politics at home - there is no evidence to suggest that there is a gender difference to this lack of interest.

We also wished to discover whether a relationship exists between self rating questions (regarding interest in politics, discussing politics at home and knowledge of current affairs) and scores on our political knowledge questions. Using Spearman's correlations, we were able to identify a significant relationship between self rating on political interest and the ability to name parties in the House of Commons, and name members of the Cabinet correctly in two schools only.

In relation to self-rating on discussing politics at home, we have already shown that our group of teenagers do not generally discuss politics in the home, although there does appear to be some evidence that, the more politics is discussed at home, the higher those people score on our political knowledge questions. In School B there was a significant correlation for all three political knowledge questions, and in three schools there appears to be a significant correlation between discussing politics at home, and being able to name members of the Cabinet.

There also appears to be a stronger correlation in most schools between self-rated knowledge of current affairs and ability to answer our political knowledge questions. What is noticeable is that School A did not produce any significant correlations for any self ratings, whilst School B showed significant correlations for all three self ratings. Generally, there was a closer relationship between positive self-rating and ability to name the parties in the House of Commons, and between positive self-rating and ability to name the members of the Cabinet, than there is between positive self-rating and ability to name the parties not in the House of Commons. However, due to differ-

ences between schools, we cannot make any conclusive statements about how political knowledge is acquired.

Conclusions

First of all, our local study confirms many of the existing findings about youth and politics (e.g. young people are generally not interested in politics, politicians have a bad image among teenagers, and young males have more political knowledge than females), though we have little evidence to suggest that these teenagers are any more radical or any more disenfranchised that their predecessors. This generation of future voters appear to have adopted an individualistic approach towards politics. The question here is, therefore, not one of being more or less interested or aware, but rather of how and why. In fact, it may not be just the young who are politically disillusioned;

> *we feel that it just may be the case that what needs remedying is not young people and their supposed lack of interest in politics, but a political system which does little to involve the mass of people of all ages and which provides little in the way of real (perceived) choice (MacDonald & Coffield, 1991:225).*

an argument certainly supported by electoral turnout in the late 1990s. In relation to encouraging greater political interest and participation among future voters, there are several ways in which we can begin to address this issue:

1. *Education* - Some authors (Wilkinson & Mulgan, 1995; Crick (see Pearce & Spencer, 1999)), put a high premium on training and education. This, however, may be problematic. Whilst party or trade union membership are essentially collective ways of fighting for social and political change, education, on the other hand, puts a high emphasis on self-advancement and, at least in its current incarnation, perpetuates a meritocratic myth. If we are right in suggesting that this - not necessarily in the form of a consciously embraced ideology or materialistic 'greed' - is where and how Thatcher's Children differ from previous generations, then serious consideration needs to be given to what exactly 'citizenship education' really means - both in terms of content and method of delivery.

2. Wider participation in decision-making - there are various examples, from the UK and abroad, of genuine attempts to widen the opportunity for young people to participate in decision-making (of both a political and non-political kind). For example, 'youth parliaments' have been operationalised in the Caribbean and in New Zealand to allow the voice of young people to be heard by politicians, and also to provide positive experiences of political participation and enhance the general image of established political systems (Miller,

1992; McClay, 1995). In the UK, youth councils have enjoyed mixed fortunes in the post World War Two period (Matthews, Limb, Harrison & Taylor, 1998). Despite a growing momentum which advocates the establishment of young people's rights, promoted by organisations such as Local Agenda 21 and the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child Article 12, youth councils in much of the UK demonstrate a lack of structural consistency and effectiveness. Far from enabling young people to become politically engaged, 'poor participatory mechanisms are very effective in training young people to become non-participants' (Matthews et al, 1998 :23). Other attempts to engage young people in decision-making have focused upon specific events - for example, Peter Mandelson's recommendation that a 'junior board' should be consulted about the Millennium Dome project (*White, The Guardian, 9/12/97*).

The potential for participation begins with the 'local' - whether this be in the home or wider community. For example, 'localised' political events may increase political interest, awareness and activism. Indeed, parties may have much to learn from single issue pressure groups (an idea supported by Leonard & Katwala, 1997). Prompting young voters to participate via birthday cards sent on 18th Birthdays and televised campaigns is all well and good. The real task for political parties here lies in convincing young people that they are genuinely interested in them and their concerns, rather than just their votes. What we have been able to show is that a group of young people who will be the next first time voters are certainly cynical about politics and politicians, but are not, as yet, likely to feel disenfranchised.

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Note

1 The schools consisted of two mixed sex schools, a boy's school and a girls' school (although a small number of girls were in the boys' school sixth form and vice versa for the girls' school). As the catchment area for sixth forms is not as restrictive as it is for students under 16, it is difficult to make any concrete assumptions about socio economic background - particularly as we did not survey participants' parents. We did ask the teenagers to record the occupation of both parents (or appropriate guardian), but many responses were too vague for us to be able to meaningfully assess social class (eg 'father is self-employed', 'mother works at Company X'). In terms of political geography, all schools were located in constituencies with Labour MPs, although prior to the 1997 General Election the area had experienced a long period on Conservative representation.

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TEENAGE MOTHERHOOD, DECISION MAKING AND THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

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Teenage motherhood has been cited as a possible route to independent living and by implication adulthood (Jones 1995). It has been argued that as a route out of the family home and into some form of social housing with the formation of a new family unit, teenage motherhood can offer opportunities for independence which have otherwise been eroded by the downturn in the youth labour market and reduction in benefits (Dean, 1997; Jones, 1995). Whilst recent research (Burges and Brown, 1995) has disputed this, arguing that in practice a baby may not be a route to independence from the family home because social housing may not be available, or the pregnant teenager may prefer to continue to rely on the support of her family (Phoenix, 1991), the idea of teenage pregnancy as a deliberate device to secure housing remains strong both in the media and among the general public (Allen, 1998). This has been most recently illustrated by the government's Teenage Pregnancy Report (Social Exclusion Unit 1999) which proposes that young mothers be housed in supported units rather than receive single tenancies. Whilst this is offered as a supportive device to solve problems of isolation experienced by young mothers the link between young pregnancy and housing is reinforced by such a development. This development also identifies current young mothers as isolated and experiencing difficulties as they are thrust into domestic independence at a young age without the experience or maturity to cope with a baby. In particular it describes these young mothers as in need of support, both financial - which it seeks to address by ensuring fathers, irrespective of age, pay maintenance - and practical - to be addressed within the new housing schemes. Contrary to assertions about teenage motherhood as a route to adulthood both these developments depict young mothers as dependent on others with the father providing financial support, and professionals providing practical support.

In this paper I will look at teenage motherhood and the transition to adulthood by examining notions of age, maturity and independence in relation to the decision making that occurs around a teenage pregnancy. This research forms part of a larger Joseph Rowntree Foundation funded project looking at the influences on young women in their decision whether to continue with a pregnancy or not. The findings used in this paper came from the first stage of the project, focus groups with young non-pregnant women in an area of economic decline with a high rate of teenage pregnancy. I will argue that young women's expectations of teenage motherhood, decision making and the transition to adulthood are more complex than suggested by the directives about housing and the contribution of young fathers in the Teenage Pregnancy Report (SEU, 1999).

The Teenage Pregnancy Report

In the report on teenage pregnancy various measures are suggested to reduce the current rate of such pregnancies by half. These measures are aimed at two related concerns identified within the report: firstly the high rate of teenage conceptions and secondly the situation of young mothers. The measures themselves presuppose notions of adulthood, maturity and independence/dependence that are worth exploring before moving on to the data from the young women in this research.

Within the report are two policy implementations which have received most media attention and tacit approval from the right wing press, and organisations seeking to prevent teenage pregnancy through abstinence. These are the setting up of managed hostels for young mothers between the ages of 16 and 18 and the pursuit of teenage fathers for maintenance. These measures are presented as being beneficial to the young women who may suffer from isolation and poverty. They are also implicitly understood as deterrents against young women using teenage pregnancy as a route to independent living, removing the option of a single tenancy for young mothers and bringing recalcitrant fathers to book regardless of age or financial position. Such measures hark back to the council housing debate (Allen, 1998) about reasons for young pregnancy which is itself considered in the report, where it is acknowledged that research does not support such a view. This apparent contradiction between the policy implications of the report and the evidence cited within it, constitutes a tension between support and censure which will be explored in this paper by looking at notions of age, maturity and independence/dependence held by young women in relation to teenage pregnancy.

Within the Teenage Pregnancy Report young women are presented as in need of support, whilst young men require encouragement to contribute to their offspring regardless of their relative levels of autonomy, or participation in the decisions leading to the birth of a baby. For example the action point on housing for young mothers states:

> *By 2003, all under 18 teenage lone mothers who cannot live with family or partner should be placed in supervised semi-independent housing with support, not in an independent tenancy.*
> *(SEU, 1990: 102).*

This is based on the assertion that:

> *The Unit heard from many people that teenage parents were likely to be housed in poor accommodation on large estates often away from family or other support.*

> *For many young mothers, a flat of their own with a young child is an isolating experience, when they are already isolated from their peers by being a parent.*
>
> *In the population as a whole, accidents, especially poisoning and burns, happen more often to the children of teenage parents than to other children.*
> *(SEU, 1999: 65).*

Whilst the action point for young fathers states:

> *The Child Support Agency will actively pursue the fathers of children born to teenage mothers for early action in calculating how much child support they should pay.*
> *(SEU, 1999: 98).*

This is based on evidence that:

> *One study found only around a half of teenage mothers were still in a relationship with the father a year after the baby's birth. The rest were usually single and without a steady partner.*
>
> *One study followed a group of 174 teenage mothers over 15 years: this found that only 20 per cent of the fathers were still in touch at the end of the period, though for a further 12 per cent there was still contact with an 'early substitute father'.*
>
> *More generally, research has shown that all partnerships entered into in the teenage years are much more fragile than later partnerships.*
> *(SEU, 1999: 65).*

These action points suggest that young mothers between the ages of 16 and 18 experience difficulties with the transition to adulthood that are linked not only to their transition to motherhood, but also to their transition to independent living. Conversely the recommendations for the fathers suggest that young men experience a problem with accepting responsibility for fatherhood at any age and that fatherhood in itself can be encapsulated in the provision of income, however small, rather than any other contribution to their child's upbringing. For young women, therefore, young motherhood under 18 is considered problematic as a route to adulthood given the support required: for them motherhood does not constitute independence, their age alone constructs them as requiring supervision from professionals. For young men fatherhood is constructed in such a way as to make age irrelevant, even school boys must pay maintenance. This ties sex to fatherhood in a very specific way without addressing the role of fathers in any of

the decisions made about a pregnancy. Age and maturity are both missing from how young fathers are viewed in the report and responsibility is only encouraged through financial support regardless of the value of that support for the young mother. Age is specifically tied into the transition to adulthood and independence for young mothers in a way that it is not for young fathers.

For the young women we talked to sexual activity, pregnancy and birth presented a number of decisions. Some of these decisions were left to others, some they insisted on taking themselves. However the ability to make these decisions was not seen to be reliant solely on the age of the young woman, but was related to the less measurable idea of maturity. In the research we undertook with young women this maturity was constructed through sexual activity, decision making and motherhood, these were distinct from any moves to independent living.

Methods

For the first stage of the project ten focus groups were undertaken with (mostly)[1] non-pregnant young women aged 13 to 26. The young women were recruited from an area with a significantly higher then the national average rate of pregnancy. Each focus group consisted of between 4 and 9 young women from the local area who had volunteered to take part in a group discussion on teenage pregnancy. Groups were broadly divided into those under 16 and those over, although some overlap did occur. In total four groups were made up of young women aged 16 and under, and six with young women aged 16 plus. Of these, three groups had young women who were in their early to mid twenties in attendance. Such a wide age range was selected to enable comparisons between young women at different stages in their life.

Table 1

Type of group	Age range	No. of participants
Sixth form (SF1)	16 to 17	6
Sixth form (SF2)	17 to 18	6
Vocational training (VT)	17 to 23	7
Pre-vocational training (PVT)	17 to 18	6
HE Group (HE)	18 to 22	9
Youth Club (YC1)	13 to 16	6
Youth Club (YC2)	13 to 15	9
Young people's clinic (YC3)	14 to 15	4
Youth Club (YC4)	13 to 14	6
Women's Group (WG)	18 to 26	6

By establishing focus groups with young girls who were not pregnant we wanted to examine their views on pregnancy as a hypothetical event, whether for example

it would be welcomed or not and if so why? What circumstances would make a difference to this, including the age of the young woman? We also wanted to know who or what would be influential in any decision to continue or terminate a pregnancy.

This methodology enabled us to track the interactions of young people as well as providing a means to allow discussion to develop around a theme with a minimum of intervention. In addition focus groups, unlike research instruments such as individual interviews, reveal the negotiation of ideas within a group. This was felt to be especially important when considering the development of young girls' attitudes to teenage pregnancy as the peer group process was thought to be influential on the development and maintenance of views. This is not to suggest that this methodology is without its problems. Focus groups are an increasingly popular method of research but they present special problems to the researcher, especially when dealing with groups such as young people who might be suspicious of the research process (Krueger, 1994). Attempts to alleviate these feelings in this research included the usage of volunteers, the payment of a token as a gesture of thanks and the use, where possible of pre-existing groups. Whilst the focus group literature is undecided on the wisdom of this approach (Krueger, 1994; Kitzinger, 1994) it was felt that young people would be more open in a discussion of this topic if they knew each other.

Within the focus groups the pre-16/post-16 watershed was a significant element in young women's thinking about teenage pregnancy. There was a general consensus that young women under the age of 15 were 'too young' to be pregnant, but 'it might be fairly normal' within their communities to have a baby at 16, just after leaving school, even if they personally would not want to follow this route. However this watershed was mediated by notions of maturity and immaturity related to sexual activity, decision making and questions about what being a teenage mother would mean for the young women, most notably would it involve a transition to adulthood.

