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YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND YOUTH RESEARCH:
Expertise, Subjection and Control

**PAUL CRAWSHAW, WENDY MITCHELL,
ROBIN BUNTON AND EILEEN GREEN**

Empowerment and researching youth and risk

Within contemporary academic and practitioner discourses *empowerment* has become both a buzzword and at the same time a highly debated and contested concept. Empowering work with young people in any context is generally viewed as a positive intervention and for some practitioners it is a key aim of their role in youth and community based work. In youth research and community youth programmes the term is often used to refer to methods and approaches which encourage young people's 'positive' participation. However it is important to recognise that these two concepts are not synonymous. Participation within a research project or a community based programme does not automatically lead to an empowering experience, and can be interpreted as disempowering. Within the discourses of youth research and youth based community work this is rarely acknowledged; participation is typically viewed as a positive intervention for young people, something which both workers and researchers should strive to achieve. However, beneath this rhetoric there are a number of important issues which require consideration. Participation is a relative term, and what on one level may be regarded as participation may on another be viewed as merely tokenistic (perhaps even exploitative) involvement or consultation (Arnstein, 1971; Boaden et al, 1982; and Alexander, 1992). Similarly, empowerment is typically understood as a positive 'liberating' process for young people (Robinson, 1994). However, personal change can have both positive and negative effects (Gilbert, 1995). The very ambiguity surrounding the notion of 'empowerment' enables it to be used either as a powerful political tool which positively intervenes in supporting marginalised groups, or as a 'social aerosol' (Mullender and Ward, 1991) covering up wider conflicts and divisions. Within research, projects aimed at promoting both participation and empowerment as a positive intervention for young people advocate an 'equitable relationship' with the researcher as facilitator and participants actively engaged in or even leading the research (an implicit goal of youth based community projects). How far this is realistically possible within a society dominated by a culture of experts (Petersen and Lupton, 1996) and what the potential unintended consequences of these well intentioned programmes may be have become key concerns.

This paper offers a critical review of an empowering action research programme (Action Risk) which has sought to both investigate and enable strategies for the management of risk in the lives of marginalised young people in a community in

the North East of England. Risk has been depicted as a key organising principle of late modern society (Douglas, 1990; Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992) due to ever decreasing certainties around technology and knowledge. Indeed Beck (1992) depicts this as a movement towards risk society. This is thought to have particular consequences for the young (Taite, 1993). Furlong and Cartmel (1997) suggest that, as a result of 'restructuring of the labour market, flexible specialisation in the workplace, an increased demand for an educated labour force, and social polices which have extended the period of family dependency ..young people today have to negotiate a set of risks which were largely unknown to their parents' (p 1)

Our substantive area of research is significant in offering a critique of empowerment. Risk and risk profiles have come to provide a basis upon which to manage populations in relation to factors such as age, social class, occupation, gender, relationships, locality, lifestyle and consumption. Interventions thus take many diverse forms. Shifts in risk management strategy have been documented in relation to crime (O'Malley, 1992) and health care (Bunton et al, 1995). Within Action Risk we have attempted to facilitate risk management through the implementation of empowering strategies. However we are aware that our action research project is implicated in the monitoring and surveillance of risk in the community studied (here called *Townville*). Through critical examination of one particular aspect of our research our aim is to discuss how both youth research and empowering methodologies which seek to work with young people can be deconstructed in light of Foucaldian dialogues concerning expertise, subjection and control.

Empowering Interventions:
Participation and Resistance

Within this paper one specific initiative (the young men's initiative) will be discussed. However it is important to note that Action Risk facilitated three other community based initiatives and issues of participation and empowerment within these initiatives have been discussed elsewhere (Foreman et al, 2000). The young men's initiative aimed to work with young men aged between 14 and 24. Some focus group data used to construct a 'risk profile' in the early phases of the project is also considered. Together these groups form a sample of predominantly white (though there were a small number of South East Asian participants), working class, heterosexual young people all aged between fourteen and twenty four and all living within a specific geographical area defined by our funding body (Single Regeneration Budget). Our aim was to conduct action research with these young people in order to explore their experiences of risk in an empowering manner and begin to develop strategies for risk management.

Risk and Young Men in Townville

Contemporary perspectives concerning working class young men have portrayed them as a 'problem' for communities to tackle (Campbell, 1993). Our sample was uniformly working class and was drawn from a marginalised and locally stigmatised community in which young people experience a high level of exposure to risk and young men in particular are a concern of local people, community groups, the youth service and crime control agencies. Within such communities young men are often viewed as archetypal risk takers (Plant and Plant, 1993); indeed our initial risk profile confirmed this as a dominant perception amongst Townville residents.

> *People, the lads and that keep breaking into houses and they put boards up but they can still get up dead easy and that and they start fires and that.*
> *(Group of young women aged 13-15)*

Young people suggested that institutional discourses define young men as risk takers and as in need of surveillance and control.

> *'You walk about in Townville with your friends and that and if your in a crowd you get pulled over and even if you've got like, say you've got a bit of cannabis on you right then they lock you up on the spot just for carrying a bit of cannabis.*
> *(Young man aged 15-17)*

In response to this, an initiative specifically concerned with young men was established in order to investigate and address risk taking and begin to develop strategies for risk management. A youth work based group context was seen as most suitable for developing this work. Established contact with youth and community workers facilitated access to young men. Group work was seen to provide the potential for an empowering framework and a suitable means of conducting further research. Before considering the process and impact of our work with young men it is necessary to highlight some of the key facets of the youth work approach which we adopted within our research.

Youth Work and Youth Research

Youth work has evolved in several different directions in the post war period (Bradford, 1997). However, since the 1960s, marked by the advent of the Albermarle Report (1960), a growing emphasis has been made upon the role of the youth service in facilitating informal education and the personal and social development of young people. This often means engaging in voluntary relationships with the young people; young people are regarded as active participants (Love and Hendry, 1994). Bearing in mind both liberal and radical accounts of social education (Bradford, 1997), our aim was to combine the educational and political agendas of

youth work (raising self awareness, highlighting structures which affect young people's lives; sexism, risk) with a research based approach. Ideally this would encourage social educational work to take place in a context which would allow further research. This in turn would be beneficial for the young people involved and would hopefully enable them to guide our research process. However as noted earlier, participation within such processes does not necessarily lead to an empowering experience for all young people. Young (1999) argues that the role of empowerment is to help young people recognise, explore and challenge their own 'internal bridles and perceived powerlessness which underpin their sense of self and guide their actions in the world' (p 88-89). Our aim was to work with young men in a framework which was empowering in order to raise awareness about their lives, experiences and exposure to risk in order to begin to develop strategies for risk management. Drawing upon group work in informal contexts, a common approach used to uphold participatory goals and facilitate empowerment, we sought to establish a 'Young Men's Group' in partnership with the local Youth and Community Centre.

Establishing the 'Young Men's Group'

The group was initiated via informal contact with young male users of Townville Youth and Community Centre. They were invited by a youth worker involved in our research to attend a session specifically provided for young men. Once an initial session had been held, the participants discussed peers who might be interested in attending and they were consequently invited. This method of attracting participants was felt to be appropriate as an important aim of the group was that it consisted of young men whose chose to attend outside of normal youth club time, rather than attempting to integrate it as part of the regular youth club schedule. Integrating the groups held the danger of potentially obliging youth club users to participate. The group was designed as a talking shop for young men within which the facilitators (a researcher and a youth worker) could encourage discussion around a variety of areas, aiming to focus specifically upon risk. This would provide a context within which issue based work could take place as more traditional, and often stereotypically masculine (Spence, 1990: 75) recreationally based activities were available to young men as regular users of the club. Group discussions were to be in the form of loosely structured focus groups (Krueger, 1994) which would allow the young men to explore issues of concern amongst themselves.

This informal context appeared to be appealing to the participants at first. After two weeks a regular group was established with a core membership of three young men and three more on the periphery of the group, all aged between thirteen and sixteen. After the initial introductory sessions however, it proved very difficult to get the young men to participate in any structured work and it soon became apparent

that they were unclear about the purpose of the group itself. Some of the group did express an interest in talking about the problem of drugs in Townville, and decided to construct a questionnaire to administer to their peers. Unfortunately due to sporadic attendance this was never completed. The young men were very particular about who should become members of the group and this suggests that they did feel some ownership of the initiative, however it soon became clear that they really just enjoyed coming to the youth club for an extra session as it provided them with somewhere to go. In response to this some activities were organised which it was felt might encourage increased participation and more regular attendance. A Cyber Café was organised at the university which attracted all of the six participants. Unfortunately, after this session, none of the older young men attended the group with any regularity, but work with the younger ones continued. As a further activity and a useful element of the research process it was decided to give the young men disposable cameras and diaries which they could use over their mid term school holidays. We asked them to take photographs of areas in Townville that they thought were risky and those that they thought were safe. The rationale was that this would give us some understanding of what they understood by risk and danger (as their perceptions were likely to be different to ours) and provide material for further discussion. This was done. However after the holidays the three young men did not seem particularly keen to participate in the group any further, and only one returned to discuss his photographs.

As this brief overview of the four months spent working with the young men shows, we experienced great difficulty in trying to establish any form of structured work. Although some of the young men attended regularly, they were never particularly keen to discuss specific issues preferring informal chats about the youth club. Throughout the sessions, the purpose of the group remained unclear amongst the participants, as this extract from field notes made after a session six weeks into the process suggests.

> *The lads seem to be very comfortable with the setting and are very friendly with me and very keen to talk to (the youth worker), largely about general goings on at the youth club; who's been attending, who's been barred etc. We discussed what they would like to do with the group and how it could develop to best interest and suit them. They did seem a bit unclear about the actual purpose of the group in general. (The youth worker) and I explained again about the importance of using the group for research purposes. The lads did agree that it would be fine to do this and that they would enjoy talking about what it is like to be a young man in Townville. (23 April, 1999)*

At some points they did engage with the notion that our group was part of a wider process of regeneration to improve Townville for both themselves and others. Some of the group composed a report for the local community newspaper about the group, inviting others to join but unfortunately lost interest before it could be submitted for publication. The group did reiterate that they were keen to talk about their experiences of being a young man in Townville, and one interview was conducted in which they share detailed information. Unfortunately it was not possible to follow this information up with the young men who participated or other members of the group due to dwindling attendance.

As this account suggests, the group did not really achieve its aim of facilitating a context from which to conduct action research with young men from Townville. What it did serve to provide was a space for a particular group of youth club users to meet on a regular basis and chat informally, both with each other and the facilitators. The activities that young men participated in were enjoyed by the group. However, irregular attendance made it impossible to continue. The young men chose to participate in the group at specific times, but perhaps more significantly, frequently chose not to participate. This suggests that our understanding of what would provide an empowering framework for them was not in line with their own interests or needs. Because of the onus upon voluntary participation in youth work provision, problems of low attendance by young people are perennial issues for the youth worker, and this was reflected by the low participation in our group (interestingly only a small number of young men regularly use Townville Youth and Community Centre during normal sessions).

'What's this all about again?'

Conflicting Aims: Participation and Involvement

Reflecting on our experiences in attempting to establish a young men's group it is important to consider the practicality of approaches which attempt to facilitate participation and empowerment. Previous studies have indicated that youth workers' beliefs and perceptions of their own work, its role and achievements are not always shared or understood by young people. In a large scale survey with 1000 participants Love and Hendry (1994) found important differences in the interpretation of youth work and participation. In terms of shared responsibility and joint decision making, young people recognised their own role and input in terms of planning events and fund-raising but when it came to certain financial or rule making decisions they felt that this was adult dominated. Similarly, when exploring the youth service in Wales, Williamson (1996) found diversity not only between youth workers and young people but also in the approach of different youth work settings. In some settings, young people felt that there was a high level of participation and consultation and thus felt relaxed and comfortable in each other's company and with staff

members. Whereas in others, 'it was clear that not even the rhetoric of participation, let alone the concept, had yet permeated some settings.' (p 172) With regard to empowerment, some young people clearly felt more self-confident but one must remember that this does not always equate to empowerment; this is a much more elusive goal.

It must also be appreciated that young people's understanding of the youth work context is often very different to that of workers. For many young people, youth clubs and youth workers are a resource for becoming involved in activities. Indeed Foreman (1987) highlights the all too common role of 'youth workers as redcoats'. For our young men, it would appear that their understanding of the youth club and the workers they were involved with was as a resource to provide them with activities and social space which was not available elsewhere in Townville. Participation in this context was keenly engaged in, but they did not necessarily recognise the need to reflect upon their own position within the community, and did not perceive themselves as disempowered. The difficulties of actually working towards an empowering situation or experience for young people, whilst simultaneously conducting social research have been well documented by France (1999) and his evaluation of 'Youth Action Projects'. 'The idea that young people should be included in the evaluation of Youth Action was built into the original research proposal' (p 79). However, achieving this in any meaningful sense proved extremely difficult. Adopting empowering methods similar to our own (working with small groups of young people in an informal and open context) France found that he faced many problems which threatened to disempower rather than empower young people. For example, many young people felt uncomfortable discussing their own ideas/emotions in front of strangers. Furthermore, there was the important issue of consent:

> *'Consent suggests choice, but did young people have real choice? Young participants were asked if they objected to taking part yet were they clear about what was being requested of them? How much choice did they really have? (1999:84)*

Power imbalances between young people and adults must be recognised alongside a prioritisation of objectives. If empowerment objectives remain peripheral and ill defined, France recognises the danger, as in his own research:

> *... that instead of young people being empowered they were being exploited because their involvement was aimed at meeting the needs of other stakeholders such as youth workers and researchers. (1999:88)*

Similarly, in the work with our young men's group there was a danger that they were brought together to meet both the needs of local youth work provision and our research aims (and consequently the aims of our funders) in order to attempt to facilitate empowerment and risk management. However, the methods and approach did not reflect their real interests and needs. Consequently, there was a very real danger of exploitation.

Deconstructing Empowerment

Issues, Tensions and Risks

Approaching research as an instrument for change (Greenwood and Levin, 1998) would appear to be a positive way of researching the needs of communities and instigating further community action. As part of a holistic programme of regeneration within the Townville area, Action Risk has aimed to contribute to a wider agenda through targeting the needs of young people and addressing the ubiquity of risk discourses within which they find themselves in their everyday lives. The key question we must now address is; have we achieved our goal of empowerment?