Sexual activity and maturity

When listening to young people talking about teenage pregnancy within their communities, it became apparent very quickly that none of them would welcome a pregnancy whilst young, but equally most of the decision making leading up to pregnancy was out of their hands. This last point is especially important in the light of the considerable amount of literature showing that young women may not be in a position to make decisions about sex including the use of contraception (Thomson and Scott, 1992; Holland, et al, 1990; Holland *et al*, 1991) an idea familiar to even the youngest girls within the groups.

ST *Do you think boys persuade girls?*

I *Yes.*

S2 *Yes they're dirty minded aren't they boys.*

V1 *Yes but boys enjoy it better don't they when they're not using protection and they say nothing is going to happen.*

J1 *All they do is they have sex with you, they get you pregnant and they don't want nothing to do with you. They have sex with you and think nothings gonna happen, but you think it will happen one day, it's like a 50/50 chance isn't it.*

(YC2 13 to 15).

In this focus group the young women discussed this type of pressure arguing that the influence of boys was pivotal to the decision to have sex in the first place.

ST *But you can't stop the boy?*

J1 *No it's like they pressurise you.*

V1 *They persuade you don't they.*

J1 *If you really like him you're going to do it aren't you.*

V1 *Otherwise they're going to split up with you. And you don't want them to because you really like them or something like that.*

(YC2 13 to 15).

Young women were dependent for their decision making about sex on others, namely boys who were seen as the instigators of sex and in charge of contraceptive decision making.

This group ended with one of the young women stating that they would probably all end up pregnant before they were sixteen suggesting that in actuality pregnancy was something over which they had no control.

Although this was a young group the element of risk and abdication of responsibility with respect to contraception was also found in other older groups.

ST *So people don't know about contraceptives?*

L1 *They are aware but just can't be bothered.*

N *I think younger ones aren't aware that you can get it.*

Na *Think it can't happen to them.*

L1 *Our mate risks it, she's 19 nearly 20 she still risks it now.*

Na *I do I'm stupid and I do.*

Le *You've got a boyfriend, yes*

L1 *But she's been pregnant twice before.*

Na *But I've had a lot of scares as well. But it's my boyfriend as well but he will not go into Boots and buy condoms, yet I've got to. If there's no condoms there I say no sex sorry.*

L1 *He could buy the box of 3 in the toilets.*

Na *He won't even get them. He will not go in to a shop and buy condoms, people are going to think he's a sensible lad, but he doesn't he won't, he's scared.*

Le *They leave it up to you.*

Na *If you're not on pill you don't see no-one you carry them you're slut of the year. You can't do right and you can't do wrong. If you got pregnant it would be your fault.*

(VT 17 to 23).

Such absence of responsibility for contraception was seen as a sign of immaturity by the groups, it was also acknowledged as a necessary and familiar element to young sexual activity. Sex was thought of as a spontaneous activity and contraceptive use was regarded as beyond the remit of young women for fear of being thought of as sexually promiscuous, even though they will have to face the consequences should pregnancy occur. That such ideas about control of contraception and sexual decision making should span the pre-16/post-16 watershed indicates that age may make little difference to the ability of young women to negotiate contraception use in their relationships. This suggests that unintended pregnancies are inevitable at any age and subsequent decisions about its continuance will have to be made.

Decision making and maturity

The abandoning of conception to fate was very different to the decision to continue with a pregnancy or to have an abortion, which was seen as one that must be taken by the young woman regardless of her age. The very fact of being pregnant bestowed a degree of maturity as it evidenced sexual activity and an associated responsibility for its outcomes.

R *I think if they think they're mature enough to have sex, they are mature enough to make their own decision about the baby.*

B *It's accidents though isn't it.*

N *They don't mean to get pregnant.*

(YC1 13 and 16)

This offers a contradiction whereby young women were required to abdicate responsibility for contraception but to accept responsibility for any subsequent conceptions, including making the decision to continue or not. In part, this reflects a feeling expressed by young women in two of the older groups (YC1, VT) that pregnancy itself demanded a decision to be made by the young woman alone. This decision making was in itself a sign of maturity and autonomy with the only other influence permitted by the older women a boyfriend if there was a steady relationship, although not in all cases.

E *I'd be like I wouldn't want them to get all worried and all that, I'd want to make sure and make my own decision. Then I'd go up to him and say I'm pregnant I'm having an abortion.*

K *I was in a position where I thought I was and he was the first person that I went to, and we sat and discussed the options, then I talked to friends afterwards, but he was like a tower of strength, he was really good.*

(HE Group 18 to 22).

However, it was generally agreed that ultimately the decision would be the young woman's alone. In some respects this decision making accelerated the move to independence and away from the family of origin as the group who's opinion was considered most problematic was parents. This lead some young women to insist that they would not go to their parents for advice but rather to friends or professionals, or to no-one.

H *You hear about a lot of stress before 3 months pregnant, you can miscarriage can't you, if you get a lot of stress. If I wanted to keep baby, wait till about half way before I told anyone I was pregnant.*

ST *So you'd wait until.*

H *I'd have my own decision rather than people saying you shouldn't have it.*

(YC3 14 and 15).

This rejection of external advice was linked to the options that would actually be available for the young women to consider as abortion was rejected out of hand by most of the younger groups. This rejection of abortion was in contrast to their desire to have jobs, enjoy themselves and generally to 'have a life'. These aspira-

tions were not thought to be compatible with motherhood, but as pregnancy was expected these aspirations could be thwarted without warning and the young women would have no option but to continue.

ST *So is that the right time to have a baby then, about 25?*

O *Yes.*

J2 *You don't have to have one, you could have one later on, but that's about the right age.*

V2 *It's like you've grown up, you've been a teenager, you've grown mature enough...*

O *When you get to that age if you don't feel you've lived as much life as you want to live, then you carry on.*

(YC2 13 to 15).

Here the young women were arguing that choices were available with respect to pregnancy and motherhood, however these same young women were also vehemently anti-abortion and felt that sexual decision making was out of their hands. These considerations continued to circumscribe the choices of the older groups.

In this case, although abortion was considered, particularly by those involved in vocational training or further education, it was still rejected as ultimately being the less desirable option. A baby would outweigh other aspirations, particularly with the back-up of parental support.

L *Having a baby or not having a baby is more important than doing a college course isn't it.*

N *Yes but that college course is going to be your future.*

O *So can a baby be your future can't it.*

L *It depends which you value, what's important at that particular time, baby or career.*

S *You can always do a career can't you, you can always go back.*

O *You need your career before you have a baby.*

S *Not necessarily. Our Shelley didn't do that, she's got a child...*

O *Yes but she's got a partner and he's got a full time job as well, and her grandmother looks after her everyday while she comes to college for nothing.*

(VT 17 to 23).

In only one group was maturity and consideration of self seen as a factor which might lead to the decision to have an abortion rather than to continue with the pregnancy. This is in contrast to the contradictions in the younger groups where abortion was rejected out of hand but the importance of 'having a life' emphasised as a separate consideration.

S *You're bringing another life into the world aren't you, and you're grown up enough to know that if you can't give it all that love and attention that it needs, or whether you still need it for yourself.*

(VT 17 to 23).

Independence and the transition to adulthood

Any desire for autonomy from outside influences did not extend to the period after the prospective baby was born. Rather the expectation, particularly from the younger women, was that support, both financial and practical, would come from parents. In one group in particular this expectation of support was linked to being under sixteen (YC2) and being dependent on their family.

A2 *They'd say oh you're mature enough now, if you go and get pregnant then you can go and look after it, you're old enough to know what you're doing. Whereas if you're like younger they'll say, oh you don't know what you're doing, you're not mature enough to look after it, we'll help you. But if you're like 16 they might just not help you and tell you to look after it on your own, and they might kick you out, then you've got nowhere to live.*

(YC2 13 to 15).

Whilst another group of younger girls (YC3), argued that being pregnant under 16 was no guarantee of parental support, an acceptance of young pregnancy under certain circumstances was apparent throughout the groups; for the younger women one of these circumstances was the expectation of parental support.

ST *So would anybody think it were a good thing?*

H *I would. I think if you have adults to support you.*

(YC3 14 and 15)

This expectation of parental support had led some of the young women to discuss unplanned pregnancies with their mothers to ascertain what sort of support would be available. For the younger ones this support was often delivered in the form of a threat to 'kill them' or 'throw them out'. However, they still believed that should support be required it would be available, based upon the similar experiences of those around them.

For the older groups, parental support was thought to be available if this helped the young woman to achieve her ambitions. It was also recognised that not everyone would be so lucky and a lack of parental support could have potentially disastrous consequences for the young woman and her baby (HE).

This expectation was in contrast to what was expected from the prospective fathers who were not expected to stick around if they weren't in a steady relationship:

S *Most teenage women don't have Dads around, all the Dads have gone. Well not all but most of them have gone haven't they.*

ST *Are you talking about the boyfriends?*

L *Yes because teenage Dads don't provide any money.*

V *They don't want nowt to do with it.*

F *And then they'll have another girlfriend next week probably get somebody else pregnant as well.*

V *They run away from it.*

(YC2 13 to 15).

Parental support as opposed to boyfriend support was thought to be pivotal to a successful teenage pregnancy, but young women of all ages regarded themselves as mature enough to make the decision to continue without their parents. This suggests that parents are key to the normalisation of a teenage pregnancy within the existing family implying that independence, or dependence on the father of the child might not be an available or desirable outcome, regardless of the age or maturity of the young woman.

Discussion

Implicit in the government's Teenage Pregnancy Report is a notion of teenage pregnancy as a route to adulthood which requires additional support, both because young mothers are vulnerable and because young fathers do not take financial responsibility for their children. According to the young women we talked to who were not pregnant, but were familiar with the consequences and circumstances of teenage pregnancy, young women could expect to receive this support from their families of origin, particularly if they are under sixteen or have aspirations. This support was expected and was supplied as part of their continuing dependence as young women within families. In this way becoming a mother was not seen as a route to adulthood or independence, but as an extension to the existing family. Moreover it was thought that young fathers would not want an involvement in long term support of the baby and the expectation was that a new family would not be formed. Teenage motherhood was not viewed as a route to independent living.

However, decisions about a pregnancy including the decision to either continue with the pregnancy or have it terminated, were seen as an expression of adulthood. This was a decision that young women must take alone with some involvement from the young man dependent on the nature of the relationship with him. Importantly her existing family should not be involved in the decision, regardless of any support that they might give subsequently.

This was in marked contrast to any decision taken with respect to the decision to have sex in the first place or to use contraception, both of which were outside of the remit of the young women. The decision to have sex was seen to be one taken by the young men inspired by either a need to dispense with their virginity or a desire to consolidate the relationship by making it sexual. However the question of whether to use contraception or not was often avoided. As a consequence becoming pregnant occurred accidentally, rather than through a positive decision to be so.

Such lack of planning in regard to pregnancy suggests that the removal of single tenancies for young mothers and the pursuit of maintenance from fathers as suggested in the Teenage Pregnancy Report will have little impact on teenage conception rates. Teenage sex was characterised by the young women as something over which they had little control and which was granted little forethought. The consequences of this in conception were not considered by either party but young men were able to walk away leading to denial of paternity, a situation likely to be aggravated by the pursuit of maintenance. It was also suggested in this research and elsewhere (Speak et al 1997) that as the baby was integrated into the young woman's existing family the young father would become further removed regardless of any involvement he might want. Under these circumstances of a lack of consultation and involvement, the pursuit of maintenance is likely to be highly contentious.

For the young women themselves support was viewed as pivotal to the success of a teenage pregnancy. This would mean that the Teenage Pregnancy Report's instruction to Local Authorities to set up hostels for young mothers would be beneficial in dealing with the problems of isolation and practical help identified within it. However as the report notes only a small percentage of young mothers between the ages of 16 and 18 are unsupported, so the numbers involved in any community are likely to be small: this creates the worrying prospect of young mothers being moved out of their communities and into centralised housing schemes in order to justify the costs in establishing them. This will make them more reliant upon professionals as they are removed from both their families and wider communities, thereby perpetuating the problems associated with teenage mothers being concentrated in peripheral estates away from more diverse communities. This would be particularly problematic in rural areas or areas with a low number of teenage pregnancies

where young mothers might already suffer from stigma (Whitehead 1998).

Furthermore, any deterrent aspect to the removal of a single tenancy was not supported by this research. Teenage pregnancy was not only thought of as a unplanned eventuality over which young women had little control, but housing and a move to independent living was also not thought to be a consideration in the decision to continue with a pregnancy or not. What was thought to be important was the perceived support of parents available after a baby is born. As noted elsewhere by the Teenage Pregnancy Report in their directives on sex education, parents are key to the education of young people about the options open to them at all stages of conception and pregnancy.

Conclusions

Adulthood typically presumes independence from the family of origin, some degree of personally secured material stability and a sense of personal control over one's life more generally. For young women these attributes are developing as they leave school and embark on an independent life. In areas of economic decline this independence may be limited. In these circumstances pregnancy may offer opportunities for maturity not available elsewhere most notably an opportunity to exert their autonomy through decision making. So, the decision to continue with a pregnancy might demonstrate adulthood, whilst conversely ensuring a continued dependency on the family of origin. This is especially important in the light of research which has demonstrated the lack of authority young women possess in relation to their sexual relationships, including the ability to say no to unwanted sexual advances or to negotiate the use of contraceptives (Thomson and Scott, 1991; Holland et al, 1990; Holland et al, 1991).

To conclude:

- *the opportunity to make an important decision was crucial to the developing sense of maturity of these young women. As decisions about sex, work and where to live have been removed, the decision whether or not to continue with a pregnancy has acquired importance as the one decision that they are required to make alone. Young women need to be engaged in these other decisions and given the necessary information and support to enable them to make informed choices in all areas of their lives, not just pregnancy.*
- *abortion was not considered as a positive option, the least so by those with little knowledge. This suggests that young women need more information and education to make an informed choice.*
- *parental support was thought to be pivotal to the decision to continue with a pregnancy; this suggests that parents have a key role to play in presenting options.*

- *the ability to manage alone was something not contemplated by the young women who acknowledged that they would still be reliant on their parents until they could support themselves and their child.*
- *it is therefore possible to be supported and dependent on parents, yet mature for these young women. This support would not come from young men who were regarded as too unreliable to offer financial or other support regardless of age. They could not be depended upon.*
- *for young men an approach needs to be developed that links contraceptive decisions to fatherhood and its consequences, as the decision to continue with a pregnancy is one on which they might have little influence.*

This paper presents a critique of the age-related notions of maturity and independence used in the government's Teenage Pregnancy Report, but it is not a comprehensive rejection of the report itself. The Teenage Pregnancy Report signifies an important advance in tackling the high rate of teenage pregnancy in Britain through its examination of all the contributing factors, and the development of initiatives at the local level in areas of greatest need. The implications of this paper for the report are that steps need to be taken to refine the policies to account for the complexity of the problems confronting teenage mothers and fathers, and those on whom they rely for support, in particular their parents.

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Note

1 In one focus group two pregnant women were in attendance. In two of the other groups there were women with children.

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HAVING A FIELD DAY:

The Theory-Practice conundrum in youth and community studies courses in England, USA and Canada

RUTH WEBBER

In 1997 I was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship from the Committee for University Teaching and Staff Development to study the field work component of the training of youth workers in England, United States of America and Canada (Webber, 1998). The study, which took place in 1998, included visits to 34 institutions including four peak and/or professional organisations involved in the setting of policy and standards. These included 14 Universities (19 separate programmes), two community colleges (tertiary) who conduct field education programmes for students, and 14 community organisations who accept students on placement. Interviews were conducted with Directors of peak bodies, academics, placement officers, managers and/or coordinators of community organisations, field supervisors and students on placement. The manuals and course outlines for all 21 programmes were analysed. The contents of the manuals and course outlines were compared with the actual practices that took place.

A number of factors have been identified as necessary for conducting appropriate field education programmes (Brennan, 1982; Jeffs, 1996; Martin, 1997; Szirom, 1995; Tash, 1984; Thompson, 1996). These include: appropriate documentation and training of supervisors, clear aims and achievable objectives, effective negotiation of the student-supervisor relationship, ability to distinguish between supervisory and assessing roles and clear guidelines about the responsibilities and roles of all parties. The importance of effective supervision is also well documented (Berger, 1993; Kaslow, 1986; Szirom, 1995; Yogev, 1982). While much has been written about field education, it is disturbing to find how little literature is available on field education specifically designed for youth work. With a few notable exceptions (Bloxham and Heathfield, 1995; Davies and Norton, 1996; Jeffs, 1996; Szirom, 1995; Tash, 1984), most of the discourse seems to come from psychology, social work and child welfare.

While it is difficult to generalise across so many organisations and programmes, a critical issue that emerged was the failure to adequately link theory and practice, a perennial problem in all human science education (Brennan, 1982; Chalmers and Fuller, 1996; Korthagen and Wubbels, 1991; Martin, 1997; Thompson, 1996). It is this issue that is addressed in this paper.

Theory and practice

In recent years there has been considerable debate about the best way to train competent workers in the field of youth work. The criticism of the existing system

has been that university training splits theory and practice with theory being removed from the real world of work and that this system has failed to turn out skilled and competent practitioners. There has been a strong push for university courses to direct more attention to 'learning by doing', to become less involved in the politics of social change and to direct greater attention to notions of competencies.

Competency standards are sometimes referred to as practice standards and the list of competencies may involve hundreds of items categorised within several practice areas. The influence of the competency movement has increased considerably over the last twenty years with an even greater push by Governments over the last five years. In the human service area, several changes have taken place that fit with a competency based approach. These changes include output based funding, a re-definition of workers as 'human resources' and the emphasis on training rather than education. Greater efficiency, which translates into 'doing more with less', is geared to number crunching and tick the box approaches.

It is not surprising that the competency model is becoming more fashionable when we consider its apparent advantages. It appears to be simple, economical while providing a clear-cut benchmark. There is however, a tendency to over-simplify the assessment of competencies (Davies and Norton, 1996). There are assumptions of objectivity that are misplaced. Assessing competencies involves one person assessing another and this process is subjective. While definitions of competence are provided, differences in meanings are apparent. There is also a danger of mediocrity. Students may feel that because they have passed a competency then that is all that is required. Students who perform competently in one situation may not in another; the context is not always taken into account. Wolf (in Davies and Norton, 1996) concludes:

> *As with all competency-based systems, a further implication in all this is that assessment will be unproblematic because it simply involves comparing behaviour with the transparent 'benchmark' of the performance criteria. Unfortunately, in practice this is not the case. (p.50)*

Bloxham and Heathfield (1995:35) are strident opponents of the competency movement. They state that the movement towards competencies, 'appears to be based on the spurious and simplistic theories which seem to reject theory in favour of practice as the key to developing good practitioners'.

Proponents of the reflective practitioner model seriously challenge the assumptions of the competency model. Reflective practice is based on encouraging students to explore ideas and formulate critical questions within their professional context. It is about learning to critique theory and associated practice with a view to formulating

new ideas within the context of a personal and professional value system (Schon, 1983). The theory is based on the assumption that learning occurs through reflection on change, irrespective of whether it is seen to be productive or unproductive. Students are encouraged to use theoretical constructs as a basis for actions and/or held beliefs under the tutelage of their supervisors. They are expected to demonstrate their areas of growth and to detail what they have learned by their failures.

> *Reflective practitioners are able to: develop their own analytical frameworks; connect those with broader values and theories and to concrete situations at hand; translate their thinking into action while critically assessing the situation and the application of their intervention and the adequacy of their theorizing and, make any necessary and possible adjustments as they act.' (YMCA, University of Kent, 1998:2)*

As James Coleman (in Parilla and Hesser, 1990) stated twenty years ago, experiential learning involves giving students more opportunity to teach themselves. He claimed that learning is a problem-solving process using what is already in students' heads in dialogue with what they experience inside and outside the classroom. When students are actively involved they learn more than when they are passive recipients. Field education introduces students to the complexities, diversities and inter-relatedness of social reality. It provides teachable moments. Field education offers opportunities for developing theory as well as 'testing the theories and concepts for which they have been exposed' (Parilla and Hesser, 1990:24).

In recent debates on field education there has been criticism of various models and practices within field education (Shardlow and Doel, 1996). An investigation by Martin and Bowden (Martin, 1997) of work placements in five professional areas including youth work, indicated that ignorance by academic staff and employers about how to develop appropriate criteria and standards in work place learning environments and how to give useful feedback, often led to the squandering of time, feelings of lack of achievement by students and dissatisfaction among employers. The preferred model of learning in some cases was 'students learn by osmosis'. However, students do not learn by osmosis, they learn by doing, by reflecting and by interaction with those who have the knowledge and the skills (Baird, 1996; Tash, 1984).

The debate about the need for skills as opposed to the need to integrate theory and practice within a pedagogical framework sets the scene for the ensuing discussion. It seems clear to me that reliance on competency standards alone will not produce competent youth workers. Youth workers need to know how, why and when to

take certain approaches. It requires them to make judgements on the basis of sound theoretical knowledge within the context of their own ethical and professional framework rather than to rely on learned responses that are assessed by a 'tick-the-box' assessment tool. While I am convinced as a result of my study, that Schon's theory of reflectivity has much to commend it, it may not be suitable for all types of learning. Youth workers do need skills and some skills just require practice, others require interaction between practice and reflection.

It should not be forgotten that employers want skills and there is a remarkable similarity between the skills that they desire. In addition to specific skills associated with the profession, these skills include analytical and synthesising ability, empathetic understanding of others, risk taking ability, the desire to seek information and feedback, and interpersonal skills to work collaboratively with others. (Kemp in Parilla and Hesser, 1990). One of the tasks of field education is to provide students with the opportunity to learn and test these skills within the context of previous learning at both a skill and theoretical level.

The Study

In all 21 programmes that were investigated in the study, there was an assumption by academic staff that in field education, students should be able to demonstrate both a level of skill and an ability to link theory with practice. There was, however, a considerable degree of difference in emphasis with some giving more weight to theory and others to practice. The results of the study indicate that in some field education programmes, irrespective of the country in which they were based, the competency or skill-based requirements were not integrated well with the theoretical underpinnings of the discipline. The use of both competency standards and reflective learning practices was widespread, with some programmes emphasising one more than the other. While many field coordinators in my study claimed that a Reflective Practitioner Model underpinned the field education programme, often the actual practice did not support this claim.

Unresolved Issues in the Theory/Practice Nexus

The result of the interviews with students, staff and field supervisors revealed six significant problems associated with the requirement that students demonstrate that they can link theory and practice as a result of being on a field work placement.

1 *The links between theory and practice were superficial, with students being unclear as to what theories they were meant to grasp and how theory could be related to the purposes and philosophies that inform practice.*

2 *There was confusion between grand theory, middle range theory and micro theory.*

3 *Many students saw the theories they were accessing as elitist, remote and disconnected from the world of work.*

4 *Theory failed to drive students' practice, often because there were few opportunities for them to reflect on, analyse and critique practice in the light of both formal theory and practice wisdom.*

5 *The pedagogical basis for learning was not clearly understood. The 'osmosis' theory of learning seemed to be a dominant ideology with the expectation that students would learn by watching experienced practitioners.*

6 *Assessment tasks tested students' recall of academic jargon rather than its application to practice while assessment practices did not match the stated objectives of the programme.*

In many programmes the purpose of the course seemed vague. There was confusion between an aim and an objective with each being used as if they were interchangeable. Often it was unclear what students were meant to be learning and what theories they were meant to be applying. There was confusion about what is the nature of a theory. The terms, 'concept', 'model', 'paradigm' and 'theory' were used inter-changeably and students (and in some cases supervisors) seemed unclear as to the distinction between them. Likewise no distinction was made between various types of theory. Students knew that their assessment depended on them putting in writing, statements about the link they observed between theory and their own practice. Many seemed unsure as to what this meant. One student stated that what she did to meet the assessment requirement on linking theory and practice, was to look in her lecture notes on theory, find one that she understood and then find an example from her own practice that could 'bend' to match the theory. In some courses, recall days and reflective seminars which were meant to help students reflect on their practice were unstructured and the time slot used for administrative purposes rather than learning. Students complained that they felt unsupported because recall days were used for assessment purposes not for reflection about their practice. Some recall sessions were highly prescriptive and allowed little student input. I conducted a discussion with about 20 students at one university where several students claimed that items that they wished to discuss were brushed to one side. This was despite the fact that the field handbook stated that during recall sessions, students were expected to raise concerns about their practice or placement experience. Other complaints were about dates for recall days not being clearly stated prior to the placement or dates were changed without adequate notice.

Students were confused because there were inconsistencies between the stated aims of a course and the field education requirements. In one programme, a mismatch occurred when the stated aim of the field education programme was to link theory to practice but the assessment practices were entirely competency based. In some programmes it was impossible to get a clear picture of what the students were meant to be learning. They knew they were meant to write diaries and/or critical incidents but did not know how they were meant to do it. For them, the exercise seemed to be for assessment purposes only. In some manuals, even if learning outcomes were stated, how these related to assessment practices was not always clear and in some cases contradictory. One student wrote 20,000 words (plus video, photographs and tapes) trying to demonstrate this. A fellow student said, 'It's not fair, I know I am a good practitioner, but I can't write as well as her'. Another student in this programme said that it was her capacity to write about competencies not her actual ability that was assessed.

In addition, students complained about the rigidity of the academic programme and the need to conform to acceptable and politically correct views, which prevented open discussion. They further criticised the lack of feedback from field and university supervisors and the lack of effective communication between students, academic staff and field supervisors.

Students complained about poor organisation, lack of structure and lack of support from the university sector. I conducted a focus group of six students who complained about a lack of emotional and practical assistance from university staff and the use of contract staff to do supervision sessions who were unavailable to provide back-up support.

Students complained of discomfort with their supervisor's style of supervision, which they believed was either too intrusive or too detached. Students also complained about the lack of direction and structure within a supervision session. A further area of tension revolved around personality conflicts between supervisor and student. All these issues suggest the need for students to be trained to negotiate an appropriate supervisory relationship that meets their needs and the learning goals. Conflicts have a better chance of being resolved if all parties are made aware of the goals and expectations of supervision.

Without exception those interviewed in this study whether students, field supervisors, field coordinators or academics, were of the opinion that field education is a valuable teaching and learning tool. However, the commitment of the university to field education varied, with some administrations providing significant resources to the programme and actively promoting its value. Others however, gave field education little support and undervalued the role of field coordinators. The level of

commitment by the university appeared to affect the quality of the course and its outcomes.

Making the Theory/Practice Dichotomy Work

Just because there are problems with linking theory and practice does not mean the link should be rejected. A task of field education is to provide students with the opportunity to learn and explore knowledge and skills at both a practical and theoretical level within the context of previous learning. Some programmes I visited were particularly well run and appeared to have resolved issues relating to the theory/practice discourse. If I am to summarise my sense of what needs to be done in respect to this issue on the basis of an examination of those programmes, four suggestions become self-commending.

1 *Field education programmes should emphasise models of learning that incorporate practice, theory, reflection, hypothesis formation and testing.*

The 'osmosis' theory of learning needs to be rejected and replaced with a model that recognises that learning should be tailored to fit circumstances with particular attention given to the process. It should not be assumed that students learn by watching others and being in a work environment. Providing an opportunity for learning does not automatically produce theory-based practice. There needs to be interaction between the learner and the learning environment in a structured context that recognises the necessity of linking theory and current practice. This process involves concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. As a result of this continual process, students should be able to change both their thinking and their practice. There may be a range of possible learning models that can be used to help students achieve optimal learning. However, there are two significant issues about model selection. Firstly, the model that is adopted by a programme should be selected with a clear understanding of what the model offers and how it relates to the aims of the programme. This relationship should be communicated in detail to all relevant parties. One effective way of doing this is by providing a well thought out and detailed field education manual. Secondly, irrespective of which model is adopted, maximum student learning will not take place unless supervisors can help students to reflect on their experiences and provide them with opportunities to try out new skills and knowledge. Supervisors need to be trained to do this. For example, allowing students to occupy their time in menial tasks like photocopying will not enhance student learning and should not be tolerated by good supervisors.