Whilst attempting to work towards risk reduction and empowerment with young men in Townville, we have encountered difficulties in encouraging participation in the research process. This is perhaps not unusual. As Homans notes,

> *social researchers are often puzzled that projects which seem to them obviously in the public interest and even in the interest of the particular community they hope to study, are not more co-operatively received by the intended subjects (1991, p 4)*

This observation is particularly pertinent in the case of empowering research strategies. People within a targeted community may not significantly identify themselves as disempowered or feel the need for change as much as the researchers or funding body. This also raises an important ethical issue. In identifying a community as disempowered, researchers are often labelling the subjects as possessing as a group socially undesirable characteristics such as high unemployment, low educational achievement and poor health. In our research, we have experienced difficulty in attempting to work with young men in any sustained way. Referring to Homans (1991) once again, we are convinced of the validity of our intervention in the lives of these young people, yet to them, (the actual participants or recipients) the benefits are not so clear. For these young men our role has appeared to be unclear and ill defined in their own terms and they have often failed to acknowledge the need identified by both our wider funding body and ourselves to instigate change. This begins to illustrate the danger of imposing expert discourses upon such communities. These discourses highlight objective risk factors, but should perhaps focus upon the subjective experiences of the community in question. Young men have proved elusive and reticent to take

part in the research process, and this potentially reflects resistance to our interventionist role. This experience raises two further questions. What role can empowering research methodologies have in successfully working with groups identified by experts as marginalised and is the highly debated aim of promoting empowerment always a positive intervention for such groups?

Empowerment, Regulation and Control

Within social research the issue of 'power' remains much debated. One can question the frequently held presumption that through attempting to employ empowering methods it is possible for the more powerful group, the experts, to confer power to the less powerful. The implication of empowering methodologies is that expert knowledge can be used to better the lives of those considered to be disadvantaged. Although the rationale for these aims may seem clear for communities such as Townville, it is questionable whether power can be conferred or redistributed in this way. Power is the outcome of 'reciprocal relations' between individuals and groups (Foucault, 1993) and it is these relationships which need to be addressed if power relations are to change. Similarly, Foucault (1993) suggests that liberty cannot be offered to one group by another. Liberty is a practice (p 163); there may in fact always be projects whose aim is to modify some constraints, to loosen or even to break them, but none of these projects can simply assume by its nature that people will have liberty automatically; that it will be established by the project itself. Liberty is what must be exercised, not necessarily given (p 162). Therefore, from this perspective, liberty, like power must be the outcome of social relations.

Furthermore as noted earlier, we must also be aware of our role in contributing to a process of risk governance. Whilst attempting to facilitate empowerment and opportunities for risk management we must question how far we have engaged in a process of surveillance of young people in Townville thus perpetuating the ongoing concerns of local authorities and crime control agencies anxious about high rates of youth crime and risky youth. Writers within the field of public health (Bunton, 1992; Petersen, 1994b; Petersen and Lupton, 1996) have suggested that empowerment can be seen not as a liberating experience for individuals and communities but as a new form of social regulation and control. Petersen and Lupton (1996) argue that attempts to empower marginalised groups through activities such as community participation are ways of defining, regulating and normalising the members of these groups (p 180). This raises interesting issues for discussion in the context of action research strategies. As discussed above such strategies aim to promote the interests of marginalised groups and negotiate change. This suggests obvious benefits for participants in terms of empowerment. However, as Petersen and Lupton (1996) suggest, attempts at emancipation, despite having good intentions, often serve to further constrain and disadvantage those individuals to whom they

are directed by prescribing specified ways of behaving (p 180-181). With regards to research this implies that strategies aimed at empowering participants may serve to merely prescribe behaviour in the context of the existing status quo rather than actually providing participants with the tools to challenge the roots of their disempowerment. Morley (1995), as noted earlier discusses empowerment in the context of New Right policies and suggests that the focus these policies place upon the agency of individuals in changing their own circumstances, uses empowerment as part of a victim blaming ideology. This suggests that oppressed groups have the power to change their material circumstances and in consequence, it ceases to be the responsibility of the state. Researchers implementing empowering strategies therefore need to be cautious of the part that their research can play in shifting blame onto the victims of oppression.

It would be a crucial oversight to ignore the role that projects such as ours can have in terms of increasing governance or governmental control over communities. Here governmental control or 'governance' refers to Foucault's (1977) use of the term to describe the control of populations via a proliferation of expert discourses, which promote surveillance and normalising behaviour. Whilst researching and attempting to manage risk we are contributing to a process of governance through subjecting groups of young people to the surveillance of expert discourses which identify them as 'risky' or 'at risk'. As Lupton (1999) states, using expert knowledges;

> *...particular social groups or populations are identified as 'at risk' or 'high risk', requiring particular forms of knowledges or interventions. (p 87).*

Castel (1991) suggests that we have seen a new form of surveillance emerge as a result of new movements in social welfare strategies, which affect how individuals or groups become identified as being dangerous or presenting a risk (p 207). Traditionally individuals were subject to interventions when they were deemed as being potentially dangerous based upon observed characteristics and behaviour. Castel (1991) suggests that in terms of intervention in work with marginalised social groups (the mentally ill, the socially excluded) we have begun to classify communities as 'at risk' as opposed to being dangerous. This strategy 'dissolves the notion of a subject or a concrete individual, and puts in its place a combination of factors, the factors of risk.' Castel (1991) states that a risk does not arise from the presence of particular precise danger embodied in a concrete individual or group. It is the effect of a combination of abstract factors which render more or less probable the occurrence of undesirable modes of behaviour (p 207). If we consider our approach to work with young men, we have identified them as a group 'at risk', a group which holds undesirable characteristics defined by the local community, the police and our funding body and also by young people themselves in the first phases of our research. This evidence has been deemed satisfactory enough to

impose a process of surveillance upon them, which makes them further visible and subject to control. All these decisions are made however, without talking to the individuals who will actually be involved in this part of the research. They are identified as part of this group, defined as 'at risk' and consequently become part of the research process. An initiative has been co-ordinated with the only criteria for membership being to be a young man between certain ages and a resident of Townville. No face to face assessment of the individuals exposure to risk, risk taking activities and consequent necessity to participate in a programme purporting to facilitate risk management is carried out. This assumption has been made via an examination of objective risk factors i.e. to be a young man in Townville is to experience risk, and intervention is deemed necessary. As Castel (1991) states;

> *These preventative policies thus promote a new mode of surveillance: that of systematic predetection...the intended objective is that of anticipating and preventing the emergence of some undesirable event: illness, abnormality, deviant behaviour etc. (p 288).*

From Castel's (1991) standpoint, the population in question is identified as 'at risk', and therefore intervention is judged to be necessary. In youth work models, Jeffs and Smith (1999) argue that approaches have become increasingly based upon predetection and prevention, particularly in relation to community based youth programmes designed to address the problem of risky youth and crime. This can be counterproductive as it is;

> *...incompatible with an educational purpose for the work: it threatens the volutary and universal nature of youth provision; marginalises those not regarded as problematic; and works to an externally defined agenda rather than a local analysis of young people's needs (Jeffs and Smith, 1994, 1996a cited in Banks, 1999, p 93).*

As Jeffs and Smith (1994, 1996a) suggest, such surveillance of youth marginalises 'normal' young people (those not at risk or presenting a risk), by using generalised 'factors of risk' (Castel, 1991: 281) rather than careful consultation with individual subjects. Within Action Risk, although having developed a risk profile through initial quantitative and qualitative research with young people, the specific groups with whom we have sought to work, and the general population of young people in Townville, have been labelled as 'at risk' through identification of factors of risk by expert discourses such as our own. This assessment is seen to justify our interventionist role and the imposition of surveillance upon young people as part of a process which seeks to replace a perceived lack of local knowledge about risk (Hughes, 1997) through empowering methods based upon expert knowledges.

Both youth research and youth based community work intended to empower marginalised young people has a role in increasing the influence of governance in the lives of the young. In *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault discusses how control over populations in the contemporary era can be understood in terms of disciplinary practices which become rooted in the mechanisms of societies. These disciplinary practices are more covert than those traditionally based upon coercion and violence and serve to make populations visible and open for surveillance and governance by both themselves and others. The disciplines bring together disparate groups, like young people, for increased surveillance. As Foucault (1977) states

> *...discipline fixes; it arrests or regulates movements; it clears up confusion; it dissipates compact groupings of individuals wandering about the country in unpredictable ways; it establishes calculated distributions. (p 219)*

Henceforth, from a Foucauldian perspective youth research and youth based community work make visible disparate groups of young people, rendering them open for surveillance and control. By bringing separate groups and individuals together and classifying them into calculated distributions (risk takers, those at risk) it renders them open for a process of governance based on systems of expertise. Youth Work targets young people as a relatively powerless group and aims to work with them towards their own empowerment. However, from a Foucauldian perspective which emphasises the dangers of social control this becomes inextricably linked with processes of discipline and surveillance. Foucault (1977) uses Bentham's model of the panopticon to illustrate this form of disciplinary power (Sarup, 1993). The panopticon was developed as a means of rationalising imprisonment and is a form of prison with individual cells being laid out in a circular formation around a central watchtower. The result is that from the central tower complete surveillance of all the cells and occupants is possible. At any time, a prisoner can never be certain whether they are actually being watched, but are also aware that it is always possible. According to Foucault (1977) panopticism;

> *...arranges power...it does so not for power itself, nor for the immediate salvation of a threatened society: its aim is to strengthen the social forces - to increase production, to develop the economy, spread education, raise the level of public morality; to increase and multiply (p 207-208).*

Ways of working with communities, and in particular young people within such communities, deemed as in need of intervention can be said to reflect this model. The presence of agencies, such as research and youth based community projects bring unattached groups into visibility and create the possibility of surveillance and consequent governance. As Jeffs and Smith (1999) suggest, detached (street based) youth work is seen in some areas as an alternative to CCTV (the epitome of

surveillance of risky communities), and the increased funding of youth based projects attempting to reduce crime in 'problem' areas provide a model of surveillance for authorities which gives them access to young people which was previously not possible. This is not necessarily a new development. Youth work since its inception has traditionally had a control element (Jeffs and Banks, 1999). It brings young people together under the surveillance of educators, and in some cases overtly attempts to steer them away from the risks of late modernity (drugs, unsafe sex, crime). Using empowering methods which seek to raise awareness and allow the making of informed choices can also be a way of making people behave in a socially prescribed way as dutiful citizens (Petersen and Lupton, 1996, Morley, 1995). As Morley (1995) suggests, empowerment contains the danger of promoting social pathology and implying that the group to be empowered is objectified and reduced to the status of raw material to be worked with and moulded by experts who have decoded the mysteries of power (p 5). Morley goes on to warn that;

> *...empowerment could be part of the rise of a new moral technology aimed to regulate and survey the most vulnerable members of communities, (p 5)*

Empowerment therefore cannot necessarily be separated from processes of discipline, surveillance and control. The empowering process has a role in making visible and normalising individuals in order to make them conform to the needs of wider society.

As O'Malley (1992) states

> *almost the defining property of Foucault's conception of disciplinary power is that it works through and upon the individual, and constitutes the individual as an object of knowledge. In the disciplines the central technique is that of normalisation in the specific sense of creating or specifying a general rule in terms of which individual uniqueness can be recognised, characterised and then standardised. (p 252)*

Conclusion

To refer back to the opening line of this paper, *empowerment* has become a highly debated and contested concept. As we have tried to highlight, there are many interpretations of what empowerment is, can or should be; similarly debates continue with regard to the effects of empowering interventions in the lives of young people. Here we have raised considerations that move beyond the simplistic model which suggests that participation within processes such as research and youth based community work is always an empowering experience for young people. Townville is a community identified by expert discourses as 'risky' and young people are viewed as vulnerable and exposed to risks and dangers associated with late modernity (Beck, 1992, Furlong and Cartmel, 1997). Empowering methods employed as part

of Action Risks research process have on the one hand served to provide young men with a social space to discuss their experiences of risk. Youth work methods clearly have potential for implementing empowering work with marginalised groups of young people and can be key tools within action based projects such as ours. However, on the other hand, whether we have fulfilled our aim of presenting opportunities for change through helping young people to manage risks is debatable. Furthermore it has become questionable whether this is even an appropriate strategy. Young people's subjective experiences of risk are not necessarily in line with adult understandings of what constitutes risk or risk taking behaviour. Accounts of risk collected in other stages of Action Risk suggest that young people experience risk subjectively and have their own strategies for risk management. Indeed they often feel that our definitions of risk are incongruous with their daily experiences which may normalise danger and draw on resources such as the peer group. Our aim of risk management through empowerment has proved difficult to quantify, and it has not escaped our attention that we have potentially become part of a process of increased regulation and control of young people in Townville. Hughes (1997) identifies the danger of such 'regulatory technologies' which become as she describes 'mechanisms of subjection' as we attempt to replace local knowledge with alternative expertise (p 21). Indeed as Hughes (1997) recognises, although, 'often subtle in its technique and presented with apparently good intentions, this subjection occurs within a complex power/knowledge dynamic (p 21). We have assumed a position of superiority (as experts) in identifying young people as 'at risk' and presuming to implement strategies for risk management. However, young people often identify risk subjectively on their own terms and consequently create their own strategies for risk management (some of which could be defined by experts as risk taking behaviour itself). In this context, empowering strategies such as ours could actually serve to disempower young people; through attempting to replace local knowledge with expert knowledge, discounting subjective experiences of risk and locally developed strategies for risk management. This leaves research and community based project such as Action Risk with a dilemma. Ethically we have an obligation to avoid bringing harmful effects upon our research subjects (British Sociological Association, 1998), yet it is clear that some aspects of our research create the potential to do just that. Strategies such as ours, must seek to avoid this by coming to appreciate the importance of subjective local knowledge and avoid imposing expert definitions and interventions upon some of societies' most vulnerable groups. Empowerment is an elusive goal and it is questionable whether the lives of young people can be improved through the use of methods which seek to empower from a position of assumed superior knowledge. Such methods may only serve to subject the knowledge of young people. A commitment

to understanding this might allow those concerned to embrace the local knowledge of young people, repositioning them as experts within their own lives (Hughes, 1997) whose subjective understandings of their own experiences and environments hold the key to their own empowerment.

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'GOING HOME WITH THE CHAPS':

Concerning the Degradation of Young Urbanites, and their Social Space and Time

CAROLE ANN SCOTT

It has been argued that the character of youth is constructed by state policy and that youth 'problems' are defined by the particular policies pursued (Jeffs and Smith 1996). Despite 'hard core' perceptions being inherently unstable (Fornas and Bolin 1995, Heidensohn 1989), late 20th century youth discourses focus on the 'problematic' rather than the 'normal' (Coffield et al 1986) constructing a 'youth collective': youth as undisciplined, rebellious, disaffected and dangerous (Humphries 198l); muggers and weapon-carrying hooligans (Cotterell 1996). Images have become political (Cohen 1982), and economic, political, psychological and pedagogically-oriented researchers have problematised young males in particular, merging categories of 'teenager' and 'delinquent', homogenising them as 'potentially delinquent', attracting condemnation and fear, and focusing on street crime (Braithwaite 1989). So the contemporary urban youth character has materialised within the hegemony of 'youth as pupa', informed by post-industrial-economic preparation expectations, and contextualised by globalisation – as 'emergent' - among discourses of urban fear and fear of the stranger.

Research policy must bear some responsibility, for spotlighting the delinquent male youth has discursively distorted the youth persona. Indeed, young people are the most likely victims of crime (Young and Lea 1984). Youth research, in focusing on delinquency, deferring to prejudice and inertia (Griffin 1993) and studies of difference (Jeffs and Smith 1995), has rendered associated problems invisible to policy makers. It has seemed to be blind to particularity and normality.

Popular discourses have restructured the adolescent urban experience as fear has spawned increased surveillance. City spaces are sites of negotiating social relations, particularly territorialisation (Massey 1988). However, arguably, justice is merely what advantages the stronger (Plato 1935) and urban space is now heavily monitored to ensure private property protection. Moreover, human and technical surveillance and deterrence by public service providers, such as Education, Transport, and Health Executives, Public Sport and Leisure, and Administrative Centres, charged with property management and public reassurance, restrict the urban sojourns of adolescents via spatial policies of inclusion and exclusion. Yet in mid-adolescence concern with 'belonging' figures most strongly, particularly peer and group belonging. Young people need access to spaces to develop emotional and self-management through adult- and peer-group relations (Cotterell 1996, Willis et al

1990). Always under the gaze of the adult, urban space seems to offer little scope for expression, blighting personal and social development.

The research for this paper focused on the spatiality of the street - the 'condition of possibility' through which claims of authenticity are staked (Keith 1995) - asking how monitoring and surveillance impact on adolescents journeying home from school through urban space. Reduction of private space and subsequent deterioration of social milieu affects all urbanites, but how it impinges seems to have been overlooked by the research community. The research was sparked by a 'commonsense hunch' (Van Maanen 1983) that restricted spatiality and increased surveillance, recently characterising young people's daily experience (Cotterell 1996, Jeffs and Smith 1996), was restricting opportunities for cultural production (Willis et al, 1990), essential to the construction of self (Bauman 1990), and wished to understand how youngsters managed such restriction. Adopting qualitative, participant methods, it focused on a particular time and space, and, particularly, on some young males.

The School Gate

At 3.30 p.m. every day approximately 1,000 youngsters converge from several exits onto the yard. They proceed quietly, most silently, to one gate (others being locked) to go home. Going home is the observable outcome, the reason for the journey, but not, for most, its sole purpose. This is prime time and space for cultural production. The pace of the swarm is brisk and purposeful, school emptying in ten minutes, although there is a slowing down at the gate.

School – Controlled Time and Space

Contemporary adolescents' day-time is organised in age-related, ability-selected classes. In specialist rooms all day, they line up, standing still in silence, several minutes before each lesson, use the left side when moving on corridors, sit for 70-minute lessons, raising a hand for permission to speak. Composition of whole-class groupings vary between subjects, so no continuity of friendship grouping is maintained. Thus, social interactions are mediated through the age- and ability-related confines of the academic curriculum. At lunch-times boys queue outside the dining-hall, then eat, talking quietly and sitting in a 'civilised' manner, under supervision. After lunch they go to the large, bare, concrete, yard and may visit the toilet. Their actions and interactions throughout break-times and lunch-times are scrutinised by CCTV and staff. Ironically, one homogenising characteristic of youth is that they are watched.

A contemporary school building offers few resources for informal interaction. Incidents at Dunblane and Wolverhampton, triggered funding (DFE 1996) for CCTV, metal fencing, intruder-lighting, alarm-systems and coded entry. In addition,

authority-wide anti-smoking policies and detection devices have exposed 'bolt-holes' many teachers once ignored. Alterations in working conditions for teachers have altered practice. The withdrawal of teacher co-operation over extra-curricular activity, has eroded opportunities open to youngsters for informal cultural exchange. Such activities once offered space – laboratories, music rooms, gardens, sports-halls – but no longer do so. After school, this 'educational fortress' is checked closely for students, then locked.

After School

Hegemonic scholasticism demands strict uniform code. Consequently, as students bottleneck inside, teachers on 'gate duty' inspect them for deviation – 'sloppiness', 'abnormal' hairstyles, 'extreme' styles of dress, 'outlandish' adornment, and offenders are called out of the flow, to remove trainers (getting shoes from bags), tuck in and button-up shirts, and put on or tighten ties. 'Miscreants' should carry parent notes justifying not having black leather shoes for school, and produce these to gate-staff. They must also justify not carrying a large bag, construed by teachers as evidence of not taking work home and defying school homework policy.

This inspection also reflects school policy concerning personal and social development. Being smart outside is widely endorsed by staff to nurture corporate identity, increasing personal pride, and developing social standing. The staffroom and office are near the gate, and staff routinely stand at the full-length windows overtly watching students, occasionally shouting to them, opening windows, or knocking on the glass. A senior teacher affirmed:

> *They learn they are part of school, they represent it when they leave. They project school image outside.*

Thus is school time and space, controlled and observed.

The Gate

Observation of the gate from outside, reveals great contrasts. Students assume individuality, becoming physically active, some jumping, 'jousting', moving heads and arms on the spot – *'go wild'* as a member of staff reported. Some get into waiting cars, others wait. As friends of different ages come into view, there is a strong sense that these are not 'leaving' but 'arriving'. Many put in earrings. Some customise uniform – removing ties, pulling out shirt-tails, discarding blazers into bags, putting on trainers, seconds after 'passing muster'. Others change into another 'uniform' secreted in their bags – trainers, track suits, caps and hats. Thus transformed and re-constituted, they disperse noisily in groups, mainly of two to five. Although observed directly and covertly, boys, typically, explained:

Do you know what we do, Miss, the minute, Miss, we get out. Right, Miss, we take off our ties, pull out our shirts, put on our caps and tops; that's the first thing.

Clearly, for about 10% of the school cohort there is an active discarding of school-identity – a resistance (Hebdige 1979), and a complex and ritualised construction of another self, usually into expensive, ostensibly-labelled track-suits. They are 'making do' (de Certeau 1984). This is popular culture in the making (Fiske 1989). These are the 'expressions, signs and symbols' (Willis et al 1990) through which youngsters create cultural significance - a necessary part of their everyday life, their 'cultural work and cultural creativity'. A typical explanation went:

You want to look cool. You want to look good with your mates.

Their concern was with building and maintaining status not only among and within their friendship group – membership and terms of affiliation – but of the group itself, of establishing and affirming its presence. Out of group identity, thus formed, individual social identity is claimed. Alteration of appearance was done in groups, and in each it was an identical whole-group practice. It was ritualised, incorporating independent stylistic innovations; some groups did not alter their garb, some only changed into trainers, others only donned caps and trainers. A small minority chose to change all their clothing except underclothes, already having T-shirts under their uniform shirts. This was shared ritual - lasting ten to fifteen minutes, and undergone with great concentration, composure, serious facial expression, and in silence.

Journeying from the gate, their uniformity is 'abandoned'. Wearing contemporary clothing – padded jackets and thick, moulded-soled footwear – and carrying large rucksacks, they process in the open-bodied, rhythmically-swaying 'strut' of the young contemporary male, and appear to the untrained eye to be much older. To the onlooker they seem to be a large noisy crowd of youths. Dispersing, they fill the pavements, spilling onto the roads and weaving through parked, and slowly-moving traffic.

Bus Stops

Here, approximately seventy young males collect - highly visible and noisy. Some loudly laugh and joke, some stand quietly in their own world. Some climb walls, some hit each other with bags, occasionally near a waiting adult, who moves away, or confronts them. Some stand 'grazing' on sweets, snacks and fizzy drinks. Some kick bottles and cans, competing for possession. Some jump on each other, dragging bags from backs. Some, additionally, have musical instrument cases or large artwork folders which are used to great effect in the barrage when the jostling begins. They are young, and their responses quick and varied. Viewing them en

masse, they are extremely active and although each has assembled individually to catch 'his' bus, patterned responses appear concerted. Individual understanding is that he is with two or three friends waiting for the bus home.

Waiting for the bus is where interactions with the world of adult strangers really begin, and power struggles are enacted. Adults are greatly outnumbered by students. They are older: often pensioners travelling 'off-peak' using free passes; or mothers with pre-school children – unlike the boys who are regulars. Space is insufficient. Boys jostle, rather than queue. Thus compressed, some students fall, or jump – exaggerating their projectile into some comic public performance, complete with sound effects - onto the road before heavy traffic, with narrow escapes. Such impromptu performances cause mirth and provide an opportunity for derision and loud banter from the throng, sometimes including swearing by the embarrassed youth, as he re-negotiates his pavement position.

Each seems absorbed in his own friendship groups, engaged in small-scale social interactions - exciting and contented places to be. Released from time-tabled regimentation and scrutiny, they relax, oblivious to the adults. They push each other, unapologetically, on the pavement, or onto the bus, laughing, sometimes accidentally pushing adults, for which some apologise. Sometimes, self-confessed, unrehearsed, admissions to 'going too far' are gauche, their social graces and communication with adults ill-practiced, and they make concessionary gestures, such as momentarily glancing towards, and pausing to face the adult concerned, and then bowing heads, or raising both palms – football player style - before resuming the chase or the game. These conciliatory gestures are usually spurned by a throw of the head of the maligned adult, who glares, now in conflict mode, ready to admonish.

Some youths 'take them on' – answering back, reserving the right to do so from the 'highest' authority:

> *My mam says I have to stand up for myself. They can't tell me off. Only my mam and dad can. We're just funnin' on ... not stealing or anything, not taking cars. They've got it in for us, cause they're old. My mam says they were the same when they were at school.*

So initial encounters with adults on the journey home are tense, negative, or openly hostile, usually occasioned by the clowning of a tiny, dispersed and disparate minority within the dynamics of large numbers, when temptations for some to 'play to the crowd' is spontaneous and irresistible, rather than premeditated. Youngsters are in worlds of their own, entering very visibly a world of adults - in which they represent 'threat'.

Negative adult cues continue on the bus, beginning with the driver, who imprints authority from the outset, often delaying opening the doors until 'order' is established, achieved by shouts and gesticulations by him from behind glass. In the melee, pavement hostility and victimisation continues, now more aggressively:

> *Miss, the worst are the old ladies. They're always in a bad mood. They kick you. They stick their umbrellas in your back, and push you out of the way. If we did that we'd get killed,* [reprimanded] *wouldn't we?*

As Thorne (1993) notes, social relations entail consequential structures of power. Cotterell (1996) has noted the fear experienced by adults close to juvenile groups. Confirming this, some adults in the queue just stare ahead. This is also a common response to older, larger youths. Adults seem to be conducting risk-assessment, like the drivers who carry straight on.

Catching the Bus – 1999

Bus behaviour represents a site of discontent, adults complaining daily about all bus routes. Boys, it seems, are *rude, noisy, foul-mouthed, threatening and violent* - feared and loathed by many. Students' own accounts confirmed how some might earn this reputation for all by symbolically opposing older people. Youths do dominate the bus space filling near-empty buses at the school stop at travelling time not used by the adult working population. Thorne (1993) notes how boys use more space than girls. Certainly, they will be cumbersome, with large padded coats, and bags on their backs packed with books, files, lunch-boxes and outdoor shoes. Young males together are very loud, as deepening voices compete to be heard.

It is conceivable if not predictable that in the light of the widely-conceived fear of youths, sharing space with them squashing into seats and moving about in narrow aisles may present concern, and the sight and sound of them may well alarm some adults. Certainly, no adults smile, neither conceding space, nor directing positive verbal or non-verbal cues at them, as boys assume bus-space.

Adults take no notice?

So the boys fight their way down the bus, positioning themselves as far back as possible, assuming differing levels of peer-status. There are 'regular' seating positions, and acknowledged 'power groups' who sit where they like, others conceding seats or hanging positions on the rails. The rear is for uninterrupted smoking, since there are no conductors, and adult passengers remain silent. *'They take no notice, Miss'.* Students share cigarettes and play with matches and lighters, sometimes lighting tickets. Here, also, is the emergency exit. Frequently, the emergency door is opened *'for a laugh'*, signalling to the driver to stop the bus and chastise suspects, before finally ejecting them. Here, taunting - tempting him out of his seat - figured

prominently. Success was sweetest when the driver lost his temper - widely considered to be an adult weakness.

The tale would be recalled later, at school, providing much entertainment in the telling, made more vivid by the rendering of impersonations.

> *He really lost it. Put us off. Really funny. Said he would phone the police but we knew he couldn't do anything so he wouldn't. We just legged it. Really funny.*

Youths find opportunities for fun-making and esteem-building, often by ridiculing and insulting each other, and repeated bell-ringing. Boys in groups bond through the risk of rule-breaking and through aggressing against other boys perceived to be weaker (Thorne 1993). Some students spit masticated pieces of ticket at each other – *'for a laugh'*, disregarding the confines of the bus, or their lack of prowess, often resulting in the pellet making contact with an adult passenger's face or coat. Boys' social relations tend to be 'overtly hierarchical and competitive' (Thorne 1993), and on the bus, hearty bragging, insulting, jostling, and roughing causes them to annoy and bump adults. The boys seem oblivious until reminded, and even then quickly resume where they left off.

On occasion, however, they become aware of 'group' and 'others', and, from the anonymity of the group, may single out a member of the public for particular game, with varied repercussions. There were several accounts of group play at ridiculing someone repeatedly as they embarked or disembarked at subsequent stops.

Catching the Bus – Echoes of the Past

From adult recollections - teachers, accountants, managers, dentists, priests, nurses, a magistrate and a doctor - the school bus had long been a site of cultural production for students, and a source of concern for bus personnel – and the headmaster next day. Past bus behaviour entailed laughing and talking to friends, but included smoking, throwing missiles (bottles of ink and football boots) wrestling, spitting, singing and shouting, physically and verbally assaulting the conductor, and the general public from windows. Incidental vandalism and graffiti-work, and regular ejection from the bus figured prominently in these, now respectable, adults' reminiscences:

> *It was great fun. We always had a laugh. Once, the bus stopped outside Binns [a department store in a main shopping street], and we poured an open bottle of Quink ink out of the window. It hit many people* [adults] *in the bus queue. They went mad! Yes we all got caned for that the next day.*

And:

> *Oh yes, there was trouble on the bus. I remember on one occasion, the conductor told the driver to stop, because the bus was on fire. Someone*

> *had finished their cigarette and dumped it out on the side of the bus. The end fell off and started a fire.*

- this rendered by a senior teacher.

Bus behaviour by school-age youngsters carries marked similarities with many adults' accounts in their youth, as offering resources for cultural production after school. However, there is a contemporary inflection as days are more confined, and opportunities for cultural production are almost non-existent. Since the demise of the Local Education Authority bussing system, their 'necessary work' (Willis et al 1990b) must be done in public, among adults whose experience of contemporary youth in groups is informed by media imagery. Furthermore, there is no authorised regulation inside these public buses, with the introduction of one-man-operators and pay-as-you-enter payment-systems, and, echoing Campbell (1993), youths inhabit a world where they are invulnerable. Thus, the 'public bus' has become the 'school bus' for the journey between school and central bus station, until sufficient numbers of boys get off and adults get on, and the adult-majority presence restored, converting it again into a 'public bus'. The situation is compounded today by greater numbers of youngsters in full-time education, competing for time and space not traditionally 'theirs'. Two decades ago, approximately one-third – mostly those over 15 years - would have been in employment elsewhere (Dennis and Erdos 1992).