Some students could not speak highly enough about their field education experience and the programme as a whole. One of the areas they specified as being highly valued was related to field education programmes having clear goals and

guidelines. I ran a focus group of seven students from a youth work course based on an apprenticeship model. The students said that they liked setting their own learning goals and not being assessed against competency standards. They further said that coming back to the University for part of each week meant that they could really reflect on what they had done and how they might do it differently next time. One student said 'I feel privileged to be in this course, the work expectations are high but I am not left floundering'.

Theory is a primary part of informed practice. Good practice needs to be informed by theoretical understanding. It is not a matter of students finding the 'right' answers in respect to linking theory to practice. Field education is not just about students jumping through hoops in order to gain an academic grade. Hopefully, its primary purpose is to provide an optimum learning environment for students who hope to enter a profession that requires both skills and knowledge. It is clear that quality field education programmes clearly articulate the requirements of each part of the programme and the connection between each part. It is essential that the aims of the programme be consistent with the assessment practices, role of student and supervisors, pedagogical practices and models of learning.

2 *Theory should be accessible to students with a stress on the relevance to practice.*

Many students recognised the importance of practice wisdom and that there is a wealth of untapped knowledge embedded in the practice of clinical experts. Some students believed what they learned in the field is more practical and useful than what they learned at University. They felt that theory was disconnected from practice and not really relevant. Other students enjoyed the opportunity to make links between the two spheres and saw theory and practice as equally important.

It has been questioned whether we should expect an expert practitioner to be able to articulate theory in practical use (Fook, Ryan and Hawkins, 1997, pp. 406-408). While practitioners may use theory they may not be able to conceptualise it. For this reason, expectations of field supervisors in respect to the theory-practice link need to be clearly delineated. Their role may focus on helping students to reflect on their experiences in the light of good practice while university supervisors may concentrate more on the theory-practice link. Some programmes both in USA and in England adopted this practice and it appeared to work well. This approach of utilizing the skill base of the practitioner acknowledges the practice wisdom of field supervisors which has been undervalued in the past (Klein and Bloom, 1995; Thompson, 1996).

Theory helps to understand both the subjective and objective reality and should be continually challenged and modified to fit new situations. Practice is concerned

with problem solving as well as making value judgments. Practice is a developing process and there can be no single or static theory that informs changing practice. Theory and practice should be adjusted to fit each other. The notion that there is a simplistic and direct one-to-one relationship between theory and practice needs to be rejected. The language and purpose of theory needs to be demystified for students. Some field manuals were very clear, with descriptions of exactly how students were expected to link theory and practice in their reports. Examples were provided, written feedback was given and extensive discussion took place. Some courses had a unit specifically set aside for preparing for field education. Preparation of manuals was a team project and the manual was refined each year.

At one university, the theoretical framework upon which the programme is based is clearly laid out in the manual. In the field handbook there are listed six integrated themes which students must address in their reflective diaries and in supervision workshops eg, systems theory, micro theories. These are described and the criteria upon which they will be evaluated are taught in the academic programme.

Likewise, one academic course in USA had as part of its programme a series of units on social change. On placements of six-month duration, students wrote research reports integrating various theories of social change with their experiences of project development at the agency. Graduates from the programme were encouraged to take undergraduate students on placements and were invited back each year for a re-union to keep the link.

3 *Students need to be encouraged to reflect on their own practice.*

Several field education programmes in the study made use of Schon's (1983) theory of 'the reflective practitioner'. The use of this model was widely acclaimed by many students and staff. Under this model students were encouraged to use theoretical constructs as a basis for actions and/or held beliefs. They were expected to demonstrate their areas of growth and to detail what they have learned by their failures. Students were encouraged to ask questions like:

- *What am I doing?*
- *Why am I doing it?*
- *How does it fit with philosophical ideas about society and practice?*
- *What have I learned about practice and the theoretical assumptions driving this part of it?*
- *If I use this skill or technique what assumptions am I making about the client group, society and myself?*

- *Do I feel comfortable with these assumptions?*
- *In what other ways might I have achieved the same result?*
- *Are those ways more closely matched with my philosophical position?*

In some programmes students were taught how to reflect on their own practice. In one course, based on an apprenticeship model, students handed in their reflective diaries every Friday and picked them up on the Monday with comments, suggestions and alternative interpretations provided by their tutor. Students are more likely to develop reflective practice habits with encouragement and an effective learning environment. Reflective practice should mean encouraging students to explore ideas and formulate critical questions within their professional context. It is about learning to critique theory and associated practice with a view to formulating new ideas within the context of a personal and professional value system. Students should be provided with an environment where they are required to be self critical and self-reflective and responsible for their own learning. Adequate planning for re-call days and a clearly delineated agenda are important pre-requisites for a successful review session. Students claimed that it was advantageous to their learning for them to have input into these sessions eg. the agenda, topics, present case studies.

Supervision is a mechanism typically used to help students reflect on their practice. Supervision involves three parties: the university coordinator or supervising lecturer, the student and the field supervisor. The role of each of these three parties needs to be clearly delineated, particularly in respect to who is responsible for negotiating the supervision model, the setting of the supervision agenda and the provision of training for supervisors and students.

In order for students to reflect on their practice they need to be taught how to do this. In many instances the university field education manual clearly delineated a range of issues associated with supervision.

- *The preferred model or models of supervision to be used,*
- *The person(s) responsible for negotiating the supervision model and setting the agenda for supervision eg. student, programme coordinator, field supervisor,*
- *The role of the all parties eg., student, field and university supervisor,*
- *The aim of supervision,*
- The method of recording supervision and reporting back to the university,
- The expected frequency of supervision.

In some of the programmes that I visited, students were given training on how to establish a supervisory relationship that suited their needs and the needs of the agency or university programme. Clear directives were given to students on how to resolve any disputes in this area and to how the establish and maintain boundaries. It cannot be assumed that all supervisors will automatically know what sort of supervision is required or how to go about negotiating an effective supervisory role. Most programmes provided training for field supervisors and in some cases certificates or diplomas were available in supervision.

Many programmes had difficulties getting and keeping appropriate youth work placements. Some agencies felt pressured into taking more students than they could reasonably manage. Financial restraints and cutback were affecting both agencies and university programme and it was often necessary to cut corners. Some universities provided incentives to agencies and staff eg, supervision courses and certificates provided free to field supervisors, free use of University libraries and other resources, joint research projects with post graduate students doing the research as part of their course, assistance in grant writing provided by academic staff.

In order to cut costs and to ensure affective supervision to students on placements in far flung places, some programmes did telephone or video link up supervision sessions. In USA and Canada most students had access to e-mail, and sometimes supervision was provided this way. One programme had a database containing 5000 agencies world-wide that was accessible to students. It swapped its list with a university from overseas to further increase coverage. Other programmes had centralised all field placements irrespective of the course and a central office kept the register in arch lever files that provided details about agencies and assessments of their services. Some universities had formed collectives and organised placements for several programmes at once, acting as a central unit to which all the involved programmes contributed financially. Many programmes were contracting out supervision to practitioners to further cut costs.

4 *Assessment practices in field placements should closely reflect and emphasise the theory/practice links, as well as assessing critical thinking, practice and student learning.*

The task of field education is to provide students with the opportunity to learn and test skills within the context of previous learning at both a skill and theoretical level. Assessment practices need to reflect this task and should not be merely about passing or failing, but about improvement in critical thinking. To achieve this students need to be clearly briefed about all assessment requirements.

Field education manuals should clearly delineate the requirements of the field education programme including assessment. Aims and objectives need to be clearly articulated but this did not always occur. If an assessment requirement is that students must demonstrate that they can link theory and practice, then the theory or range of theories that they may access should be outlined. Further, the criteria by which the work will be assessed should also be detailed. If part of the assessment requirement involves the students keeping a reflective diary, then the framework for recording critical incidents in relation to theory should be included. A number of programmes provided a proforma, which included examples of how such a recording might look. Likewise, examples of field contracts setting out learning goals were provided.

The necessity for students to achieve certain skills also should not be ignored. If these skills are to be assessed, the manual should clearly state what skills are to be assessed and the standard to be achieved on each placement. There may be instances where it is not appropriate to try and force a theory-practice link. If the aim of a placement is entirely skill based, then there needs to be a good reason for having a theory component. However, if the theory-practice dichotomy is accepted then it should be very clear as to what is to be assessed, how it is to be assessed and by whom.

The primary purpose of assessment should be about improvement of student learning (Cooper, 1994). Assessment practices need to reflect this task and should not be merely about passing or failing, but about improvement in critical thinking and practice and should encourage student learning. Several of the programmes had a student self-checking list. Its purpose was for student to list their areas of strengths and weaknesses and to prioritise their learning goals. This list could remain private and be used for establishing learning priorities. For example, at one supervision session I sat in on, the student listed in her learning contract, her desire to gain some skills and understanding of the process of conducting meetings. During supervision the university supervisor assisted her to reflect on this learning and to relate it to theories about group processes.

Conclusion

It should be recognised that the workload of professional staff in health and welfare has increased in recent years and consequently some are reluctant to take on a fieldwork student with the associated supervision duties. Universities should recognise this and provide some incentives to these professional workers.

Academic and professional staff often have not been trained in field supervision nor been provided with an adequate framework for how they are expected to help

students to learn. University schools or departments can assist those involved in placements by providing them with professional training in supervision.

One final observation, the best programmes are those based on a partnership between universities and agencies supporting field education. Field education programmes need to be well planned and organised and should meet the needs of both the students and the field. Both sides should get something out of having students on placements. In a context where accountability and effectiveness matter increasingly, the best programmes also reflect the willingness by universities to invest their human and financial resources in links with industries and other institutions.

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CLASSIC TEXTS REVISED

E. J. Urwick, Studies of Boy Life in Our Cities

Written by various authors for the Toynbee Trust
J. M. Dent, 1904

CAROLYN OLDFIELD

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In the early 1900s, working-class boys were highly visible. The jobs they took on leaving school at 14 meant that they were constantly in the public gaze - as messengers, errand-boys, van-boys or street sellers. Add to this their much deplored tendency to conduct their leisure time activities in the street rather than the home, and the result was, in the words of the editor of *Studies of Boy Life in Our Cities*, a 'very concrete and offensively living reality', all too evident in everyday life (p.x). Following on from late-Victorian investigations into the social, economic and moral condition of the working classes, the twentieth century brought the problem of youth - in particular male working-class youth - to the fore. According to Harry Hendrick, an extensive literature on the problems associated with youth and the juvenile labour market existed by 1914, of which *Studies of Boy Life in our Cities* was the forerunner (Hendrick 1990:91).

The context

Discussions in the early 1900s took place in the context of concerns about Britain's economic, military and imperial decline which found expression in eugenic fears about the quality of the urban population and the perceived decline of the British 'race' (Weeks 1989, Ch. 7). The much publicised failure of many Boer War army recruits to pass their medical examinations was seen to offer conclusive evidence of this decline, leading to the setting up of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Reporting in 1904, the committee concluded that while fears of widespread deterioration were exaggerated, urgent measures were needed to promote the health of children and young people, including a school medical inspection service, free school meals for needy children, provision for infant welfare, and compulsory physical education.

Anna Davin has highlighted the way in which nineteenth century reformers had promoted the concept of childhood dependency, embodied in the extension of compulsory schooling and legislation addressing children as a separate category (Davin 1996). The increasingly influential concept of adolescence as a critical period of life characterised by stress and uncertainty, during which future adult development would be determined, now served to legitimise further intervention in the lives of young people. Although Stanley Hall's influential work on adolescence was not published until 1904, his conceptualisation drew on already familiar ideas. His theories were characterised by three main ideas: recapitulation - the belief that individual development mimicked that of the human race, progressing from supposedly primitive culture to modern industrial civilisation; an emphasis on adolescent 'storm and stress', and the overriding importance of puberty within adolescent development (Springhall, pp.30-34).

Adolescence, however, was more than a concept. For most social reformers, it was not adolescence as a stage of development which mattered, so much as adolescents as a group whose behaviour needed to be managed. Crucially, adolescence coincided with the end of compulsory schooling for working-class young people, resulting in premature removal of adult control; it therefore provided the rationale for the development of a range of institutions seeking to shape young people's lives (Griffin 1993 Ch.1).

The book

Studies of Boy Life in Our Cities explores different aspects of the life of the 'London working boy' - from the perspective of different authors commenting on the family, work, crime, and boys' clubs. A fifth chapter considers 'the girl in the background', and a concluding chapter by Urwick draws together the themes and concerns identified by others. While Reginald Bray's discussion of family life explores the experiences of young boys, *Boy Life's* main focus of concern is with boys aged 14 to 18 and the influences to which they are exposed. Although the term itself is not used, it is clear that an understanding of the adolescent years as a critical period of life underpins the discussions. According to Urwick, the 14-year-old school-leaver is 'a species of man-child, in whom the natural instincts of boyhood are almost overwhelmed by the feverish anxiety to become a man,' (p.xii) leading them to adopt undesirable adult habits such as smoking, swearing, reading 'penny bloods', going to music-halls and going out with girls.

Individuals and institutions set out to counteract this working-class precocity by reinforcing the boy's relation to childhood rather than to adulthood. Despite Urwick's description of boys' prematurely adult habits, he insists that the working boy 'remains a boy at heart'(p.xiii). He stresses the contradictions in his character and behaviour, describing him as 'half angel, half savage' (p.xiii). It is precisely this instability that makes intervention both necessary and effective; Urwick argues that the 'right man can produce almost as much impression on a boy in a month as he could on a man in a year'(p.xiv). Discussing youth crime, Arthur Lowry also draws on the discourse of adolescence to argue that not only should child offenders be treated separately from adults, but that this distinction from adults should be extended to young people aged 16 to 21, since they were then 'most susceptible for good or evil to influences of training or environment' (p.169).

Reginald Bray's discussion of 'the boy and the family' draws upon an established tradition of social investigation, in which the middle-class reader is invited to contemplate the unexplored territory in their midst - in this instance, an 'almost unexplored ocean of souls' near the West End of London (p.1). He identifies three kinds of working-class home and family, ranging from type one - living in squalor and disorder in one or two rooms, to the respectable type three with four rooms or more including a parlour set aside for special occasions.

Bray's account focuses on the disintegration of family life, and its consequences for boys' development, at the extreme ends of poverty. In his account of 'type one' family there is effectively no home life. Boys come in from the streets only to sleep and grab some food, there is little contact between family members, and no parental discipline or control. In contrast, in the third type of family, families eat together regularly, family bonds are strong and demonstrated in shared activities, and parents - especially fathers - attempt to exercise some control. Bray would no doubt deplore the contemporary 'grazing' habits blamed for the ending of the 'Oxo' family meal advert.

Bray explicitly challenges the deterministic views expressed by some contemporaries that it was the character, rather than the environment of the poor which led to their condition - the slum-dwellers making the slum. While he concedes that the circumstances of his first type of family may be due to their character, he argues that the superiority of the third type over the second is the result of 'a more kindly environment'

rather than 'a more excellent character' (p.42-3). Intervention to improve living conditions could therefore break the cycle of poverty.

However, even in Bray's best type of family, parents removed their children from school as soon as they could. All working-class boys were therefore expected to make an early entry into the world of work, exposing them to a range of dangers associated both with the conditions of their employment, and the way in which they spent their money. This aspect of boys' lives is discussed by J.G. Cloete. The 'boy labour problem', as it was widely termed, lay in the fact that the unskilled labour of school-leavers was in considerable demand. Boys leaving school at 14 found employers competing for their labour in a range of unskilled jobs which often involved working long hours but spending many of them hanging about for the next task. This was seen as undesirable for several reasons. It failed to instil habits of discipline and order, there was often little or no supervision, and boys were able to drift from one job to another. Moreover, once they reached 17 or 18, they would find themselves replaced by a younger generation of cheaper school-leavers.

This concern about the conditions of working-life gave new urgency to attempts to regulate young people's leisure time, particularly by replacing commercialised and unsupervised amusements with constructive and educational recreation. The reintegration of young people into the education system through part-time evening classes was commonly proposed. Urwick himself advocates a system of compulsory evening classes for all young people aged 14 to 17 who were not being 'efficiently taught' during the day (p.285) He considers objections to this compulsion, but dismisses them on the grounds that 'if there is one thing the town child needs - and hates - it is discipline, and yet more discipline, of body, mind and character'(p.290).

W.J. Braithwaite's chapter on boys' clubs displays a similar robust assertion of the rights of the club worker to determine the needs of young people. His ideal club is educational, open seven nights a week and engages in intensive building and rebuilding of character.

He criticises the recreational nature of much provision, describing many clubs as 'mere noisy lounges for unruly boys'(p.201). He argues that it is better for clubs to do 'definite and good work' (p.189) with a limited number of boys, rather than simply providing an alternative to the streets - an interesting parallel to contemporary debates about targeting of disaffected young people versus universality.

Braithwaite offers a highly interventionist vision of club work. Attendance may be voluntary, but absentees must be 'hunted up and talked to'(p.220). While club workers should make every effort to get to know boys and their circumstances, there is no sense that boys themselves should determine the programme. Indeed, Braithwaite begins his discussion by arguing that clubs should beware of letting the boys 'call the tune' since this undermines character development (p.174). He is similarly dismissive of senior boys' committees, arguing that 'the number of things which can be trusted to a committee of boys is limited'(p.223). (So much for the concepts of participation and empowerment.)

Braithwaite argues that education lies at the heart of club work. The traditional club idea of 'equality and friendship', while valuable, is not enough; boys' clubs must seek to control and teach 'unformed' boys who are turned adrift at an early age. (p.176-7). He considers the ways in which the club curriculum can incorporate educational elements, through sport, craftwork, first aid training and drama, but advocates a more radical solution - the integration of club work with the evening class system. The London County Council directly provided evening classes on school premises for three nights a week; Braithwaite proposes that clubs should be started on school premises on other nights for boys attending those classes. Not only would this improve the premises and facilities available for club work, but more importantly, it would encourage more boys to attend classes through bringing the 'club idea' into evening schools. He suggests that club leaders should take over from teachers the responsibility for ensuring that boys complete their elementary education or attend appropriate evening classes (pp.211-2). Youth work would thus not only complement and strengthen formal education, but youth workers would become part of the mechanisms for regulating pupils' progress through compulsory education.

Braithwaite stresses the centrality of the personal relationship between club manager and boys. The character of the club manager is critical; for him, clubwork is more than work, it is the expression of identity. Lily Montagu's discussion of 'the girl in the background' similarly highlights the importance of personal relationships. Her discussion is more explicit than Braithwaite's in identifying youth workers as middle and upper-class 'women of culture', who will help working-class girls develop new understandings of themselves and others to counter the pressures towards individualism, excitement and pleasure-seeking coming from

their work and home environments. While she is critical of girls' behaviour, particularly their obsession with 'flirtation', she attributes this to girls' low sense of self-worth and the limited options open to them. The girl, she says, 'knows herself to be a fairly cheap article' in the labour market; in addition, her brother's superior value in the labour market often gives him an 'artificial superiority' in the home (pp.237, 240). For Montagu, the solution lies in giving girls more to aim for: girls who have been encouraged to 'develop their individuality, and those who have become skilled workers in honourable trades, are not likely to throw away their chance of complete self-realisations in order to enjoy promiscuous flirtation' (p.246).

The language may be very different, but is the message that far from current debates about the relationship between self-esteem and teenage pregnancy? Furthermore, for Montagu, club work meant engaging with the totality of girls' lives. In a memorable passage she criticises club-workers who peer down the 'abyss' of poverty, and then content themselves with 'surface polishing' - making girls behave well in the clubs, while ignoring the 'grim truth that if girls work for less than a living wage, in a vitiated atmosphere, they are not likely to become the strong, self-controlled women whom we desire the clubs to train'(p.250).

It is unlikely that Montagu would have been impressed by Cloete's suggestion that the boy-labour problem might be solved by employing girls in dead-end jobs (p.114). Other areas of disagreement surface within the collection, particularly on the question of targeting of youth work. While the contributors agree that clubs are for working-class youth, they disagree about more precise targeting. Bray accuses boys' clubs of having abandoned their mission of working with boys from the poorest families and instead working with boys from the 'highest social class' (p.100). By doing this, they were both failing to compensate for the deficiencies in boys' family lives, and threatening the solidarity of respectable working-class families. In contrast, Braithwaite rejects the notion that clubs should target only 'rough lads', arguing that clubs will not do their best work if 'confined to the lowest class'. Moreover, he argues that clubs have a role in promoting class solidarity, over-riding more precise distinctions based on earnings and jobs (p.190-1). However, work with rough lads clearly has a place, the point being that the boys should not remain rough; the worker should target specific groups of rough lads, make them respectable, and then move on to work with another group (p.190).

Despite these differences, the over-riding message from this collection is the shared belief that greater intervention is necessary to compensate for the deficiencies in boys' (and girls') lives. However, while highlighting the dangers of urban life, *Boy Life* does not endorse deterministic fears of national deterioration. Urwick discusses the claimed evidence of physical deterioration, but then draws upon the experience of those working with boys to challenge the 'doctrine of degeneracy'. Those familiar with boys' 'superfluous energy', he says, greet with 'amused incredulity' the claims of medical authorities that boys' energy is declining (p.264) - a reminder of the extent to which youth work, then as now, provided a focus for competing professional interests.

Boy Life and current concerns

Boy Life is the product of a set of concerns of a particular era. But what is striking is the extent to which many of these concerns - and their solutions - are echoed in current youth policy. *Boy Life* calls for young people to stay within the reaches of the education system until they reach 18; the central aim of the current Government's Connexions strategy is that 'all young people should stay in learning until 18 and beyond'(DfEE: 2000, para. 1.3). The Connexions strategy's identification of the need to break the cycle linking poverty and educational underachievement (paras. 2.4, 3.2-8) is also pre-figured by Bray. While the early twentieth century labour market meant that unemployment was not an issue for school-leavers, Connexions' discussion about the problems in later life associated with young people not in education or work (paras. 3.7-8) mirrors earlier fears about young people in dead-end jobs failing to develop appropriate work-related skills or disciplines.

Perhaps most interesting, however, are the similarities between the role of the club worker in *Boy Life* and that of Connexions' personal adviser. Connexions outlines a range of roles for the personal advisor - ensuring young people attend school, providing information about future opportunities, more in-depth support, the broadening of access to specialist services, and keeping in contact and monitoring (paras 6.10-13). There is a clear resonance with Braithwaite's vision of an interdependent system of formal education and boys clubs, in which the club workers' detailed knowledge and understanding of both individual boys and the circumstances of their lives would supplement the more impersonal education system. Club workers would take on responsibility for ensuring boys attend elementary schools, would direct them to appropriate evening classes, and would

seek out and re-engage the non-attender. Just as Connexions suggests that taking on a personal adviser role offers legitimacy to the relationship-building of youth work (para. 5.12), so Braithwaite and Urwick offered a vision of youth work and youth work skills being enhanced by their location within a firmly educational and interventionist framework.

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A Classic History · But is it an obituary for the Youth Service? by John Holmes

These two substantial volumes (Vol. 1 is 212 pages and 8 chapters, Vol. 2 is 202 pages and 9 chapters) provide a comprehensive history of the English Youth Service from central government first giving official status to the main voluntary sector organisations in 1939 (Circular 1486) to mid 1999 when government proposals in *Learning to Succeed* and *Bridging the Gap* challenged the Youth Service to come into line behind their policies on the social exclusion of youth.

The importance of these two volumes lie in the author's depth of knowledge and understanding of the Youth Service, and in the timing of publication. Who better to write what will almost certainly become the definitive history of the Youth Service than Bernard Davies? Born in 1935, just before the 60 years starts, he was involved as a member of a voluntary sector youth group (Jewish Lads Brigade) before moving onto training as a youth leader, and studying history at University. His involvement in youth work is as a worker, trainer, researcher, writer, officer, member of review panels, union member and in latter years as a consultant.

However, his experience is not limited to youth work, being involved in both teacher training and in social work training, two closely related professional areas. The issue of timing is not so much being the end of the millennium, which has done much to boost history generally, but that the 60th anniversary has been reached and this would appear to be a point of crossroads. The fact that time may well be running out for the Youth Service and one of the roads could well lead to the end of the Youth Service, focuses the mind about how the Youth Service can maintain both an identity and a future? Davies concludes his work by:

> *As the 20th century closed..., the inheritance both of a distinctive form of practice known as youth work and of a youth service*

specifically mandated to guarantee this was looking more brittle than at almost any time in its 60 year history (p. 191 Vol. 2)

The extent to which this conclusion, a conclusion Davies was clearly sorry to reach, is justified or influenced by Davies' particular interpretation of history is an essential question for all readers.

The reading of these two volumes is important for all involved in youth work. Doug Nicholls in his Rapport review (October, 1999) argues that workers should negotiate a week's study leave to read it (and this should apply even to those who don't usually read books!) There is much to be gained from a reading in terms of thinking about current policy initiatives. Lessons can be learnt to help us repeat the successes rather than reinvent the wheel, *and* avoid the mistake of the past. Although the languages may vary the Youth Service has previous experience of work with girls and young women, with Black and Asian young people, with young people with disabilities, with inner-city and rural young people, with gay and lesbian young people. In particular the experience of working with disadvantaged, disaffected young people (and deciding how much this should be a priority) is a theme running right through this period and preceding 1939. This has meant that issues of low educational achievement, poorly paid jobs and unemployment, and involvement in crime and disorder are recurring themes in these books. Also the ideas of greater involvement of young people in their communities, of participation, whilst very current have a long history. Equally the recent trend towards detached work has parallels going back to work with the unattached in the 1950s, with centre-based work always having its doubters.

Whilst the trend towards issue-based work and intervening with young people primarily as drug-users, or single parents, or offenders, or homeless, or unemployed is a trend that Davies demonstrates has grown (and has been funding led) in the 1980s and 1990s the root of this go much further back to the view of youth work as 'social rescue' which often conflicted with more person-centred educational approaches. Davies usefully highlights key policy tensions and dilemmas in the introduction (repeated in each volume) and then returns to give a further analysis in a 'Retrospection' at the end of Volume II. The four key areas identified are:

- Universalism vs selectivity
- Education vs rescue
- Professionalism vs volunteerism
- Voluntary vs state sponsorship

This 'retrospection' is in itself a valuable summary for many to read. Its value to students is fairly obvious but to workers and officers it should help to focus debate on the boundaries within which youth work has and can take place. It may be wishful thinking but this section would be valuable reading for ministers with responsibility for the Youth Service. Davies recounts, particularly in Volume II, the rapid turnover of ministers in this area. Whilst there are a number of reasons for this, one is surely their difficulty or unwillingness to come to terms with the continuing tensions which the Youth Service has been unable to resolve.The preference recently would seem to apply models of organisation and evaluation imported from other parts of education (eg the core curriculum) or the business sector (eg unit costs and performance indicators) without sufficiently understanding the context in which these would be received and operated.