Here lies the potential for conflict: with the erosion of co-operation in public space (Campbell 1993), more, and older, youngsters are contesting territory, with no 'visas' nor positive guidance over possibilities for shared use. Given that young people are not passive but opportunistic, actively constructing their lives, and also the widely-held adult perceptions concerning youth menace, we can understand the repercussions which lie in store for some adolescents, reinforcing the reputation of them all.

On the journey, as the boys-to-adults ratio shifts to favour adults, youths' behaviour quietens, more so on their second bus approaching home. There is more space. They sit apart, or in small friendship groups, of, perhaps, youngsters from other schools – including girls - and mingled with neighbourhood adults. They 'sit still', sometimes looking out of the window:

> *You grow up, you behave, you sit nice ... everybody knows that. ...Well, you just don't act daft ... You just don't ... Nobody does. You can't be stupid unless there's someone to to be stupid with.*

Walking from School

'Walking prefigures and is prefigured by the process of identity formation' (Lefebvre 1996 p145)

Compression of space and surveillance continues for the young urban pedestrian. City schools serve densely-populated areas, largely concrete, suffering late-20th-century decline in public outlays on recreation and open space (Katz l998). In this post-industrial city, a myriad of streets and back lanes dominate the area. Approximately 700 young males thread through for almost one mile, either to go home, or reach the city centre to catch buses to outlying districts.

Ejected from the confines of school-day, they are projected into another system of spatial and temporal compression, hostility, aggression, and danger - the walk home. Urban motorists experience spatial stress (Gould 1991) and students are squashed, mostly on the pavements. Many contestations occur for road supremacy. Some larger students march briskly, cutting through slower boys and slower cars. Differences in age groups are highly visible. Older students seem to be in small groups of two or three, or walking alone. Younger boys are physically boisterous and in larger groupings.

At junctions, all bottleneck, where the force from the rear pushes some onto the road. Car horns hoot, drivers grimace, or make hostile gestures, which are returned, with vocal and physical ripostes, or completely disregarded. They are confronted, in queues, or concourses – not as right-holders, confirming Wyn and Whyte (1997), but marginalised (Malone 1998) as enemy or threat, transformed into targets and victims of collectives (Muncie 1984) suffering continuous assault on basic civil liberties. They generally avoid eye contact, *'Or you might get a smack'* (from a girl, a bigger youth, or a male adult). This grounds the logic of practice for these young urbanites, navigating dangerous space and time.

With imagination, however, the scrum provides fertile resources for cultural creation. Some passing cars contain peers, and the close proximity of walkers and vehicles is exploited, opportunist students occasionally getting in or out to join friends. Others engage in 'jousting' – mock battles – as students seize the moment, transforming it into self-expression and image-building; then may wind down car-windows and engage in loud conversation with their marching peers - as traffic slows down.

During these exchanges, sweets, sweet papers, plastic drinks bottles, and other missiles may be thrown both into the cars – a sign of great skill acquisition prompting cheers from the moving throng – and also from cars, invariably disrupting the thought processes of some, while providing amusement and interest. The latter display of finesse may be timed to coincide with the parent moving off with the traffic

flow, when the window will be rapidly wound up as a defence strategy and last act of defiance, behind which the grinning, gesticulating student will reinforce his superiority, then retreating up the road.

Triumph may be short-lived, however, if a 'chauffeur' (parent) is compelled to slow down ahead, initiating an opportunistic second-wave onslaught on the vehicle. The challenge is met, and wits are again pitched in battle, with a tauntingly slight opening of the window to reveal a single-finger sign, but through which hands and forearms may be pushed in an attempt to seize a bodily extremity within. All that remains is to seize control, with a firm tightening up of the window around the arm, better still if accompanied by a coincidental acceleration of the vehicle, inducing squeals of alarm from the vanquished youth – running while attached to the car - laughter within from the victor, and general approbation from the appreciative crowd. Some yards on, the youth is released at the command of the driver, and rejoins his friendship group.

City Space

The city has always comprised contestable space (Lefebvre 1996), the outcomes of which indicate power-holding, a site of 'spatial apartheid' (Davis 1992), wherein identities are formed in terms of who has access and who is denied, strategies of organisation grounded in the 'social production of identities' (Skelton and Valentine l998). Since the school is located near the city–centre, and has a whole-city intake, students' journeys home represent the materiality of this contest, as they approach bus stops, or adopt routes home, or walk to the city centre to catch buses onwards. The city environment is highly structured. Public walkways, shopping malls, parks, play-parks, car-parks, building sites, public buildings, surrounds and interiors, metro-links, railway- and bus-stations, lifts and escalators, rail- and foot-bridges, once the social milieu of the young, after school and after dark, are all locked or illuminated.

Uneven 'socio-spatial relations' (Katz 1998) have seriously compromised the construction of subjectivity and identity formation inflected. So, traditional spaces where once adolescents fitted unobserved, are exposed; their private space is reduced, and opportunities for forging and negotiating peer culture diminished. Cities are 'crucibles of power' (Lefebvre 1996), and city-space is conceptualised (Skelton and Valentine 1998) as the site for interacting social relations. To most adults, the space of the city offers possibility; to the youth it spells out denial. Public houses and working men's clubs, banks, building societies, the Post-Office, off-licenses, supermarkets, shops, work-shops, betting-shops, coffee-shops, are for adult-only consumption.

Shops

For most youngsters, spending has symbolic value (Cashmore 1984). Consumption includes sweet shops, local video shops, some clothes, cosmetics, computer and

music multiples. Spending determines identity, within the realm of social acceptance. However, young people are defined as a 'zone of difference' (Skelton and Valentine 1998, p127) in shops and are victimised by inaccurate interpretations of crime statistics (British Retail Consortium 1995), which exaggerate and highlight youth crime (Farrington 1994). Many students shop straight after school. Some traders sell them sweets, snacks, and, illegally, single cigarettes. Equally, many in the area close until students pass by. Youngsters encounter heavy surveillance in shops, which they accept without response or retaliation. This makes sense to them, grounded in a logic of risk assessment, for to be assertive, or claim rights, would warrant immediate ejection from the premises, even robbery:

> *You only have to say something, and they take your crisps back off you and put you out and don't give you your money.*

Youths monopolize the shop frontages, hanging about (Henry 1993) where proprietors restrict their entry to two at a time, such messages being displayed prominently. Youths make their purchases quickly and silently before being ushered out. Shop-front activity is of physical, small-group interaction, lads bumping into passers-by, occasionally falling onto passing vehicles. Crossing the road involves one-to-one challenges with motorists. Cars can be bumped with bags and boys bumped with mirrors and bumpers. There is open battle for command of the roads, youths giving good accounts of themselves, but ultimately assuming Pyrric victories, and escaping intact with a smirk, rather than stemming the incessant flow of traffic.

Compression

Pavements are narrow, and roads increasingly congested with traffic, not only moving, but also tightly parked, defining kerbs. Youths, dressed in large, padded jackets, shoulders spread from carrying back-pack sports bags, are squashed together, and scrutinised closely by residents - owners of garden furniture or ornaments, or parked cars. Many boys brush past bushes 'accidentally', or overstep onto unfenced gardens in their boisterous walk, and residents knock on windows or 'come out yelling', re-asserting territory. Such is the level of anxiety over property damage, perceived to be deliberately - 'wantonly' - caused by youths that surveillance is a feature of one entire route:

> *He just gives you the evil eye, so you know he's watching you. They all do in that street. You cannot move for them.*

Plants, containers, and garden ornaments, however, are not appropriated as resources for symbolic creativity by most youths walking home, being generally ignored by the thousand passing daily. Some appear aimless, kicking bottles and cars, wielding fallen branches, gladiatorially, then discarding them in the road.

Some walk along walls, burst open gates (simultaneously falling into gardens) and bang into wing mirrors en route, both because of the squash, and also because of their apparent self-absorption and consequent carelessness. In attempting to negotiate a narrow gap between wall and car, the procession narrows to one or two boys, but often, the crowd behind forces the pace and boys are seen to scrape along cars, sometimes also catching these with bags. Such collisions seem circumstantial, not pre-conceived or deliberate.

Clearly, there is a difference in adult anxiety levels, and tolerance, between boys pushing against brickwork and boys pushing against cars, linked with financial considerations and extortionate car-repair firms. However, youngsters are normally victims rather than perpetrators, confirming Young and Lea (1984), and it seems to be assumed that in our consumerist and acquisitive society (Katz 1998) where conspicuous consumption and car ownership is normalised, indeed valorised, cars are privileged over young people. Where territory is contested the car assumes the greater right, even when protruding into pavement space.

Small boys scratch hands, being pushed against rough brickwork, wrought iron railings and car aerials, they bruise shoulders against wing mirrors, and rip pockets or bump arms or shins on sharp metal projections. Neither they, nor their parents, complain to residents about damage caused to their offspring, and appear bemused to be questioned over this. Street survival is part and parcel of the journey home; no accommodation is made for them in such excessive numbers. There are nine 5-18 schools situated within one mile of this school and within one mile of the city centre, closing each day between 3.30 and 3.45 p.m. Why isn't traffic curtailed on access roads around school-leaving time? After all, hedgehogs and frogs achieve discursive consideration. Suggesting this among adult associates aroused a barrage of incredulity and derision!

Negotiating Urban Space

Routes adopted by students journeying home do not always correspond with town planners' perceptions. They are socially prescribed. Most of the area under investigation was built during the 19th century. Now it must accommodate not only several 1960s-built school campuses, but, also, the journey home for the thousands of adolescents educated therein. Routes are often negotiations. Many youngsters ran across a busy main road, then climbed a wall higher than most of them, into a park to avoid another school's homeward trail, then crossed the park, joining another city road almost in the city centre.

Similarly in the park, mutually-agreed territorial routes were devised, separating schools. Some students left the road early, and cut across private car parking, daily

outrunning and outwitting security personnel - a logical route, connecting with a recently-opened pizza house, an oasis for those travellers en route to outlying environs. Interestingly, young people, in spaces where power was more balanced, had negotiated satisfactory arrangements as to their use.

Clearly, young metropolitans negotiating the city, like their older counterparts, inscribe their route in terms of the main purpose of their journey. Routes represent, not streets and buildings, but paths between destinations, safety and harm in a dangerous environment (Gmelch and Zenner 1996). For many students of schools sharing city space, the logic of practice is grounded in mutual territorial acknowledgement and informal peace agreements. So, they may follow part of a street, but then cut over walls, car-parks, gardens, churchyards and back onto streets or back lanes, if these elements of the city landscape lie in their 'path'. Students widely mentioned that bollards were 'there' but they moved them, or gates were locked but they went over, or round them, or that something was fenced but they managed to squash through somewhere, or they took a diversion to avoid the 'Hillers' (a nearby school cohort) who went along 'there'.

Urban Police

Again, interesting parallels might be drawn with frogs, both in their displacement, but also their determination to maintain traditional routes across contested urbanised landscapes. Like frogs, however, some must pay for resistance as they enter areas of contestation and potential conflict. Policing strategies of protection, informed by misconception, ignore adolescents as the most likely victims of delinquency (Griffin 1993, Young, L., 1990). This prompts unfair treatment. In the park, youngsters fall victim to aggressive intervention (Hendry 1983). New authoritarianism within youth policy targets youth crime (Sunderland City Area Command 1999/2000), monitors youth movement (Jeffs and Smith 1996), and, specifically, the police intervene to break down groups of teenagers:

> *The police are always in the park when we go home. They say 'Come on now lads, break it up, and no hanging about'. We have to split up...we just go down to the gates, and wait for our mates.*

> *I was just running down mine* [down his street] *cos I was late, and this policeman says 'what you running for, what you been doing?'*

The police maintain a conspicuous presence at home-time, in the nearby park, the architectural policing of social boundaries being 'a master narrative in the nineties' (Davis, 1990:.224). Here, strategies of spatial organisation do socially 'construct identity' for police have gained some leverage over boys' behaviour, using a formal reporting system to parents. In school, many students are apparently unperturbed by informal school discipline practice - being put out of lessons to stand at the

door, or being the object of sarcasm or verbal abuse. Indeed, these are resources for gaining cultural capital, used opportunistically and by some very skillfully, to irritate teachers. All are diversionary and, so, intrinsically valuable. Success is sublimely experienced, in its accomplishment or general witnessing, when the teacher's temper is lost, *'It's great when they really lose it all'*, and definitely worth loss of privileges or detention. Marginal benefit is still abundant. However, a communication home acts as a deterrent and, in school contestations, teaching staff threaten this to reduce the student, and the class to submission, and restore control.

Similarly, youngsters fear 'police letters' being sent to parents. Many youths quoted what they were 'done' for – *'noise pollution', 'causing an affray', 'urinating in the street'* figuring predominantly. Letters were threatened if youths were apprehended in the park running - *'for a bus'* in a group of five or six, or across a road; or running around; or collecting at a park gate and making a noise. This strategy was effective, being mentioned widely. Most youngsters feel they are on good terms with parents, and letters are feared because they disturb harmony and sour relationships.

Parents display shock at receiving such communication, this giving rise to *'a right ear-bashing'* (severe telling off), *'a smack from my mam',* loss of freedoms (for example playing music or going to the match), or worst, *'grounding'* (house detention, and banning of making phone calls or having friends round). Retaining social contact with their peers is, therefore, worth a temporary loss of contact with them on the park. They buckle down immediately. But this is not defeat. It is active risk assessment, rather than subjugation of will, or sublimination of spirit.

Police assertiveness was widely documented, for example:

> *He says 'Look at that* (car) *window, son, 'cos I'm going to put you right through it'.*
> (given by a fourteen-year-old).

It is staggering how police interest in inappropriate, even 'excessive', behaviour by youths, released from the restricted school environment into open parkland, becomes formalised by police with youngsters' rights unrepresented. Boys reported being stopped, pushed into cars, intimidated, searched, sometimes with bags being turned out onto the ground. This is worrying, considering the computerised nature of modern police recording of time-sheets, and follow-up administration. Many youths' names, perhaps, may be 'on file' for what is energetic behaviour following seven hours of tight surveillance, where contemporary journeying home from city schools is problematised, and re-defined – conceptualised, even, as 'pollution'.

Urban Surveillance

Maintaining city security is overwhelmingly problematic (Gmelch and Zenner

1996), and misperception of (downward) crime trends (Hough and Mayhew 1983) compel youths to negotiate a security-obsessed urban fabric (Merrifield and Swyngedouw 1995). During the autumn, winter and spring, students journey home at dusk or night-fall, rarely out of surveillance, under artificial light, because of street-light pollution, and security lighting, which remains triggered as the procession of boys moves past the gaze of sensors. As they move, lights flicker on and off for hundreds of yards, leading to the brighter city. Even along back lanes, less publicly-lit, domestic and office security systems make up the short-fall, leaving little privacy.

Adults – teachers, shop-keepers, security personnel, the general public, law enforcement officers – observe all young people, not only deviants. Almost always under 'adult gaze', the youth's privacy is diminished. School gaps are closed, bolt-holes blocked, shops are barren, and streets lit. This conjures up images of glass-sided environs, as constructed for non-intrusive television portrayals of 'wild-life', but in this case, conditions produced for viewing youth are of spatial-restriction, permanent illumination, and subjection to continuous negative stimuli en route. It is ironic how animals are privileged with sensitivity to disturbance of their delicate and fragile social world but young people not.

'Time-sharing' Urban Places and Spaces

A few youths, dressed in track suits, caps and trainers, break from the group of walkers each day and go to a 'secret place' on the way home. This is a garage attached to disused premises. They climb in through a window and share cigarettes. They spend about a half an hour, 'hanging out' and 'being cool', which seems to involve narrating, and re-constructing the day's events, involving teachers and students, impersonating characters, joking and laughing.

This space is not only 'theirs'. From 4.00 to 4.30 p.m. it 'belongs' to this small group. However, it has been customised as a down-market, informal, 'time-share' space. For there are, littered around, empty beer cans, water bottles, spent matches, and used *'lungs'* – the coloquialism given to an inhaler for sniffing substances, formed from a plastic bottle cut in half and then customised to fit over the face. They have a working lexicon and fluency concerning drug use, but say they *'do not touch or smell anything'* nor *'lie around on the dirty bundles of coats and covers'* but *'only kick them - cos they're mingin, Miss* [filthy]*'*. They claim they only smoke there – cigarettes pinched from parents or bought from a shop. They *'drink'* (cans) on Friday night after going quickly home, having tea and getting changed.

> *It's just a cool place to be, because nobody knows you're there. It's like ours.*

This illustrates interestingly the multi-layering of social activity on the face of the city, and how appropriation of space has temporal dimension, beyond the original

planning brief. How different the use of this 'garage' may be later in the evening. Furthermore, this reflects Fiske's (1989:32) analysis of appropriation of the city as 'places' constructed by the powerful, and 'spaces' – within the places - constructed by the weak We see here that young people have no places and innovatively use spaces within adult locales, sometimes time-sharing it with other deviants – this fraught with danger.

Urban 'Gangs'

For some youths, journeys home on Monday to Thursday are leisurely, stopping off at the garage, because *'Once I'm in the house, I'm in'* - they must stay at home *'to keep out of trouble'*. Parental fear of the city at night was found to be widespread. So, going home is the main opportunity they have on these days, for freedom of expression and cultural production. On Fridays, however, these can be occasioned in the evenings when they go back out. They meet friends and 'hang out', sometimes travelling five or six miles by bus, to convene in large groups in the city and then roam around, drinking cans of beer and smoking. These contribute to the 'youth gangs' of which moral panics are made. They form the 'gangs' which are the uppermost concern of the adults of their city, and so are a priority for their local police personnel (Northumbria Police 1999 Open Forum).

Having a bolt-hole *'where nobody can see us'* to *'do nothing, just stand around'* mattered to them. To have space of their own was important. If accounts were sincere, however, it raises many issues concerning danger, when curiosity and identity-building combine with need for private time, in the absence of space. 'Guilt by association' loomed large for many youths, often leading them, figuratively, down very tortuous routes.

Reflecting on the outcome of what were allegedly, impromptu, individual or small-group, and small-scale assaults on property, or individual repartee with persons, and the correspondingly individual, but patterned, responses - *'We all legged it'*- it becomes clear how the myth of 'a mob of them' acquires discursive materiality among adult society, escalating local moral panics among residents, habitual local dog-walkers, shop-keepers, lollypop ladies, the local business community, and the police. At an open forum for townspeople, organised by the police to gauge public feeling and allocate resources, the problem of young people in groups was the only item for debate emanating from the audience, later expressed by the police as being the major worry for local people.

Young People as Victims – the Police Trap

One Monday morning, an inter-com message summoned anyone who had witnessed the 'incident' the previous evening to the hall. Boys had set a car alight in a nearby street and the police were involved. Apparently, the car had been stolen and abandoned

(unlocked) the previous Saturday night – culprits as yet unknown. The police had then become pro-active, leaving it to lure the 'bad lads' (in this case, three curious adolescents journeying home) and 'ferret them out' – a tribute to effective 'policing' being the general feeling of many staff discussing this. Clearly, young people do not hold a monopoly on cultural creativity and identity-building! The car had been observed in the morning, by many boys going to school. After school, approximately 300 boys walked past, of whom one, followed by two friends, took the bait and investigated, all squashing into the car. Most walked on, some stood by, looking on and yelling, not *'getting involved'*, and subsequently *'legging it'*. Risk-balancing was clearly part of the complex of decision-making:

> *It's a rat-catcher, Miss. My mam says if you want a good job you better not have a police record.*

Many had identified the unmarked police car nearby, and resisted temptation:

> *They always have two aerials, Miss, and they're usually Metros - silver - you can tell.*

The 'bad lads', however, played the radio loudly, laughed and pushed, competing for possession of the gear stick and pedals. They also smoked, and a cigarette or match dropped onto the seat, igniting the upholstery, at which point two uniformed policemen appeared from a doorway. Such vigorous 'policing', or modification of goals, ensured that the future of one boy was made very uncertain, already being involved with school governors for disruptive class-behaviour and for challenging teachers' authority. Staff were not surprised, regarding his entrapment as *'poetic justice'*.

'Fights'

Fights occur mainly outside the perimeter wall on open ground behind a shop, and are of great interest, delaying going home. For example, boys take the same road 'unless there is a fight on'. Although always banned in school, fights had occurred, occasionally, in the yard at lunch-breaks. Following the introduction of yard cameras, they had now become an after-school occurrence. They are staged events. A slight conflict of opinion may arise, a verbal exchange, usually at lunch-time. This is then fuelled by others making remarks, such as:

> *'I wouldn't take that off him', or 'You're not gonna take that, are yer?' or 'Go on, get him for that', or 'That's bad that'.*

A challenge is then made, and met, to the great glee of others adopting the role of agents in marketing the forthcoming event with great alacrity. By 3.30 p.m., the exit from school is transformed, with hundreds of excited youths rushing in one direction, amassing behind the shops. Whoever has not received news via the

informal network, key members relaying messages to different groups at lesson changeover, learns it on the way out. Now boys do not hang around to meet up as groups, nor change at the gate, going straight to the scene of the fight instead, and re-assembling there in mixed-age friendship groups.

Fights concern school management and prompt telephone calls by local residents, worried about the 'youth violence', thought to be a recent and growing phenomenon. Certainly, they *are* an emergent public phenomenon, having been traditionally conducted in school but recently re-scheduled by CCTV for home-time. However, although conducted seriously and with formality, they are not the violent contestations supposed by adults to be. They consist of two boys wrestling for some minutes, until one concedes to the other, upon which they shake hands.

The contest over, they are joined in the arena by their friends, the 'promoters', carrying coats and bags, and the audience disperse to journey home. Blows are hardly struck, no noses bloodied. Weapons are never drawn, despite many carrying knives, and implements for self-protection – *'for defence, Miss'*. Boys remain unbruised, and clothes remain undamaged. These fights, it seems, are pure spectacle - staged entertainment. They are also interactive, the crowd encouraging opponents to prolong the show, and they provide great material for next day's tales.

> *The teachers don't know. They think it's serious. It's a laugh, though, Miss, that's all it is. Everybody knows it. It's really entertaining. If it's going to be a good one, you hang around – go and see it. You talk about it all next day if it's a good one. Usually it's just a laugh, though. Everybody shouts at them. You might say 'I heard him say he was going to kill you', or 'he's been bragging all afternoon about you', and you try to make it last longer.*

Fights offer resources for social interaction – in their construction, marketing, and playing-out - amusement, relief from tedium, interest and self-expression, and a vital resource in the construction of identity. Now, obliterated from lunch-time social activity by surveillance technology, they are simply 're-timetabled', but still part of the curriculum. The number of fights in city space has, indeed, increased but the notion of 'escalation' or of 'violence' is mythical. Locally, it nourishes the moral panic surrounding youth, especially urban males, when located in the context of resistance to repression.

Home – Deserts and Oases for Leisure

Home is, for most youngsters, a sanctuary. Many cultural resources require purchasing power, however, and without human contact youngsters are often in the 'company' of television, or low-grade computers, 'communicating' being pared down to Yes/No, and OK/Cancel, or to identity-building in the cultural desert of joy-stick decision-making, against the back-drop of the suburban bedroom. There is greater

private leisure potential via the interactive resources of the Internet and through E-mail. However, confirming Barry (1996), this option was available only to a tiny minority. Most watch television in their room, late into the night.

Home is the 'backstage region' (Goffman 1959), where roles are rehearsed and developed. It is the ordinariness of everyday life, where trust and security is found (Misztal 1996). Here, parental practices reflect fear, confining youngsters' evening activity to the home. Parents' accounts confirmed the experimental, creative, innovative (Willis et al 1990b) and class-based (Roberts 1983) dispositions of their offspring, in their attempts to socialise (Hendry 1983) with their peers. Many clashes of wills occur during these negotiations, and freedoms are hard-fought, again confirming divisions (Roberts 1983) between the rough and respectable.

Parents widely feared public space by day and night, interpreting this as contemporary community deterioration, and also perpetuating the myth – *'it's just the lads of today'*. They feared the availability of drugs-and-alcohol street culture, informed through mass-media portrayal, and doubted their sons' strength to resist, construing *'peer pressure'* perjoratively. Parents largely drew on American representations from television chat-shows to articulate concerns and worried over sons joining gangs. Sons also believed the 'rough gangs' discourse, and in police integrity, speculating that officers picked on *'good lads by mistake'*.

In negotiating these cultural dangers as they perceived them, parental strategies varied. There is widely sanctioned alcohol consumption at home, for example, *'with his dad, watching the match', or 'upstairs, with a couple of his friends, playing on his computer'*. Many parents provide expensive alternatives to going out, such as computers and games machines, stereo, hi-fi, CD, video recorders and television, with terrestrial, satellite and cable availability, in order to insulate them from *'gangs and jungle-warfare out there'*. Over 90% of youngsters went straight home after school, only one-third being allowed out later, most boys remaining in their rooms all evening.

It is interesting how many boys' private entertainment is conducted in their rooms, while their parents' is conducted outside, and girls are increasingly going outside for leisure pursuit. Most youngsters were 'not a problem' to their parents, many saying they 'do homework all night'. What conditions ground their logic of practice? Many are allowed 'a couple of cans afterwards', reflecting negotiation of cultural practices (Dorn 1983), and may later play on computers and phone friends. However, such negotiations have financial implications, unrealisable for many.

Interludes – the Symbolic 'Twilight Shift'... and Home Again

Some homes offer sufficient private space for friendship groups, offering in-house entertainment and refreshment, but many can not. Some adolescents told of going

home, having tea, getting changed and going straight out, not being allowed to drink alcohol in the house, nor to have friends in. Homes are *'small'* or boys *'too noisy and make a mess'*. Most youngsters seemed to enjoy good relationships within the family fold upon returning from their sojourns:

> *We're not doing wrong, and we don't worry our parents. We're good – just go round, maybe sit on walls. I get on great with my mam.*
>
> *I get a pizza when I get in, and sit with them. I like them ASDA ones best. I might do a bit of homework, if nothing's on.*
>
> *My mam says, she doesn't mind where I go - I can - as long as I'm back (at 9.30 p.m.) and I don't bring any trouble home. I do my homework, get my supper and watch telly with them when the baby's in bed. I take the dog out when I get back.*

Youth are individuals

Going home, boys are not a cohesive group as popularly defined (Cotterell 1996), not connected in shared purpose other than, say, ordered in time and space to catch a bus or to go home. They can be galvanised similarly, for example by confrontation with adult hostility - or a rainstorm. There is small-group, small-scale, deliberate exploitation, aggravation and contestation with adults, for cultural or economic gain, relief, distraction, or amusement. However, this is more by happenchance, rarely consensual, or premeditated. Rather, findings support the notion that youngsters are individual agents, balancing risks, assessing outcomes, and making choices independently, within very small groups.

Therefore, they are not 'all up to' anything. They may present as troublesome, they do disturb, but they are not organised in this, being without collective purpose or strength. They are no mass threat. That they are believed to be is informed by the hegemonic grip of 'youth is a problem', which has been distilled down into 'youths are a problem' - then into 'these look like trouble'.

Youth are Cultural Creators

> *People are formed most self-consciously through their own symbolic and other activities....where they form symbolic moulds through which they understand themselves and their possibilities for the rest of their lives ... through difference as well as similarity.*
> *(Willis, 1990 p 7).*

This research testifies to Willis' thesis on cultural production, positing, furthermore, that for the young person it is intrinsic to consciousness - not only actively 'being', but, this research argues, it is 'be-coming'.

Sites of cultural production are symbolic, concerning, for example, role and representation, or cultural forms - fashion, everyday situations, the bus journey. Even waiting has a purpose. Symbolic production can operate 'in the clouds', the imagination, as much as in the music shop, a disused garage, or on the bus home. Resources are available through language, the active body, drama as practice, and symbolic creativity for the production of new meanings. So we see that youngsters are never 'doing nothing', especially when going home.

In understanding their own potential, youngsters shape self-identity. Expression is intrinsically involved in this, in the processes of identity-constructions, including positioning of self and self-worth in relation to 'others'. Here, a strong characteristic of young people, therefore, is to collect to communicate.

The Journey Home - an End in Itself

The journey home is not a 'means', but represents a set of cultural possibilities for young people. In the ordering of their lives the journey represents, for the majority, the only site for cultural creativity within relaxed, peer-group, interaction. Youngsters seek to build identity in a world distinguished from both the adult- and the child-world, and the social network is vital. All are individual cultural producers, constantly drawing on others and on the city as resources. They do display 'disorderliness' as a group and are perceived as gangs, but this reflects idiosyncrasy, a tapestry of small-group behaviours enacted, largely, between themselves. 'Hanging out' and 'being cool' carries symbolism, is active, necessary, and not to be trivialised in the traditional, dichotomous, adult-understanding of 'work and play'. Youngsters experience great time and space compression during the day, and going home, especially for the majority who stay in all evening, represents a frenzied investment of cultural production and exchange, compressed into limited time.

Youngsters within City Rhythms – A Post-Industrial Cacophany

Changes in urban living and dwelling have altered the grounding of this journey home. Affirming the conceptualisation of many 'segregative and integrative...lived calendars' (Zerubavel, 1981), radical changes in time-ordering of work and leisure are of particular importance to this city and to this research. Recently, regional structural unemployment (Dennis and Erdos 1992), the casualty of shifts in world economies (Herbert and Smith 1989) has led to decentralisation of jobs and people, in primary and secondary production, changing adult-timetables. Coupled with Western patterns of increasing longevity, more non-working adults are thrown into this urban space by day.

Furthermore, unemployment and protracted education, force adolescents onto the city-scape between 3.30 p.m. and 5.00 p.m., like a 'dam-burst' rather than in historic 'waves' of traditional shift-working. Most threatening to adults - compounding the

situation, and creating conflict – is that the mass-exodus of many contemporary youths is directly into residential areas, from local school- and college-campuses, rather than onto the industrial infrastructure of factories, shipyards and coal-mines. Thus, traditional city-rhythms have been radically disrupted, causing time and space disturbance to the habitat of the urbanite negotiating the city. Critical to journeying home from school, this constructs youngsters as highly visible 'nouveaux' contestants for limited space, in a battle whose lines are drawn by adults.