One of the joys and challenges of reading a history is to read about those points that one has either personally been involved in or know others who have. Then it is to realise how much has had to be left out, despite the length of these two volumes, to get 60 years included. Themes around training, and links to community (and community work) and professionalism run through both volumes but are covered particularly in the last chapter of Volume I and in chapter 4 of Volume II. Davies rightly focuses on more tensions in this area between college trainers and the field, volunteers/part-timers and full-timers, and between youth and community. A service is portrayed which is divided in itself, confused about its present and future role, and presenting an off-putting face even at the few times when government and other funders were prepared to listen, (the only real exception being the Albemarle period of the late 1950s).

There is no doubt these tensions existed but there is a debate about the extent to which the service was engaging in self-indulgent, destructive and unnecessary conflicts, as Davies increasingly seems to imply, or rather involved in necessary debates and struggles which could have, and sometimes did, lead to progress. The tension between trainers, in particular higher education course tutors, and their field is not limited to youth work (as I am sure Davies is aware from social work and teacher training) and whilst the stereotyping of each other does not help it would appear inevitable that some tension exists. It is the job of education courses in any professional area to develop a critical analysis of existing practice, although government thinking has increasingly rejected this,

wanting functional training to employer defined competencies. Critical analysis will inevitably lead some to seek employment outside the professional field, and this happened in a dramatic fashion in youth work training from the 1970s onwards.

A major factor in this was the addition of 'Community' to both Community and Youth Work training and to Youth and Community Services. The 'export' of trainees was seen as reaching unacceptable levels and the community work influence as leading to fragmentation. Davies is right that *Youth and Community Work in the 70s* (the Milson-Fairbairn report) led to an ill thought out and failing 'marriage' in the 70s and 80s, but in my view the struggle for the identity of the service was waiting to happen and much *could* have been gained (and still could) by coming together. The greater politicisation that community work perspectives brought to training courses in the 1970s led to 'misleading myths' from both youth work and community work but in retrospect it is clear to see how much this politicisation could have helped youth work. The increased marginalisation of young people in the 1980s with rising unemployment, which Davies has probably documented better than anybody else (*In Whose Interests?* - 1979, *The State We're In* - 1981, *Threatening Youth* - 1986), and in particular the repression of Black and Asian youth required a more political, and again as Davies cogently argues a class perspective, which increasingly got lost with the emphasis on other forms of oppression.

Community work has these perspectives more than youth work, but what it also had in the 1970s and still has, is a greater opposition to a professional service, wanting to be rooted in more local, voluntary work. This perspective also led to a rejection of a youth service (even with community added on) and increased the 'export' from training. Yet in retrospect (hindsight is a wonderful thing) community work could well have learnt from the tentative moves towards professionalisation. Davies has been a critic of these trends and rightly sees the volunteer and part-timers as central to youth work. But both youth work *and* community work needed a stronger collective professional identity to withstand the onslaught of Thatcherism. Community work has arguably fared worse than youth work by fragmentation as a result of its anti-professional stance. It could be argued that a combined youth *and* community service which was a stronger professional partnership would have been even more of a target for Thatcherism (alongside teaching and social work) but a redefined locally rooted and union-linked professionalism could have been stronger, at least in holding to its core principles.

These debates and struggles look different from the late 1990s. Working in higher education to-day within largely apolitical, consumerist contexts it seems clear that students on professional training courses who come with clear community-based perspectives (whether these be Black, Asian, women, disabled, Irish, gay, lesbian, or even but rarely working-class) provide a valuable perspective in work with young people (as well as other age groups). It is no longer divisive between youth and community; it is a recognition that community development and identity are central to good youth work. It does not have to undermine skills work related to working with individuals and groups, or curriculum development. Rather it can enhance them. Less common but equally valuable in my view, is the comparison and links between playwork and youth work.

Also the difficult debates and struggles about part-time volunteers versus full-timers would seem to have made progress, at least in the sense that a unified set of pay and conditions have been agreed through JNC. Some would still argue that locally qualified part-timers should be paid the same pro-rata as full-timers but this would undermine the position of nationally qualified workers, who can and should be at the forefront of policy development. Incidentally, Davies seems to argue full parity was achieved in 1996 (Vol 2, p 61), which is not the case.

It is inevitable that there will be different interpretations of historical developments. Davies, to his credit, has argued that he wants to promote further debate rather than write so definitive a history that it is seen as ending the debate. However my reading of Davies on the topics of training, links to community work, and professionalism does raise a broader issue about the extent to which the tensions and struggles have led the Youth Service to the point of facing extinction at the end of the century. What was and is possible for any service funded by the state? Can principles be adhered to and oppositional stances maintained while taking the 'Queen's shilling' from what are flawed interventions in youth work terms?

These questions have clearly exercised Davies is this work and Davies' answers seem to be pessimistic about the future and about the potential to survive within what he sees as an increasingly centralised and stigmatising youth policy. In broad terms the book reads as an account of a service moving to a high point around Albermale in 1960 (but notably this occurred following fears of extinction in the mid 1950s) and then downhill with a series of wrong turns, confused policies and conflicts.

The government responses were neglect, opposition or misunderstanding. This applies to both Conservative and Labour governments. In particular in Volume 2, with Davies moving towards his conclusions, there is a depressing catalogue of failed attempts to take the Service forward.

But how much is this Davies' particular perception? Davies is refreshingly up front that his account is not an objective account. He starts his foreword with the heading 'Beyond objectivity' and recognises that his values, feelings and preconceptions have influenced his analysis. He recognises that his close involvement makes neutrality impossible. His roots in studying history and his writings about youth work (in particular *Social Education of the Adolescent,* 1967 and the texts previously mentioned) provide a context within which this history was written. Through this context he sees history as written by people, often by being organised, but usually contested by others and firmly rooted in wider social and political forces.

Yet although making clear he is aware of these fundamental underlying issues in the writing of this history it remains problematic to me how he resolved these tensions. Despite the 'beyond objectivity' statement the impression given is of a magisterial sifting and sorting of evidence, with conclusions drawn by weighing up the balance of evidence when outcomes were in doubt in terms of courses or values. Davies even uses his previous writings in this way, drawing on them but writing as if they were just another source rather than owning them personally. This surprised me, not because it is not a perfectly legitimate way of writing a history, but because it was not the style I expected from somebody I saw as one of the foremost critical thinkers in this area, and has always had his own radical voice.

My first introduction to Youth Service analysis came in the late 1970s when Davies was involved with the *Realities of Training* research study into part-time workers training (by Steven Butters and Sue Newell) which in true radical style criticised previous models of youth work including the 'Social Education Repertoire' presented by Davies and Gibson in *Social Education of the Adolescent.* My memory is that Davies accepted the criticism from the 'radical paradigm' even though as he states in this history that the report was rejected by the field as 'too full of jargon - and as too political in its orientation'. At this time, as with many others, (including myself), Davies saw the role of the state as something to be aware of (it being naive to assume person-centred edu-

cation could occur in a vacuum) and to be critical of (despite providing funding it did so at the cost of controlling and incorporating the threat that young people posed).

Some of the anti-statist and anti-liberal radical edge remains in this history, for example in the important emphasis on social class as the missing social category of the last 20 years, and in the critique of essentially liberal well-meaning government reports such as the *Hunt Report Study* of immigrants. But it is difficult to maintain this position throughout the Thatcherite period when the intention was to 'roll back the state', at least as far as the Youth Service was concerned, and wanted to return the work to its voluntaristic philanthropic roots. At the same time, as Davies shows well, the power of the centralised state was being increased, not least around Youth Policy. In this context simply to hold onto the compromised 'social education repertoire' can be seen as a success and the battle shifted to arguments about adequacy, sufficiency, and holding the state to its responsibilities (which proved to be weak in legal terms).

The extent to which Davies' pessimistic interpretation becomes reality partly depends on whether we are discussing 'Youth Work' or the 'Youth Service'. In the concluding quote given above Davies mentions both as currently at risk, but the dividing line between the two, or even the relationship between them, remains unclear in my reading of this history. Clearly youth work as a distinctive form of practice is bigger than the Youth Service but it has never seemed satisfactory to me to talk about the two as separate entitles, which seems to be required for those who see the Youth Service as dying but youth work living on. Part of the problem is that the Youth Service, which is the government's link to youth work, is itself a loose collaboration between the voluntary and local authority sectors, as well as increasingly projects directly funded by central government. The Youth Service, as Davies shows, is founded on tensions and contradictions (see the four key areas above), which even when the state showed the greatest commitment (ie the Albemarle period) remained unresolved.

For Davies, and others such as the NYA who are at the interface between state and youth work, these tensions and contradictions have become an increasing source of frustration for they appear to be holding back the commitment and recognition from governments that youth work deserves. Whilst this is undoubtedly true in terms of putting the

youth service on a satisfactory footing, and holding onto JNC pay and conditions, these tensions and contradictions may not be wholly a bad thing. By *not* being a state agency the government cannot simply prescribe what the Youth Service does. The government can cajole and bully, can promote or allow it to wither at local authority level, and crucially decide what funding to allow to be released, but they cannot wholly determine the future of the Youth Service, let alone youth work. Davies states in his introduction that his history 'is very largely a history from above' and that 'no claim is made...to trace how local and national policies have worked their way out as provision and practice on the ground'.

This does appear to be a major limitation of this history even though to do so would have been a very difficult and time-consuming task. Youth work *and* the Youth Service are characterised by 'bottom-up' approaches and are popular forms of education, much more so than teaching and social work. They could not have survived for so long with so little government backing without this being the case.

With this additional tension and contradiction between 'top-down' (both state and benevolent philanthropy) and 'bottom-up' (self-help, locally initiated movements and groups) the view of the state as the ultimate force, whether saviour, enforcer or obliterator can be put into a different perspective. It would be possible for a government to pass legislation banning youth work, but this is unlikely and would not likely be effective. More likely the government will continue to be confused and frustrated by a service which refuses to come down on one side or other of the fence but still has tremendous resilience when its principles are seen to be under attack. The government is more likely to offer 'carrots' such as the proposed Youth Support Service, (for 16-18 years olds, not in education, training or employment), which will challenge principles such as universalism, education, volunteerism and voluntary sponsorship.

However in my view the future should not be seen in such dramatic terms as 'the end of the Youth Service', or even 'the re-birth of the Youth Service'. The Youth Service is likely to survive and do so best if it can continue to critically analyse these policies and opportunities that come from government whilst continuing to provide the week-to-week services for which it is most known. The Youth Service cannot exist apart from government, and can only halt decline if funded properly, so must get involved in initiatives such as the Youth Support Service. But this lat-

est government initiative is only likely to be partly successful and youth workers on the ground who are involved should be able to offer an explanation for the successes *and* failures. Many of these will relate both to previous successes and failures of the Youth Service, and so workers and officers can point to the need to return to the key principles of youth work, which as this history shows have survived the test of time. Lets celebrate the distinctive contribution that youth work can make!

***John Holmes**, University of Birmingham, Westhill.*

Patrick Ainley and Bill Bailey
The Business of Learning:
Staff and student experience of Further Education in the 1990s
Cassell 1997
ISBN: 0 304 33982 2
£14.99 pbk
pp 139

Ruth Gilchrist

It was a joy to find a book which gave both the historical background and an insight into how people are currently working, managing and studying within Further Education. This sector has within the past couple of decades experienced massive changes as colleges have been recognised and struggled to find a role to play within the policy drive towards 'lifelong learning'.

The Business of Learning compares the 'day-to-day workings' of two colleges. One is located in an inner-city, the other in the 'Home Countries'. They have divergent histories which are covered in Chapter One. In Chapter Two we look at the implications of incorporation, which took colleges out of local authority control, the new funding regimes and the changes in curriculum and course content with occurred around the same time. Ainley and Bailey stress that these changes have created real problems and tensions not least the 'many demands upon further education in the new competitive market for students ... colleges are struggling to survive. They are funded in an inherently unpredictable and unreliable manner .... Their future cannot be predicted or guaranteed' (p 31-32).

The following chapters look at how these changes impact on those who work and study in FE using interviews with managers, teachers and students in the two contrasting case studies. Although only two colleges are covered and no one college is the same in this sector it nevertheless gives an insight into how institutions are coping and the nature of the shared experiences. It is especially refreshing to find that students feature in this narrative. Their views have been sought although as the authors point out the students interviewed are new to the colleges and therefore cannot compare their encounters with what went before. Most students, unlike their counterparts in HE only attend for short periods being either on one year programmes or part-time. This however may be changing with the blurring of the lines of demarcation between HE and FE. As Ainley and Bailey note 'Already nearly half of all colleges are franchisers of parts of degree courses or run access programmes for higher education institutions. In fact, 13 per cent of all HE level students are in FE' (p 10).

Policies on 'widening participation' also mean that universities are competing for students who would normally not have expected to attend such institutions in the past.

Colleges are subject to government policies on unemployment and welfare reform, New Deal being only the latest of many government training schemes to have brought young people into FE. Other initiatives have also now introduced compulsion into a sector which was once largely based on voluntary attendance. This text was written before colleges became fully involved in New Deal and those schemes designed to force the 'disaffected' back into full-time education. However as this is the first book in a series on FE perhaps the impact of these will be looked at in future contributions.

The concluding chapter brings together the often conflicting experienced and views of management and teaching staff, in order to reconcile and draw on them in an attempt to predict future developments. In an education sector that together with schools cater for about two thirds of 16 to 18 year olds FE is now involved in mass education. However it is in a way that places it in direct competition with both schools and HE as well as itself in the form of other colleges: 'So, although the growth of FE colleges has been unprecedented, their present position is more than usually ambiguous and their future even more uncertain than it has ever been' (p 113).

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The authors don't leave us with an altogether pessimistic view. The final chapter on the value of FE asserts it value 'for the future development of learning as a whole' and the contribution it can make to a more radical concept of lifelong learning. However as the authors point out the culture of short term contracts which aims to get more work for less hours out of fewer teachers has distracted the latter from their real business of teaching. Simultaneously competition between colleges, schools and HE has encouraged cheaply delivered courses which give little thought to the needs of the student, community or employer. The way FE is funded is central to these issues and the merger of FEFC and TECs into one agency is a change which will inevitably alter what is happening now in ways which it is difficult to foretell.

The authors advocate regional organisation with colleges working together, something which is already happening in some areas with universities and colleges talking about developing a regional approach and even sharing staff. FE colleges have strengths which can and should be built upon with an emphasis on the applied and vocational without overlooking the need to offer academic courses. As the authors stress 'FE has an essential contribution to make to the long-term future for society, particularly in preserving and developing knowledges and skills whose value and use are too often unrecognised. In order for the colleges to play their part in future economic and social progress, their immediate future has to be secured' (p 123).

The Business of Learning is the first book of a proposed series and we must hope those which follow prove as valuable and informative.

Ruth Gilchrist *YMCA Newcastle.*

Janet Shucksmith and Leo B Hendry
Health Issues and Adolescents: *Growing up, speaking out*
Routledge 1998
ISBN 0 415 16849 X
pp 142
£12.99 pbk

Sue Bloxham

Health promotion interventions with young people clearly need to be based on good quality analyses of their health beliefs, choices and behav-

iour if they are to be more than general exhortations to a healthier lifestyle or public relations exercises which waste large sums of money. Consequently, the subject matter of Shucksmith and Hendry's book is very welcome. Last summer's Social Exclusion Unit report on teenage pregnancy is perhaps the most contemporary example of public and government concern with the health behaviours of young people which feature regularly in policy and press, but which continue to elude us in terms of effective, acceptable and cost-effective interventions. The SEU report is notable in being a major government policy document which tackles young people's lives as they are, rather than as we might wish them to be.

Hendry and Shucksmith's aims for their research echo this recent concern to put 'young people at the centre' and allow them to 'speak for themselves', and they stress the extent to which young people's voices aren't heard, relying instead on adults' views about what adolescents think. They were also concerned to investigate health issues in a more holistic way, investigating the health implications of adolescent lifestyles and youth cultures. The research is based on a combination of reviewing previous research, 10 discussion groups and interviews with 44 young people in their mid-adolescence. The researchers attempted to use a representative sample of young people and there is a useful discussion of appropriate methods for gathering qualitative data from young people.

The book is divided into a number of chapters which eschew the approach of tackling one health topic after another in favour of addressing the different levels of influence on young people's understanding of health. Unfortunately, the authors intentions to portray adolescent health within a much wider picture of their lifestyles and relationships, whilst admirable, is too large a task for a book this size. There is so much research on, for example, young people's friendships and peer activity that I felt the book struggled to add anything to our existing knowledge. It reinforced the well-understood influences of gender, class, race and other differentiating factors on young people's lives but this is hardly new: 'Young people's age, gender, social class ethnicity and life experience all combine to give them as varied a set of 'voices' as would be expressed by the adult community' (p137). The space devoted to reviewing and describing this broader understanding of young people's lives, relationships and attitudes left little space for the important interpretation of this material for our understanding of their approach to health issues.

However, there were some important messages in the book for professionals and policy makers concerned with young people's health. For example, the role of parents in health information and role modelling behaviour is apparent as is the important role of mothers in providing first-line support to young people. The book reviews the research on the links between forms of parenting and positive developmental outcomes for young people. It is interesting to note that parents seemed to approve the use of alcohol, not because of its low risk per se, but because of their fear and ignorance of other drugs. Surely, this must indicate that extensive intervention with parents might be a more effective approach to providing young people with timely advice and support; for example, evaluated experiments using school newsletters, parents' evenings, and drop-ins.

At the same time, the young people in this study are extremely condemnatory about the failure of health education and PSI in school which they see as lacking meaningful discussion of issues. Shucksmith and Hendry acknowledge the problems for schools in dealing with these issues and other studies have revealed how ill-equipped many teachers feel in relation to this area of their work for which they lack often lack the specialist training that the will have received for their 'subjects'. However, there are excellent examples of schools drawing on other professionals in health and youth services to contribute to this work using their different relationships with pupils and their up-to-date knowledge of health matters. Unfortunately, research on the long term impact of such approaches is very thin on the ground.

Health Issues and Adolescents also identifies the isolation many boys experience in relation to their developing sexuality. It contrasts the positive role of girls' friendships in providing the opportunity to share and discuss some of the most intimate aspects of their lives as well as their access to information through magazines, with boys' need to hide their feelings and disguise their lack of experience in an area which 'troubled them greatly'. Peer groups, thus, have different influences on the different sexes and 'the boys' isolation and need for knowledge is not served well by the health education methods in common use in schools' (122).

The book ends with a tantalisingly stimulating discussion of 'empowerment' and the changing nature of professional interventions. There is no doubt that efforts to attend to clients' 'voices' alters the relationships between education and welfare professional and those they wish to

'empower'. This seemed a central element of this project if its attempt to let young people 'speak for themselves' is to be anything more than an academic exercise, yet like so much in this book, it is only briefly touched upon and leaves you wanting more!

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Adam Crawford
Crime Prevention and Community Safety
Politics, Policy and Practice
Longman Criminology Series, Longman, London and New York, 1998
ISBN 0 582 29457 6
pp 271

Judith Million

With the advert of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the statutory duty placed on local authorities and the police for the prevention of crime and disorder, some might think that community safety and crime prevention have come of age. They would be wrong, as Adam Crawford so articulately illustrates in this very welcome contribution to the rather sparse body of theory in this important area. Whilst the requirement for local authorities to do all that they reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in their area is now enshrined in legislation (Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act), the reality is that many local authorities have a very long way to go to achieve the level of sophistication in their approach to community safety upon which the legislation and accompanying guidance is predicated.

Equally, community safety as a professional discipline is in its infancy. Staff working in the field come from backgrounds as diverse as planning, administration, community development, teaching and youth work as well as the more obvious and, in some ways more relevant, criminal justice professions. Although the national Training Organisation for the Community Justice Sector is working on occupational standards for community safety staff, there is as yet no nationally recognised and validated entry qualification and only limited recognition of the underpinning knowledge required to equip people to work in this area. All of these points serve to underline the importance of developing a body of literature that can illuminate what

is without doubt an extremely complex policy area, in a manner that is accessible to the practitioner faced on a daily basis with the conundrum that is community safety.

Perhaps the most significant statement in the book, which encapsulates the whole thrust of the work, is Crawford's stated intention at the outset to study and analyse crime prevention as 'essentially political in nature and not merely as a rational form of technology, nor as a disinterested science, the application of which is value free' (p 2). This will surely strike a chord with those working in community safety. The theme is threaded throughout the book and is particularly evident in Chapter 6 where Crawford unpicks the complex social dynamics and organisational inter-relationships implicit in partnership working which lies at the very heart of community safety.

The blend of theoretical discussion illuminated by practical examples and case studies guides the reader through the as yet unresolved definitional debate about the meanings of community safety and crime prevention. Crawford does not offer a definitive conclusion. This is perhaps unsurprising when one considers that the terms 'community safety' and 'crime prevention' were not used in the Crime and Disorder Act because they are so difficult to define. Rather, Crawford offers a number of competing and sometimes conflicting perspectives, leaving the reader to reach his or her own conclusions on the respective merits of the arguments presented. He draws on different models of typology to challenge previous over simplistic distinctions between terms such as 'social' and 'situational' crime prevention that have been central to the language of community safety for some time. For this reason, the book is a must for more experienced practitioners many of whom will have been expected to be instant experts in community safety, and all that shelters beneath its broad umbrella, from the moment they took up post.

The book may well be a challenge for those who are new to this field of enquiry. It will certainly not appeal to those seeking straightforward explanations. However, its value lies in part in the manner in which it explains the broad social role implicit in a strategic and structured approach to community safety and crime prevention and the resultant danger of the criminalisation of other areas of social policy. In so doing, Crawford raises fundamental questions about the nature of community safety and its relationship with social policy more generally. This may well find resonance with those involved in youth work where

concern is expressed that the deployment of detached youth workers with the primary purpose of reducing anti-social behaviour could usurp the traditional role of the Youth Service.

Nevertheless, with his use of international comparative examples that have relevance for our own experience, Crawford does make a very convincing case for a key role for all tiers of government in community safety and crime prevention. At the same time he recognises that ownership of community safety and crime prevention is diffuse and definitions are essentially political.

At first glance, Adam Crawford's attempt to provide a comprehensive and critical overview of the multi faceted community safety world might appear somewhat dense to the practitioner and consequently hold more appeal to the academic. Certainly, the book is more demanding of the reader than some previous works works on the subject Nevertheless, if one takes the time to follow the arguments and engage with the debates, the payoff is well worth it.

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Judith Corlyon and Christine McGuire
Pregnancy and Parenthood
National Children's Bureau, 1999
ISBN 1 900990 42 3
£13.50 pbk
pp 192

Maddy Lewis

Throughout the 1990s, teenage pregnancy and parenthood has been a prominent issue, both in terms of media coverage and government policies. The debates concerning the issue have tended to focus on negative stereotypes of pregnant schoolgirls and teenage parents, with little attempt to understand the underlying issues for those directly involved. However, for those who did look deeper, it was clear that certain groups and individuals were more prone to early pregnancy and parenthood than others and among these were young women in or leaving public care.

REVIEWS

This study was undertaken in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the views and experiences of young people in public care about pregnancy and parenthood.

Previous research studies on care leavers have shown that high proportions of young women are either pregnant or have a child when they move on from public care (Biehal et al 1992, Garnett 1992). Other studies indicate that certain background factors, for example family status, educational attainment and childhood experiences, might predispose young people who have been in public care to become pregnant or parents at an early age. This study aimed to explore the attitudes, expectations and experiences of young people in public care, in relation to pregnancy and parenthood, and to compare the views of this subgroup of young people with their peers in the wider community.

The study had three broad areas of focus. Firstly, to look at the preparedness of young people in public care for parenthood - what informal and formal education they had received about relationships, family life, parenthood, sexual health and sexuality. Secondly, to better understand the choices that young people make in becoming parents while still adolescents - whether pregnancies resulted from choice or accident, how young women who become pregnant choose between abortion and continuing with the pregnancy. Thirdly, to examine the support those young care leavers who are pregnant or parents receive from the care system - views of young people and workers about services, role of social worker in relation to mother and child.
The study was carried out in separate though inter-linked components, providing both qualitative and quantitative data. The first component focussed on the provision of services to young people who are pregnant or parents and included interviews with:

- *young people who had been in public care and who were or were about to be parents,*
- *social workers or carers linked to the young people above,*
- *staff in local authorities to gather information on local policy and practice in relation to looked after young people, sex education and support in parenthood.*

The second component focussed on the way the different experiences of young people might impact on future expectations, particularly in relation to parenthood and relationships and thus involved a comparative study of young people in public care and those who lived with their

families. This included questionnaires completed by 212 teenagers, half of whom were in public care, and follow-up interviews with 67 of the questionnaire respondents.

While at times, references to these different components might be confusing to the reader, the findings compiled from the research are both informative and clearly set out. There is a depth of qualitative information, which allows the reader to gain a deeper insight into the views and expectations of young people in public care in relation to pregnancy and parenthood. I found the chapters looking at relationships, future aspirations, and pregnancy and decision making, especially interesting, and in particular, the information comparing and contrasting the views of young people in public care with those of their peers in the general population. The differences were often not as marked as I had expected, but were in areas where they are likely to have a significant impact. For example, when asked about their hopes for education, training and employment, the looked after young people shared many of the aspirations for the future of those who were not looked after. However, an important difference was that they aspired equally to early marriage and parenting, and to a far greater extent than their peers in the general population did.

The researchers were concerned not to suggest that being looked after automatically leads to an increased likelihood of becoming pregnant. However, their findings showed that there are ways in which the care system seems to compound some problems and fails to alleviate others. Living in residential care would appear to place extra pressure on young men and young women to embark on sexual relationships at a relatively early age and provides them with greater opportunities to do so. The research also showed that looked after young people's experiences of not being able to participate fully or meaningfully in decisions made about their lives, had led to their having a short-term view of the future. This outlook has made it hard for them to see the implications of embarking on sexual relationships and even harder to see the long-term consequences of pregnancy.

The last sections of the book deal with support for young mothers – including preparation for parenthood, family and worker support networks, provision of accommodation and support with education. The authors point out that almost half of young women under 16 and just under two thirds of those under 20 who conceive, continue with their pregnancy (Office for National Statistics, 1998). Thus they argue that the focus of attention should not only be on preventing unwanted pregnancies, but also on supporting and preparing those young women who

decide to continue with their pregnancy. This research showed that looked after young people were far less likely to have received information about childcare and parenthood than their peers were. Furthermore the majority of the young mothers in the research sample had not attended antenatal classes – some were unaware of their existence, others felt that they did not need to attend such classes. Also of concern was the fact that some of the young mothers in the research sample, even as young as 16, had been left to live in the community with no support other than that which might be provided by friends or family.

The issues raised in this research are particularly topical in the light of recent Government initiatives, such as Quality Protects (one target is to reduce the number of pregnancies to girls under 16 in public care to a level no higher than the general population) and the Green Paper *Our Healthier Nation* (which focuses efforts on the neediest groups, of which young mothers and their offspring are clearly a part). Under the 1989 Children Act, local authorities have a responsibility to ensure that young people in their care receive sexual education. They also have a duty to prepare young people adequately for leaving care, which should include issues of building and maintaining relationships – both general and sexual. Staff therefore need to be equipped with policies, guidelines and training to enable them to work confidently with young people in their care.

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Gillian Squirrell
Developing Social Skills
Russell House Publishing
ISBN 1 898924 28 7
£39.95
pp 256

Bren Cook

As we are perched on the dawn of a new millennium, I find myself in a reflective mood and musing on the circular nature of time. History seems to repeat itself. 'You can say that again!' I hear you quip. We are at the beginning of a new century and facing what could potentially be

the most profound changes in the youth service field for many a year. The government agenda of social inclusion and welfare to work is rolling inexorably towards excluded young people, and with it a revival of methods of working that some of us tended to let slip in the early 80s. 1980s that is.