'Urban Youth' - 'Fearful'

Youngsters enter the city at 3.30, informed by their understanding of the cultural potential of the approaching evening, nourishing the urban habitus. Those few going out are more likely to hurry straight home. Cultural production on the journey is via planning or recalling. However, to go home, thence to be controlled, and confined, some within meaningless and symbolically barren spaces, correlates with first visiting city centre shops, for an hour, or 'hanging out' on street corners, talking to their friends, collecting meanings for evening creativity. However, the mythical threat of young men is widely held (Gmelch and Zenner, 1996), creating a climate of adult hostility and fear, and youths' individual responses nourish the urban habitus of their being troublesome. Within the structural elements of the city, boys' activities are restricted and monitored. So, most youths who stay in at night are likely to experience conflict before arriving home. Outcomes reflect age-subordination, and materialise as victimisation and negation of rights and social esteem, which appear to operate as a norm in city-dwelling.

An Outsider Group

For the urban youngster, experiences of aggression and hostility, and restricted opportunities for acquiring social skills, obviate positive perceptions of self in the community. Urban youngsters build identity informed by exclusion. In this development, particularly the constructed nature of self and 'other' (Bauman 1990) youth is a critical age-stage. How then, will this progress, as 'alienation' is climatically drip-fed, and occasionally force-fed into the urban culture by the adult community, articulated as increased surveillance, social exclusion, and without encouraging cues? They are 'urban untouchables' in city space, blighted of positive understandings through which to construct the world, and themselves in it. Under conditions of increased compression and contestation, the message of dominant adult society to their young is not only 'keep off', and 'keep out', but 'go away', and 'we don't care where'.

At home, they are nurtured on a diet of television and computer technology, to protect them. They form their identity through appropriation of these media. In school they operate within structural compression and surveillance to maximise

the societal objective of preparation for economic usefulness, and personal survival in the cash economy. They form self-identity via academic participation – perhaps, again, through appropriation? They have minimal scope for spontaneous, relaxed peer-group involvement in which to be culturally creative.

What we are witnessing is the multi-faceted starvation and inhibition of particular, urban, cultural potential, and the force-feeding of a more processed, privatised, alternative - a 'bad diet', in fact. Spatially, youths oscillate between a 'cultural desert' and 'prison camp', all in a 'war zone' - this is even reflected in their intense energy, wry humour, and desperate exploitation of whatever comes to hand. This is crisis management, their potential under siege, inevitably throwing them, en masse, in collision with the fearful and unwelcoming adult population, contesting space and time which they have not previously occupied en masse, and to which they bear no legitimate claim.

These youngsters in protracted 'education' have become more visible, and visible as 'idle', and are now disrupting the traditional rhythm of the school environs. They emerge from hours of compression and surveillance with much to do, but as co-respondents in urban spatial conflict. Anxiety and misunderstanding act as dynamics within the complex of interactions between them and those responsible for their social development, resulting in injustice and disenfranchisement. Youngsters' pressured responses result in policies of further compression and increasingly-tight surveillance policies, widely supported by parents. In the contest, adults dominate. In the frey most youngsters become victims. Youth identity is informed through exclusion and starvation of cultural resources in a socially-unhealthy city. Peer-group cultural production struggles within city 'spaces' - youngsters have no 'places'. This is the grounding of their logic of consciousness - a dominant feature of the youth habitus. Youngsters are cultivating their sense of self within a disarticulated post-modern experience - a minor urban crisis.

Streets reflect a state of consciousness, and a way of thinking about the world (Lefebvre 1996), for policy concerning expanding cultural possibility for contemporary urban youth emanates in this context; so, what is justifiable is 'slippery' (Harvey 1973). In this city street delinquency represents the greatest source of public concern. What can we do? If shared knowledge is a result of the power of the metropolitan institutions to impose rules (Gmelch and Zenner 1996), and social justice depends on social processes operating in society as a whole (Harvey, 1973), in acknowledging individual rights so that it is possible to meet strangers outside (Lefebvre l996), then addressing issues of legitimation to power-holding would seem to be a first step. This would greatly alter the urban journey home, for all.

But, in 'finding solutions', these youngsters risk becoming hi-jacked, through the hegemony of 'adults who hold truth and knowledge' – better, perhaps, to 'seek to explain', rather than 'solve'. Finally, on this, whatever strategy is adopted it must eschew the rhetoric of the normative 'we'. Grounded within an ontology of legitimacy, driving an epistemology of inclusion, questions must concern, not 'what can *we* do?', but 'what can be done?'

Postscript – 'Comic Relief'

At 3.30 pm on 'Comic Relief' day – this having been defined as a 'normal' day - three boys were spotted, detained 'at the Head's pleasure'. They were accused of doing graffiti, having chalked drawings and messages to teachers on much of the yard – obscured by groups of friends - while staff were diverted by other 'silliness', for example, boys throwing water in the toilets. *'Hyped up by media excitement'*, it was believed. Messages named certain teachers as being 'No Fun', and positioned them stylistically within comical scenarios, whose subtle pastiche of colour escaped black and white monitoring for some time.

'The boys thought that was funny – they'll see what's funny', said teachers.

The boys said, *'...doesn't matter, it was a right laugh ... really funny, really solid ... Have you seen it?'*. They said they *'wished the Head would hurry up'* – their friends were waiting for them outside the gate. They had to go home!

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CATCHING THEM YOUNG?

Local initiatives to involve young people in local government and local democracy

MIKE GEDDES AND MAGGIE RUST

The limited political participation of young people, and their disenchantment with politics, is a major issue not only in the UK but across Europe and the advanced industrial world. This paper discusses the involvement of young people in local government and local democracy, drawing on research on initiatives to increase participation in three localities in the UK, where the alienation of young people is part of a wider 'local democratic deficit'. A review of the implications of these initiatives shows that there are a number of possible mechanisms which can go some way to bridge the gap between young people and local politics and local government, and the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches are summarised. However the paper argues that more systemic organisational and cultural change is necessary both in local authorities and in political parties if the limits of current initiatives are to be transcended. The article explores the way in which different conceptions of democracy and participation are embedded in different approaches to involving young people, and emphasises the need to link a concern with local political citizenship to questions of social provision and economic participation. In conclusion, the future of initiatives to involve young people in local government is related to the Labour government's programme for the modernisation of local government.

Young people and local government in the UK

Citizen participation and the modernisation of local government

The disengagement of many young people from local government is currently a major focus of political and policy concern, not only in the UK but in many other countries. In the UK, this reflects in the first place the limited extent of public involvement in general in local democracy, either in the narrow sense of electoral participation or in the wider sense of involvement and participation in local politics. It is widely held that there is a crisis of participation and democratic legitimacy in local government (King and Stoker 1996). The importance of deepening democracy at the local level is a common thread which links otherwise divergent analyses and prescriptions for the future of democracy (see for example Held 1995; Giddens 1998). Among the specific concerns about local government and local democracy are low levels of turnout in UK local elections, both in absolute terms and in relation to other advanced industrial countries, associated with limited representativeness of local councillors (Brown, Jones and Mackay 1999), and negative public perceptions of the role of political parties. Traditional, bureaucratic, committee-dominated local authoority procedures are inaccessible and alienating to the public, and local

public services are often of questionable quality and ineffective in delivering 'joined up' responses to issues as they are experienced by citizens and service users. All these concerns, it may be argued, apply with particular force to young people as 'tomorrow's citizens and voters'.

The Labour Government is promoting a wide ranging package of reforms to 'modernise' local government, partly to address the problems identified above. Green and White Papers on Modern Local Government (DETR 1998) have paved the way for legislation (DETR 1999) the provisions of which are intended to introduce new political management structures and processes in local authorities, including proposals for elected mayors and cabinet-style executives; to modernise service delivery by means of a new 'Best Value' framework to provide so-called 'citizen-centred services'; and to strengthen the community leadership role of local authorities, by preparing consultative Community Plans and by working closely in partnership with other local agencies, such as the police and health authorities, business, and local people.

The extension of citizen and user consultation and participation is one of the major themes running through these proposals, supplemented by recent guidance from the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions on how local authorities should enhance levels of public participation (DETR 1998). Local government itself is actively promoting participatory initiatives (LGMB 1998). It is recognised that there is a particular need to encourage new forms of interaction between local authorities and 'hard to reach' groups, including deprived communities but also 'communities of interest' such as young people.

<u>Local democracy and young people</u>

However, the limited involvement of young people in local government and local politics also relates to factors specific to young people. Children and young people today constitute close to one third of the UK population. A Demos report argued that for the 18-34 generation, politics has become a dirty word (Wilkinson and Mulgan 1995). Young people are less likely than other age groups to vote, join a political party or be politically active.[1] Over a third of 18-24 year olds took pride in being outside the system. Political disconnection also leads to a broader social disconnection: just 49% of 18-34 year olds said they would be willing to sacrifice some individual freedom in the public interest. More recent work by Demos (Bentley, Oakley et al 1999) based on in-depth consultation with young people confirms this analysis. Bentley and Oakley conclude that young people are not prepared to engage in politics unless they see it making a tangible difference to the circumstances they face; that conventional politics often does not seem to achieve the things they want; that they are not listened to seriously by many politicians; and that the distinctions between parties are difficult to perceive. Other recent

research comes to very similar conclusions: engaging young people means making politics more interesting, easier to understand and more accessible; and finding new opportunities and routes for young people to enter the political process (National Centre for Social Research, 2000).

Similar trends of 'disconnection' are apparent in many other countries. As Frazer and Emler point out, the lack of interest and involvement in, and knowledge of, politics among the young is not a uniquely British phenomenon but something common to almost every European state (Frazer and Emler 1997), although it has also been suggested that the political participation of young people is taken more seriously in some other European countries (Matthews, Limb, Harrison and Taylor 1998). EU surveys suggest that only about half as many young people as adults think that politics is important (Helve 1997). Disenchantment with national and local politics is particularly marked, for obvious reasons, in postcommunist societies (see for example Dubsky 1995; Ule and Rener 1998).

Locally, young people are among the heaviest users of public services provided by local government - schools, public transport, libraries, leisure facilities - as well as public places and spaces such as town centres. But because of their disaffection and cynicism with the political process, there are frequent instances of intergenerational conflicts with local authorities over policies and resources. Many councillors feel ill-equipped to represent young people's views and aspirations, although in some localities political parties are now taking active steps to recruit young candidates/ councillors (Martin 1996).

The Local Government Information Unit, in a recent review of local government policies dealing with young people, argues that there are three broad reasons for involving young people in local government and democracy. As well as the political imperative to strengthen local democracy, young people share fundamental citizen rights, including those of access to public services. Additionally, there are legal considerations, embodied for example in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, signed by the UK in 1991 (LGIU 1997). Organisations such as the National Youth Agency, Save the Children and the Childrens Rights Office argue that young people have a right to be heard and have a great deal to contribute, but are concerned that current governmental processes - nationally or locally - provide few mechanisms through which the needs and interests of young people can be identified and incorporated in new policies and legislation. They therefore emphasise the need for greater investment in participative democracy, the importance of empowering those who are currently disinterested, and the inclusion into the social, economic and political mainstream of those currently marginalised (NYA 1999; Treseder 1997).

Wilkinson and Mulgan (1995) proposed a number of changes in electoral processes to 'reconnect young people'. These include holding elections over a week or weekend, with polling stations in places like shopping centres, more active registration initiatives linked to driving licenses, banks and other bodies, and more controversially a system of required voting backed up by a small fine. They suggest that new technologies need to be used : 70% of 18-34 year olds are keen to use TV, telephones and computers to vote at elections. But they also suggest that the involvement of young people in local politics depends on a 'new intergenerational deal' with a new balance in public spending and a shift to intergenerational accounting to ensure that the needs of young people are met.

Many local authorities in the UK are now pursuing initiatives which develop these and related proposals. Some of these have an electoral focus, but an increasing number of authorities are experimenting with youth councils and forums, and are developing strategic policies or plans for children and young people. Such initiatives are by no means confined to the UK. The EU has an active programme to promote exchange of experience in this field between member states, and other supranational institutions such as the Council of Europe have adopted policies encouraging local and regional authorities to promote the involvement of young people in local life and politics. Youth councils and forums are as much a feature of other EU member states (such as France, Italy and Spain) as of the UK (Matthews, Limb, Harrison and Taylor 1998).

A review of initiatives in the UK by the Local Government Information Unit (Willow 1997) suggested a number of general principles for local authorities to take into account in seeking to involve young people in decision making. The research which we will now present here has examined three specific initiatives in detail, with the objective of not only identifying some of the common threads among local initiatives, but also exploring the strengths and limitations of different methods of involving young people.

Local initiatives
to involve young people in Bury, Manchester and Wolverhampton

Three local initiatives have been researched, in Bury, Manchester, and Wolverhampton. The three initiatives are characteristic of wider developments in the UK, and illustrate different approaches which are being developed at local level. The research, undertaken in the Local Government Centre, Warwick University, in conjunction with local authorities in the Warwick University Local Authorities Research Consortium, developed out of a wider review of initiatives to enhance local democracy in local authorities participating in the Warwick Consortium (Geddes

1996). The evaluations of the three initiatives in Bury, Manchester and Wolverhampton (Geddes 1998; Geddes and Rust 1998; Rust and Scott 1998) were based on both analysis of secondary material, especially local authority policy and committee papers, and interviews with a range of individuals, including local authority officers and councillors, young people involved in the initiatives, and representatives from other relevant organisations. The research has been undertaken by a co-researching methodology involving both academic researchers and local government policy officers.

Bury MBC's Youth Strategy

Bury has developed a strategy-led approach to involving young people in local government. Among the most significant elements of this have been the production of a corporate Young People's Strategy, the establishment of a Youth Issues Subcommittee of the Council, and a Youth Initiatives budget. The decision to develop a youth strategy in Bury was triggered by a number of factors, including young people being perceived by some citizens and agencies as a source of annoyance and problems, and the dissatisfaction expressed by young people with youth provision and information about local services. Initially, several consultation events were organised, with the aid of external facilitators experienced in working with young people. These provided the impetus for the Young People's Strategy, which is intended to embody the local authority's corporate commitment to young people. Adopted by the Council early in 1996, it is a substantial document which describes the position of young people in Bury, and explores some of the linkages between citizenship, empowerment and participation, and makes proposals for a participative framework for young people. It assesses the advice, information, services and facilities available to young people and makes proposals to improve provision; and identifies key issues relating to young people at 'risk'. It establishes a specific budget to implement some aspects of the strategy, and makes proposals for monitoring and evaluation.