Phrases like social inclusion and urgent social need refocus our attention on those young people who, whilst having potential, need to gain confidence, self esteem and social skills. For those of us that have been in the field for some time there is an emerging sense of de-ja-vu when reading 'Bridging the Gap' and 'Learning to Succeed' that has had colleagues dusting off YOP programmes and Job Creation Project reports.

This is where Gillian Squirrells book comes in. Far from being retrogressive her learning resource manual is a well researched, solid, relevant and useable work.

Russell House Publishing seem to be producing quality publications consistently and this manual is no exception. It is an A4 spiral bound book of some 248 pages filled with useful material for anyone who wants to run a whole social skills course or to provide one-off workshops.

Section 1 is called *starting points* and it introduces and defines social skills. It describes the role of a trainer, how to use the manual, overviews of the manual and learning activities and the role of the learner as well as the learning process.

It would be feasible to use parts of this section as a basis for a train the trainers workshop.

Section 2 starts the learning process with an introductory module that will give learners an overview of the rest of the modules and the techniques that are used in the rest of the manual. It gives the learners a chance to grasp the shift from school based didactic learning to a developmental group based approach.

Section 3 is the set of social skills modules. These take up the bulk of the manual and cover the following areas:

- *Developing communication skills*
- *Non-verbal communication*
- *Communities and relationships*
- *Understanding and managing emotions and feelings*
- *Managing myself*

- *Developing assertiveness skills*
- *Seeing it from others' points of view*
- *Relationships with partners*
- *Developing and maintaining friendships*
- *Relationships with people in the workplace*
- *Dealing with authority*

Each module contains within it a set of sessions that break the heading down into smaller 'chunks'. Each session is laid out with tutors notes and a programme. The programme gives you suggested timings and descriptions of the exercises. The manual, as a whole, tries to give you everything you need to run a programme of social skills apart from the tea and coffee for the breaks.

I would say that this is an invaluable tool for any social includers in the future that want to have a set of accessible and systematic materials that you can use straight off the shelf.

Section 4 is a set of end notes, that maybe would be better at the beginning. They include trainers techniques and strategies that tell you how to actually run some of the exercises. They feel a little bit 'tagged on' but are very useful to newcomers and old hands alike.

This manual could become the Hopson and Scalley of the future, even though there isn't too much that is radically new, it does bring a lot of material and structure together in one place. The materials presented as activities may be reproduced for training purposes and activity sheets are included in a reduced format for the trainer to blow-up on a photocopier. It is all there in the one tome.

As the Youth Support Service coalesces from the swirls of speculation, workers, brokers or advisors will be searching for rapid solutions to the gap between the skilled and unskilled, the included and the excluded. *Developing Social Skills* would be a good place to start for the first plank of the bridge.

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REVIEWS

Kathryn Geldard and David Geldard
Counselling Adolescence
Sage Publications, 1999
ISBN 0 7619 5779 0
£14.99 pbk
pp 244

Judith Fewell

I wanted to like this book for two reasons: I know how much thought and hard work goes into writing a book and there is a real need for a book about counselling adolescence. Unfortunately this book does not address this issue adequately. I don't think I have read so flawed a book in a long time.

Throughout the book the concept of adolescence is used in an unquestioning way as if there is complete agreement about what our understanding of it is. Especially in part one which deals with developmental processes what we are offered is an uncritical account of the nature of adolescent experience, a traditional cause and effect description of the biological and psychological changes that occur. But to compound this nonreflective stance the authors discuss 'the adolescent' as if it (sic) has no gender, no class, no culture and no ethnicity. The adolescent in this book is situated in some taken-for-granted never never land that I certainly do not recognise from my experience of working in secondary schools or as a parent of a young man and young woman of this age group. I find it deeply disturbing that no reference is made to the wealth of literature which explores adolescent development in terms of a gendered, negotiated experience which is historically, culturally and class specific. Here we are presented with a linear, normative view of development which is so generalised that I'm not sure to whom the generalisations relate. The adolescent is primary but we read nothing about the particularities of male and female experiences mediated by class, culture and ethnicity. When parents are mentioned it is in terms of either good or bad parents who produce either good responsible citizens, or psychologically and/or behaviourally disturbed adolescents. The peer group is represented as a somewhat two dimensional concept which does not reflect the agonies, joys, violence and support that can be experienced within, between and out with such groups.

The following quotation is typical: 'When an adolescent is unable to confront and deal with a development challenge successfully there are likely to be unhelpful psychological, emotional and behavioural consequences' (p 2). This may seem innocuous enough but the individualising

of the experience of adolescence in this manner has the consequence of putting all of the problem into the young person rather than seeing the difficulties experienced as part of a complex web of individual, familial, cultural and gendered influences.

Parts 2 and 3 deal with the practical aspect of counselling adolescents. Whilst part 2 has some interesting discussion about the value base of existential counselling this did not make up for the absences of discussion in either section on such topics as: the differences between counselling and the use of counselling skills, the interface between counselling, the agency within which counselling occurs and other agencies who may be involved with the young person, the use of supervision, ethical practice, the dynamics of the counselling relationship.

Counselling as an activity is never questioned. It is just assumed to be a good thing once the problem has been diagnosed. Serious issues around assessment, such as the suitability of counselling for any particular young person, are absent. When there is some discussion of assessment it is conceptualised in terms of diagnosis and problem solving.

There is a very serious debate occurring in the counselling world about the difference between counselling and use of counselling skills in the context of other work eg youth work, teaching, nursing (Mcleod 1998, Feltham 1995, Bond 1993) as each requires a different set of Codes of Practice. According to the British Association for Counselling (BAC) if a formal contract has been negotiated with a client then counselling is the activity which is happening. However, within this framework counsellors are ethically bound to have regualr supervision to ensure ethical and safe practice. But more than that the codes spell out a level of training required for competent practice. The authors of this book seem to suggest that counselling is something that anyone can do if they have a handbook like theirs. There is no discussion of the training that a person may need in order to work competently and sensitively.

I find this highly dangerous. Young people in need are very vulnerable. To suggest that it is possible to work in their areas of fragility without the framework of training, supervision and ethical practice seems to me to be unethical. That is not to say that workers with young people, either in the statutory or voluntary sector, should steer away from engaging with a young person in their need and distress. But rather we need to recognise what demanding work this is and how much it can cost the worker personally and professionally. We need to make certain that the training, supervision and support, structures and procedures are in place in

order to ensure that counselling young people is taken seriously and is given the resources it needs. Books like this do not take us forward. They suggest that if you have a collection of techniques and intervention then you can work as a counsellor. This undermines the work of counsellors. It also undermines the work of those who use counselling skills. Both of these are highly demanding activities. When you bring these activities into the realm of working with young people then you evoke intra and inter-personal complexities located in a gendered, class and cultural context. This book makes it all too simple.

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Nick Frost, Sue Mills and Mike Stein
Understanding Residential Child Care
Ashgate, Aldershot, 1999
ISBN 1 85742 3100
£35.00 hbk

Derek W Hall

In my view, this is a very good book which is most welcome in its topic area as there is a distinct dearth of such publications relating to residential child care. It serves as a relatively basic and concise underpinning guide as to how state child care has both evolved and developed. However, although the brief but comprehensive chapters offer sound theories and principles of practice for the reader to reflect upon, what is clearly missing is an appropriate biography of each of the authors which could better show whether or not they themselves can justify the experience they claim to have in this field.

Nevertheless, the book emphasises that its key concept is 'empowerment' (both of young people and staff) which is why it is, rightly in my view, keen to take a rather political slant in which the argument begins by tak-

ing a very Foucaultian stance of showing how contemporary child care can only be fully understood by linking it with its historical evolution. In effect, the book suggests that residential child care is very much torn between the provision of care and control due to the past 'less eligibility' emphasis of the Poor Law being juxtaposed with modern day concerns about the varieties of abuse that young people sometimes endure - and how these often need a considerable depth of understanding, Somewhere in between, it is explained that there is a jumbling of permanence theories, ideological drives and a move towards non-institutionalism which tragically combined to create the birth of a number of crises throughout residential child care in the 1980s - resulting in the very lengthy formulation of the Children Act 1989.

Frost, Mills & Stein seek to show how the contrasting analyses of Goffman and Foucault make it readily easy for the reader to appreciate their relative critiques of residential settings. The thrust of their argument being that such care can generally be conceptualised simply as being a contemporary 'workhouse' model in which class and poverty prove to be the key elements of its existence, with 'social control' being its key role. The authors then try to develop their own theories of how to match these to issues of practice by discussing other relevant areas of influence such as gender and ethnicity - again, with the emphasis on 'empowerment'. The perhaps natural outcome of this is a prescriptive suggestion as to how residential child care can be improved by aiming for better 'quality' provision via better systems of practice, inspection and management. Of course, such Utopian goals can only be striven for by getting the basics right at the outset - which is why an exploration of the need to create and supervise good staffing teams is accorded an in-depth chapter on such matters.

By highlighting the issue of abuse in residential child care (discussing both the various forms of it - and how to prevent these), and flagging up the ridiculous reality of the dearth of 'aftercare' provision nationally, the book makes a concerted effort to try to demonstrate how low and marginal is the status of young people in care. But they make an equal bid to project that, with a better understanding of why and how residential child care has been thus far perceived and presented (with the resulting multitude of negative outcomes), then there is no reason why an enlightened and updated policy of developing empowerment and positive outcomes can't be embarked upon.

Overall, the book is extremely well written - but perhaps too well so for many of those whom it is aimed at. This is not meant to seem like a snooty observation, for the apt academic prose is certainly not overdone. However, as the fundamental tenet of the text is ultimately aimed at a whole cross-section of practitioners from all walks and levels of child care (but probably mostly at those working 'at the face of it'), it might possibly have been wiser to portray what is being espoused in a more 'manual' mode. Whilst few would doubt that most managers, recruiters of personnel and practice tutors are probably educated to at least degree level, it is nevertheless still a fact that, despite the aims of implementing, nation-wide, a Howe recommendation of literally upgrading the profession of residential social work (through the engendering of larger salaries, higher status and improved qualifications), this is still being seemingly achieved in a piecemeal and rather minoritative fashion - with the mild implication that many of those 'on the shop floor' (so to speak) would probably gain more benefit from being able to make a better and more appropriate use of this work if it was presented more like and 'A' level text book.

Derek W Hall *is a Senior Residential Social Worker in a planned-placement children's home in the city of Durham.*

Judith Masson and Maureen Winn Oakley
Out of Hearing:
Representing Children in Care Proceedings
John Wiley and Sons
ISBN 0 471 98642 9
pp 166

David Hunter

Out of Hearing is a book in the NSPCC/Wiley series in Child Protection and Policy edited by Christopher Cloke of the NSPCC. The series explores current issues relating to the prevention of child abuse and the protection of children, and focuses on professional practice and policy,

and the practical application of research. The series claims to be essential reading for all professionals and researchers concerned with the prevention of child abuse and the protection of children. It also hopes to appeal to parents and carers.

The book researches the experiences of 20 children and young people through their proceedings in the civil courts. The researchers observed meetings between the young people and their representatives (mainly guardians ad litem and solicitors) both before and after the court proceedings. The researchers looked at the representation process from a young peoples perspective trying to ascertain whether the process is really concerned about whether or not the children and young people understand what is happening to them, or if they feel involved with the process, or feel that their wishes and feelings are being taken into account.

It is obviously hoped that this book will be read by a wide range of interested people from barristers to parents and carers. This is a very ambitious remit which is handled skillfully by the authors. There is, necessarily a good deal of historical background and explanation of the legal framework covering childrens' rights and their representation in the legal process, but this is done in a manner which is understandable and enlightening to even those who have never put foot inside a court.

To those adults who are not actively engaged in the representation of children and young people a great deal of the research findings must come as a bit of a shock. Many people thought that the Children Act 1989 had got it right, and that the system of providing children and young people with a guardian ad litem and a specialist solicitor would ensure that childrens' views would be heard. Reading the experiences of the children and young people in this study makes you wonder how we can possibly still be getting things so wrong.

Even taking into account that the study is using a small sample and that the authors accept that it is not a representative sample of children and young people, there is more than enough evidence to show that adults in the process are still following their own agendas, and that the wishes and feelings of the young people involved are often not taken into account and they are not being listened to.

The book also examines the relationship between the local authorities and the court. It is easy to come to the conclusion that the local authority social workers, guardians ad litems, solicitors and barristers are so busy fighting their own corners that the needs of the young people are

secondary. All sorts of anomalies are pointed out, such as the refusal of the local authority to give ethnic details of young people when requesting a guardian, requiring the guardian to appoint ethnic solicitors to redress the balance. An issue that could be of crucial importance to the young person. The relationship between the guardian and the solicitor is also crucial to the young person, with the guardian instructing the solicitor, necessitating one solicitor in the study to be reminded that he was the solicitor for the child.

So much seems flawed with the present system of representation. The children and young people have little knowledge of the system they are involved in. There are no information leaflets, other than those supplied by some guardian ad litem panels, that explains who everyone is in the system and what they do, or how the courts work and how the young person can be involved. There is no set time put aside in court for young people to make their own representation and no system for ensuring that the decision of the court is relayed to the young person as soon as is possible.

The recurring evidence presented by the children is that at the particularly stressful time of court care proceedings they feel isolated and ignored. All those who read this book and read about Peter and what the system was doing to him will be shocked to think that such bad practice can still exist. It raises the question that if social workers, guardians and solicitors cannot between them represent young people, is it not time that children were offered independent representation to ensure that their wishes and feelings were always heard and acted upon.

The message from the children and young people involved in this research is loud and clear. It is beholden on the professionals involved to listen and not to assume that the researcher happened to come across a few isolated incidents where the system did not work too well. There are lessons here for all the adults involved in representing children in care proceedings. Changes, not only in practice but in the fundamental way we view childrens' right to be involved, need to be made. This book is a significant help in being a catalyst for the change.

David Hunter *is an Advocate for the National Youth Advocacy Service.*

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