Involving young people

In 1997 the impact of the Strategy was assessed at a review day (again externally facilitated) with young people, other agencies, and Council officers and councillors. This showed that considerable progress had been made in listening to and involving young people. The Council was beginning to promote more positive images of young people, and the Strategy was generating a better focus in the local authority and in other organisations on youth issues, and helping to build a culture of mutual respect between adult and young people. Nonetheless, the review day also showed the extent of the task ahead: not enough young people knew about the strategy, and some of those who had been involved over the past two years had lost contact.

Alongside the Strategy, the Youth Issues council Subcommittee has been particularly important. The representatives of young people co-opted onto the Subcommittee (principally from schools and youth groups) have helped to ensure that young people's views are taken more seriously within the local authority, particularly because the subcommittee has been given strong support by senior councillors. The emergence of a cadre of young people as representatives on the subcommittee has encouraged the emergence of a core group of committed young people, although the need is to develop a wider range of participative opportunities to extend the current level of involvement.

Improving facilities and services

Through the Youth Issues Subcommittee, young people's representatives are now consulted on a wide range of decisions about service provision, including decisions on specific facilities. The related Youth Initiatives budget has enabled young people on the subcommittee to scrutinise proposals for some new facilities. Representatives have established criteria for choosing among alternative proposals, and have been able to follow through on the outcomes of funding decisions. The budget, though small in comparison to mainstream service expenditure, has supported a number of specific developments, including a local drop-in centre, kickabout areas, and improved access for disabled young people.

The key next step in building on this initial progress in Bury has been to 'mainstream' the principles of the Strategy and the experience of the Subcommittee across the major departments and functions of the local authority. Lead responsibility has been located within the Education Department, although there is a perceived danger of this associating the strategy too closely with the schools agenda. Currently, a major issue is where political responsibility for the Strategy will lie in future, as the local authority moves to a cabinet-style political management structure, and whether it will continue to be championed by leading councillors within the new structure.

Manchester City Council's Young People's Council

Manchester Young People's Council (MYPC) is a forum of elected representatives from Manchester secondary and special schools, which meets three times a year. It has been developed as a response to a series of initiatives in the 1990s focusing on the needs of children and young people in the city, and is seen by the council as one of a range of measures which can provide young people with an opportunity to play an active part in the life of the city and a long-term mechanism for them to have their say. Elections are held in schools for representatives and deputies for each of years 7 to 10 (ages 12 to 16), and there are also co-opted members from youth projects and voluntary organisations. 'Link workers' and training are provided for the representatives/deputies. The MYPC is linked directly to the Council's decision making process, but the young people's representatives have the final say on

which items go on the agenda for discussion. Meetings are held in the Council Chamber and chaired by a young person elected by the MYPC, (with support from an adult councillor). Council officers attend to present reports. Decisions and recommendations of the MYPC are reported to the City Council's Social and Urban Strategy Subcommittee (chaired by the Leader of the Council) and then on to other committees.

The development of the MYPC seeks to make a public statement on behalf of the (adult) City Council about the importance of young people and its willingness to listen to their views and involve them in the decision making process in local government. The crucial issue for the young people involved in the MYPC is that they should be able to 'make a difference', by seeing positive results from the Council's deliberations. Local authority councillors and officers have had to realise that, while they are aware that change takes time, young people are impatient to see things happen. The result has been some tension between addressing the 'big issues' to which there may be no quick and easy solution, and focusing on some other issues where it may be more possible to achieve some rapid successes. There have also been difficulties in discussing big and complex issues, and taking decisions about them, in a large gathering of more than 120 young people, and as a result of this smaller working groups are being considered.

An important issue - and one which is also apparent in Youth Issues Subcommittees such as the one in Bury - is the style of presentation of items at the MYPC. It is very clear that if issues are to be accessible to young people, keep their interest, involve them fully in debate and enable them to feel ownership, then traditional ways of presenting information - such as local authority committee reports - just will not do. Using a range of media, plain language and conciseness are among the lessons being learned, but this is involving a new style of working which many local authority officers do not find easy, and is needing new skills and training.

Widening support from councillors and young people

The impetus for the MYPC came from a small number of leading elected members, and it has continued to be championed by them. While such support is essential, it carries the danger of it becoming marginalised as the 'pet project' of just one or two members of the council, rather than becoming recognised by all councillors and officers of the local authority as a key part of the decision making process. A notable feature of the MYPC has been a determination to encourage representation from all secondary schools and youth organisations. As a result a broad range of young people have been elected and co-opted to the council, from across different class, age and ethnic groupings.

At the time of our main evaluation the Council was still in its early stages, with the first meeting having been held in late 1997. Since then, however, there is encouraging

evidence that it has become well established and is beginning to have a significant impact. Young people on the Council are starting to think in terms of the wider city, not just in terms of the schools and areas from which they come. Issues taken on by the MYPC have included action for the homeless, public transport concessions, and the development of a system of peer counselling for young people, enabling them to go to a contemporary rather than a teacher on issues like bullying.

Youth Participation in Wolverhampton MBC

While the initiatives in Bury and Manchester are quite recent, the origins of current policies for youth participation in Wolverhampton go back more than ten years, and give an interesting perspective on the importance of maintaining the continuity of an effort to work with young people over a long period, through the peaks and troughs of activity that are likely to happen.

Among the recommendations of the 'Willis Report' on the social conditions of young people in Wolverhampton, sponsored by the Council in 1984, was a call for increased political participation among young people at all levels of decision making (Willis 1984). Since then, the local authority has experimented with a number of different approaches, which at the time of the evaluation included:

- *Borough-wide elections, which take place biennially for three young people (supported by a further number of substitutes) to sit on the Council's Youth Affairs Subcommittee.*
- *Area Youth Forums in the three administrative areas of the Council's Youth Affairs Service.*
- *Further opportunity for groups of young people representing special interests to attend the Youth Affairs Subcommittee to raise or discuss particular issues.*
- *Borough-wide Youth Conferences held every two years.*
- *More recently, Wolverhampton's Best Value project, designed to review the way the local authority provides services, has identified young people as one of two main user groups in relation to which the 'best value' approach is to be piloted (the other group being older people).*
- *A multi-agency Youth Issues Partnership Group has been set up.*

Youth Elections and the Youth Affairs Subcommittee

Wolverhampton now has an extended experience of youth elections and the operation of a dedicated subcommittee. It is estimated that about 6,000 young people voted in the most recent elections. The linked processes of election and operation of the

subcommittee have had some substantial benefits. The young people's representatives have become an established part of the Council's decision making structure, and this has initiated the process of making the authority's procedures and organisational culture more open to young people and their concerns. It has enabled councillors to understand better, and take into account, the perspectives and needs of citizens-to-be and users of council services. At the same time, several 'generations' of young people have been able to influence some council decisions - on the vexed intergenerational issue of facilities for skateboarding in public spaces for example - and in the process, have gained greater knowledge of and confidence in their ability to achieve changes through the local democratic system, as well as the limits to what they can achieve. But this has taken some time, and at the time of our evaluation there was awareness that building on these gains meant widening the election process to involve more young people and securing fuller corporate support and departmental commitment to a proactive approach to young people's needs and involvement. A further issue was to ensure that adequate support was available from the Youth Service for the young people's representatives.

Services for young people

Recent developments in Wolverhampton have included a post-OFSTED review of the Youth Service, the Best Value project, and the establishment of the Youth Issues Partnership Group. These linked developments emphasise the centrality of work, training and employment-related skills for many young people, their relative lack of awareness of the services which are available to them, and the consequent importance of more accessible information and co-ordinated provision between agencies; thus introducing a stronger concern with young people's exclusion from full economic and social citizenship alongside the local authority's established concern with political participation.

Some of the ways in which the young people's agenda is developing in a number of local authorities in response to pressures from the Labour Government are reflected in the new Best Value regime for local public services. 'Best Value' is the government's proposed replacement of the Conservative policy of compulsory competitive tendering or CCT (which exposed public service provision to private sector competition). The new regime does not abandon the previous government's preoccupations with cost, efficiency and market mechanisms, but introduces alongside these a much stronger emphasis on customer/user consultation. 'Best Value' presses local authorities to undertake a fundamental review of all their services - challenging existing structures of provision, comparing levels of performance with other providers and consulting more effectively with users and citizens. Providing so-called 'citizen centred services' implies reviewing the way in which a

range of services (including those of other partner agencies as well as those provided directly by the local authority) impact on key problems, or on specific groups of users, such as young people. Wolverhampton's Best Value pilot programme (1998 - 2000) has involved a thorough review of the services provided for young people by the Council's Youth Service and other functions including employment training and advice, community and area regeneration, housing and town centre development, including related services provided by other agencies. Alongside the co-ordination of services, the aim is to increase consultation and participation of young people at all levels, (from town-wide forums to youth clubs). Although a detailed assessment of this initiative is not feasible here, it is nonetheless important as an indicator of one of the major influences which will condition all local authorities' approaches to working with young people as the Best Value regime begins to apply systematically across local government from April 2000.

Political commitment and organisational and cultural change

The three initiatives in Bury, Manchester and Wolverhampton (which are paralleled by similar initiatives elsewhere) show that there are a range of possible mechanisms to involve young people more fully in local government, and initiate them into local democratic processes. These include youth elections, youth councils and youth affairs subcommittees; corporate youth strategies and service review processes; consultation events and information policies.

These are not mutually exclusive possibilities - indeed local authorities which are serious about involving young people in local democracy are likely to be pursuing a strategy which incorporates several of these elements. There are, though, important choices which authorities will have to make, because the makeup of a broader strategy is not just a question of 'pick and mix'. Different approaches have different impacts, advantages and disadvantages. Some of these are summarised in Table 1, and discussed further below.

Table 1 Advantages and Limitations of Different Approaches

CORPORATE (YOUTH) STRATEGIES	
Advantages	**Potential constraints**
A comprehensive and holistic approach, permitting clear objectives, targets and actions. Obvious links to the new Best Value regime. A Youth Strategy enables a Council to send a clear message about the importance of young people.	A Strategy needs political and senior officer commitment, and implies a major resource input. There can be a danger of putting more energy into writing a strategy than action and implementation. Important issues are who 'owns' the strategy? How is it written? What are the links with other strategies and planning processes? There needs to be a clear process for communicating the strategy, and for monitoring and evaluation.

YOUTH COUNCILS

Advantages	Potential constraints
As it is not a formal Council structure, a Youth Council can be 'for' young people and 'owned' by young people (though facilitated by a local authority or other organisation). Youth Councils can be large enough to enable a considerable number of young people to participate, and have a high profile and visibility with schools and other organisations.	Questions include how to link the Council into formal decision making processes within the local authority; and the process of agenda setting and how to enable debate to take place in an inclusive and participative way. Youth Councils tend to be resource intensive.

YOUTH SUBCOMMITTEES

Advantages	Potential constraints
A Youth Subcommittee establishes the presence of young people within decision making structures, and - as it is 'owned' by the local authority - makes it easier for councillors and officers to engage with young people.	The local authority often sets the agenda, and information may not be presented in a 'user friendly' way. Young people may not have control, and this approach may develop 'mini politicians', as the formal structure can mitigate against young people's natural behaviour. Practical arrangements, eg seating, time of meetings, number of young people able to participate, are important.

YOUTH ELECTIONS

Advantages	Potential constraints
Elections allows experience of an important democratic process by large numbers, and can have an atmosphere of vibrancy and excitement. They can draw on expertise about elections within the local authority. Elections can draw out issues that young people think are important, and the young people elected are accountable to a 'constituency'. They can build up recognition and self-esteem for some young people.	Elections are resource intensive, and require the participation of schools etc. They generate a lot of work for those elected, while potentially creating an 'elite' and raising questions about how the larger 'constituency' is involved after the elections.

PARTNERSHIP BODIES

Advantages	Potential constraints
Partnership bodies recognise young people's issues within a broader context than just the local authority, facilitate cross-agency, cross-sectoral working, and enable a range of organisations to 'sign up' to the importance and values of young people's priorities and concerns.	A frequent issue is how to enable young people's voices to be heard in what may be an 'elite' forum. These can be bureaucratic and formal bodies which mask young people's agendas. Practical arrangements are important, as with sub-committees.

AREA FORUMS

Advantages	Potential constraints
In area forums issues are raised and addressed in-situ and at a local and easily comprehensible level relevant to young people's day to day experiences. It is often more attractive for young people to go to a local forum in the area they know, and it can be easier to add a forum onto an existing youth club or local event. Area forums can benefit from natural networking with other local groups and organisations to create something of a critical mass.	It is more difficult to take an overview of issues affecting young people more generally, while equally issues that are raised may not relate to the area in question (eg, safety on public transport links). Forums can be more resource intensive than centralised approach, and may encourage parochialism especially when resources are tight and need to be rationed.

CONSULTATION EVENTS/PROCESSES

Advantages	Potential constraints
These can give a clear view from young people about what they want or need, helping to 'get it right' first time rather than make expensive mistakes. They can engage council officers with young people and offer an opportunity to develop presentation skills. They tell young people that their views are important, and offer an opportunity for them to be involved in decision making processes and develop their role and responsibility.	How can the consultation mechanism be made attractive to young people? If the consultation is too heavily controlled by the local authority young people may be stifled in their views. Young people need to see quick results or be given early feedback, but it is also necessary to ensure that the agenda is not just a wish list but based on real possibilities. It is important to involve young people outside the 'mainstream'.

INFORMATION POLICIES

Advantages	Potential constraints
These meet a basic need and can be tailored to meet a variety of resource levels ranging from the Information Shop approach to the leaflet drop in schools. They are relatively straightforward to implement, and can form a useful foundation for participation work - information is power.	Information policies don't promote participation as such. Young people often need interpretation of information and advice rather than simple information. It can be difficult to measure effectiveness in terms of specific outcomes.

While their strengths and limitations are different, many such initiatives do appear to start to address some of the issues which may persuade young people to take a more active interest in local politics and local democracy. Their importance is corroborated by the recent research by Bentley and Oakley (1999) who, while documenting the alienation of young people, also identify a number of key areas where change might have an effect. Young people, they say, would take more interest if there was evidence that politicians were taking seriously the issues they care about; if there were more effective and honest communication between politicians and young people; and if young people were able to have a voice and make choices about specific issues, not just between party programmes which

seem remote and hardly distinguishable. The initiatives in Bury, Manchester and Wolverhampton are encouraging in these respects. But if initiatives such as these are to be built on and extended, both by the authorities concerned and in local government more widely, a number of issues can be identified which will need to be addressed by councillors, by local authority officers, and in relation to the involvement of young people themselves.

For councillors, the key issues are those of political commitment, and of the culture and practice of political parties. The three initiatives evaluated all showed that the commitment of individual councillors was critical to the advances they had made. At the same time, however, this commitment was often limited to a few councillors - involving young people was seen to be 'their baby' by other councillors. If such initiatives are to achieve wider impact, they will need wider political commitment by councillors, ruling groups and leaders. Secondly, the initiatives raise key questions concerning the response of political parties to the involvement of young people. Initiatives such as these demonstrate that a considerable gulf continues to exist between the majority of politicians and young people - even while these three initiatives did something to begin to bridge that gulf. There are relatively few young councillors, and relatively few local political parties appear to regard it as a priority to change this. Moreover, the experience of most of the young people involved in the three initiatives in working alongside councillors did not lead many of them to think that they might want to join political parties or become councillors. The conclusion must be that many local political parties need to do more to adjust their practices and cultures if they are to appeal to young people.

Parallel questions of commitment and of organisational and cultural change arise for local authorities and officers. Again, in the three initiatives we have evaluated, the commitment of dedicated staff, and of 'champions' in senior or central positions within the local authority, has been crucial in what has been achieved. In all cases, however, a major step forward is seen to be to give real priority, both corporately and in specific departments, to pushing through and implementing the implications of strategic policies and of innovations such as the co-option of young people onto committees. This raises questions of resource allocation (at present, for example, dedicated young people's budgets are very small); of internal processes (such as the need for all council departments to consider the implications for young people of all decisions) but also questions of cultural change. A symptomatic issue concerns the attempts made to make committee papers more accessible in style to young people. This appears to present real difficulties to many local authority officers. The implication is that resourcing of training and support within the local authority for initiatives to involve young people is an important priority.

Turning to young people themselves, the question is not primarily one of their commitment, but of the implications of sustaining and extending the kind of advances achieved by the initiatives we have evaluated. There are a number of dimensions to this. Some of these concern the need to put systems of election and co-option to subcommittees and youth councils on a firmer footing. Participation among schools, and in different parts of local authority areas, is often patchy, and can lead to under-representation of certain social groups. Wider issues concern ways in which school or college-based election processes can be supported by a greater commitment to civic education, but also whether the 'message' which a school-based approach sends to young people (especially more alienated groups) is always the right one. Those young people who have become actively involved in youth subcommittees and councils are aware of the need for better procedures to ensure accountability and dialogue between themselves and the wider youth constituency, and also the specific problems posed by the attempt to represent the interests of a 'generational' community, whose members are constantly changing. A particular aspect of this problem is the need to pass on the experience of each group of young people's representatives to their sucessors, if successive 'generations' are not to have to constantly re-learn the more basic lessons. This is a crucial role for community development workers and for the Youth Service, and the under-resourcing of the latter is a cause for concern in this respect.

Political, social and economic citizenship

The above issues are essentially concerned with how to make initiatives such as those we have evaluated work more effectively. Beyond this however lie another set of issues, in this case concerned with questions about the relationship between local government and local democracy, and alternative forms of democracy at the local level.

In the first place, initiatives such as these raise questions about the extent of power which young people are being offered. In a recent discussion of this issue, Stoker develops a typology of participatory mechanisms developed by local government, ranging from top down strategies to 'bottom - up' or grassroots approaches (Stoker 1997). A discourse of 'consulting and empowering young people' frequently conceals a considerable variation on such issues. If we examine the range of policy elements which we have identified, some of them appear to fit most easily into a category of top-down strategies in which the initiative 'starts and finishes with the local authority'. Examples are the development of corporate young people's strategies, and information policies. It should be stressed that this is not per se a criticism of such policies, which may have important effects in focussing local authority actions, and enabling them to reach an important target group.

There is also substantial evidence that citizens and service users often consider that good information is what they need, rather than the opportunity to participate, or even be consulted.[2] At the other end of the spectrum, if we look for elements of policies which are young people-led, we find that there are certain mechanisms - youth councils for example - which offer more opportunity for young people to set the agenda. If the local authority adopts an empowering approach to these, it allows young people to take the lead and assists them in doing so. There is still some distance, however, between this and activity which originates and is more unambiguously owned by young people. This suggests that an important issue for the future may be for local authorities to explore ways in which they can participate on terrains staked out by young people, rather than only inviting young people onto the authority's ground. In between these two positions are many initiatives which offer young people a limited autonomy within an initiative which remains fundamentally under the control of local government. When this is the case, the initiatives evaluated offer a number of conclusions, including the need to be clear what degree of autonomy is on offer; and the difficulty often encountered in realising what are often quite ambitious aspirations. These situations are often complicated by the fact that local authorities are only one element in wider structures of local governance, working alongside other public, private and voluntary sector organisations, often in 'partnership' frameworks. The involvement of young people in such partnership structures and processes may be just as important an issue as involvement with(in) the local authority itself.

The second set of issues concerns the relationship between representative, participatory and other forms of democracy which these initiatives help to promote. The involvement of young people is frequently seen as part of a wider desire to promote more direct citizen participation in local politics, alongside, or, sometimes it would appear, as a constraint on, representative forms of democracy. In this sense, the involvement of young people can be seen as part of a response to the widespread identification - both popular and 'expert' - of a crisis in the representational capacity of political parties and councillors. From this perspective, the purpose of involving young people in local democracy has as much to do with the need to empower local authorities whose democratic legitimacy is seriously questioned, as it has with empowering young people who often feel no such need. Again, the experience of the three initiatives evaluated shows how different policy elements can have a different impact. On the one hand, innovations such as the establishment of youth subcommittees, with co-opted/elected young people's representatives - 'quasi-councillors' - represent ways of enabling representative democratic processes to respond in a more sophisticated way to the needs of communities of interest, alongside the geographical 'communities of interest' which a ward-based electoral

system creates. On the other hand, innovations such as young peoples councils - 'quasi-parliaments' - are more ambiguous in their relationship to the representative democratic process, and their impact is likely to depend on the extent to which the inputs to, and outputs from, such councils are linked with political or administrative decision processes. Other elements in the initiatives evaluated illustrate different approaches to the participative role of young people. Consultation seminars and day conferences may encourage a more *deliberative* form of involvement, in which young people are at the centre of a process of public or quasi-public evaluation and review of the activity of local government. The election or co-option of individuals to 'serve' on subcommittees, councils and so on can partly be seen in terms of a *politics of presence*, in which the intention is to ensure the presence of certain social groups in institutions and positions of influence, rather than their indirect representation by others (Phillips 1995). It is characteristic of this approach that, in the initiatives examined, the groups of young people exhibited considerable concern for the presence of male and female, white and non-white individuals within their numbers.

Common to nearly all elements of the initiatives evaluated, though, is a concern to promote the fuller political citizenship of young people as a group who tend to be excluded from - or exclude themselves from - local political activity. This 'exclusion' is of course partly because young people are not considered to be capable of full participation as citizens until they reach adulthood. Universal suffrage still begins at 18 in the UK. In this respect, the initiatives we have examined tend to suggest that this is an increasingly controversial issue, for several reasons. First, young people below the age of 18 do appear to be capable of making a valuable and 'mature' contribution to local democracy - a not uncommon comment by some of the young people involved in the three initiatives was that they behaved more maturely than councillors in party point-scoring mode. Secondly, local authorities need the contribution of young people as important current users of services, as well as because they are the adult citizens of the future. Recent proposals for voting for children (Ringen 1998) are of interest in this context.

The three initiatives under review tend to confirm, though, other research findings (Bynner and Ashford 1994) of a correlation between educational attainment and interest in democratic participation; and, further, suggest a danger that some popular current mechanisms for involving young people can reinforce this tendency. Organising elections through the school system may enlist some educational achievers, but not those who fail in, or are failed by the school system.

Not all elements of the initiatives however had a primary focus on political citizenship. If we adopt the terminology of current discussion about social exclusion, it is important to also recognise the social and economic dimensions of exclusion.

Some elements of the initiatives we have discussed are primarily concerned with social citizenship - access to social provision, and, in some cases, the way in which the participation of individuals in the mainstream of society can be consolidated by improving such access. We have not been able to adequately evaluate the distributional outcomes of the three initiatives on patterns of expenditure and service provision, but in general their impact so far seems to have been confined to a number of specific and fairly limited changes, although these may be valuable in setting precedents. In the longer term however, initiatives are likely to be increasingly judged by the extent to which they shift the balance of resource allocation both quantitatively and qualitatively in line with the demands and needs of young people and, especially, excluded groups of young people. The outcomes of new policy initiatives such as Wolverhampton's Best Value pilot project will be important in this respect.[3] Without an ability to influence distributional outcomes, the political voice given to young people through many of the mechanisms we have discussed is likely to end in rapid exit, particularly as many young people find it difficult to come to terms with the length of time it sometimes seems to take to get things done in local government.

The provision of social facilities is of importance for all young people but particularly for those who are excluded from full economic citizenship through unemployment or underemployment and marginalisation in the labour market (MacDonald 1997). It was outside the scope of this research to assess the kind of local authority policies - such as urban regeneration, training and education, and the authority's practices as an employer - which can contribute to the ability of young people entering the labour market, and to a very considerable degree the labour market prospects of young people are entirely outside the remit of local government. However, these are key issues for young people as for adults, and the extent to which young people see value in involvement with local government will be influenced quite substantially by the extent to which local authorities are perceived to be important local economic actors. Thus the allocation to local authorities of a more general duty to promote the economic and social well-being of the area, as is currently being proposed by government (DETR 1999), might in due course offer more incentive for young people to become more involved in local democracy - given that government also allows local authorities sufficient resources to make a reality of the duty.

Conclusion: involving young people in 'modernised' government

The previous point is one instance of the fact that local initiatives such as those discussed here are taking place within a context of change and 'modernisation' of governance both nationally and locally.

At local level, there is some evidence that the wider 'modernisation' of local governance may have contradictory effects in terms of engaging young people in the decision-making process. The introduction of new political management arrangements (cabinets, scrutiny arrangements etc) appears to be creating 'tighter' decision-making arrangements, but the accessibility and accountability to the public of these arrangements is often an issue (Davis and Geddes 2000), and it is often not clear where initiatives to involve young people will 'fit' within new structures, as in Bury. The Best Value regime is encouraging fundamental reviews of service provision, and citizen/user consultation is an important element of this (Martin et al 1999; Martin and Boaz 2000), but young people will not necessarily be regarded as a key 'user' group (in the way that has happened in Wolverhampton), while Best Value also brings strong cost-related pressures on local authority services. Similarly, the new power to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area, and the duty to prepare Community Plans, offer opportunities to engage communities in a more systematic way, but again young people may not be central in this process. Many new government-initiated but locally-based initiatives such as Education and Health Action Zones are developing active approaches to engaging young people, but the lessons from these are not being widely shared, even at local level. New devolved government structures are also having an important impact (eg a new Scottish Youth Parliament) but there is again limited learning across boundaries. 'Modernised' local governance thus may not necessarily be any more 'young people friendly' than the traditional version.

At the same time, there is little evidence that the current restructuring of local government implies any overall lessening of direction and control by central government, so that the wider national context also remains crucial to what happens at the local level. This is particularly the case because our democratic practice, culture and discourse is not largely local. Although the local arena may be the one which is most accessible to most people, it is now a commonplace that local democracy is conditioned by national processes and issues. Voting or the failure to vote at local elections takes place according to national agendas; local politicians are largely unknown,[4] partly because of the weakness in the UK of local media. An important conclusion must therefore be that local initiatives to enhance democracy need national support and visibility. Local initiatives, in the view of participants in those discussed here, would have more impact if they were much more widespread and if national political parties gave greater prominence to local issues. It might also be argued that, if initiatives to increase the democratic involvement of young people are valid at local level, then they are also at national level. What price parallel experiments with a young people's House of Commons Select Committee with elected or co-opted 'young members', or a Youth Parliament

meeting regularly at Westminster (as now happens in Scotland), or an interdepartmental government Youth Strategy, or with other forms of representation of young people such as in a reformed second chamber?

Innovations such as these discussed in this article are unlikely to fully bridge the generational gap in politics, in that young people are likely to continue to develop their own distinctive political and democratic forms, the essence of which may sometimes be tangential or oppositional to established politics and the state. Nevertheless, such initiatives demonstrate that 'the system' can be made more responsive to the next generation of citizens. If those who currently hold power want local democracy to survive beyond them, then involving young people must surely be a priority.

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Notes

1 Under 25s are four times less likely to be registered to vote than any other group. In the 1992 election only 43% of 18-24 year olds and 68% of 25-34 year olds voted and the trend was particularly evident in the more disadvantaged areas (Wilkinson and Mulgan 1995).

2 In this respect, we do not agree with the common interpretation of Sherry Arnstein's 'ladder of citizen participation' which implicitly privileges the higher rungs of the ladder.

3 The NYA has recently put forward proposals designed to encourage local authorities to set more systematic standards for services they offer to young people through their Youth Services. These embody an emphasis on performance specification and management which is consistent with the Best Value regime (NYA 1999).

4 Which is not to suggest that electing a middle aged mayor supported by the dominant local political party would improve the involvement of young people.

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THE NATIONAL YOUTH AGENCY:
Past, present, prospects.

TOM WYLIE

One day, far into the next century, when the archaeologists come to excavate the National Youth Agency's building, they will find also the grave furnishings of the bodies which preceded it. There will be old copies of 'Youth Service' and film lists from the Youth Service Information Centre (YSIC) of the 1960s and the back numbers of 'Youth in Society' as YSIC broadened into the National Youth Bureau (NYB) in the 1970s. The burgeoning, co-located organisations and specialist units of NYB during the 1980s may be represented by finding files of endorsement visits to training institutions by the Council for Education and Training in Youth and Community Work, and the 'Make-it Work' pack from the National Association of Young People's Counselling and Advisory Services.

The 1990s will be revealed as a turbulent decade as the Department for Education's grand project of merging all the national youth bodies into a single National Youth Agency (NYA) foundered on the voluntary sector's resistance to having its voice suppressed within the new quango; only for NYA itself to come close to infanticide before the local authority associations rescued it just as the Department for Education's hands closed around its throat.

Thus is the history of the NYA briskly told. A longer, more complex tale would go back to the Albemarle and Bessey reports of the 1960s with their recognition of the need for *an intelligence unit to serve the new youth service.* (Bessey, 1962). Bernard Davies's magisterial history identifies that at that point *'attention turned to creating a structure capable of disseminating the service's accumulating experience in more systematic and analytical ways.* (Davies, 1999, vol 1, p77). Influential backing from the Youth Service Development Council - how we miss a contemporary version of this - produced the Youth Service Information Centre which opened in 1964 in the premises of the then National College for the Training of Youth Leaders, in Leicester.

By 1969 when Alan Gibson, its first director, left to join HM Inspectorate, the Youth Service Information Centre had grown to six full-time staff and a range of functions concerned principally with information services, publications and training materials. But Gibson also left a grand design for *a permanent national institution concerned with in-service training and advanced courses for full-time and part-time workers.* He envisaged also that a focus simply on the, narrowly-defined, 'Youth Service' might not be sufficient but that a new body, springing from YSIC, *might make a substantial contribution to the growth of whatever educational, social or social educational services it covers.* (Davies, 1999, vol 1, p78).

John Ewen, the incoming Director, was comfortable with this grand design. Indeed, all the subsequent Directors of the NYB and NYA (David Howie, Janet Paraskeva, and Tom Wylie) were to prove passionate advocates for taking a wider look at young people's lives and for a range of services to be developed to meet their needs effectively.

Accordingly the NYB/NYA, not always comfortably, sought to thread a path between the generality of youth affairs policies, the distinctive form of practice known as 'youth work' and the set of loose institutional arrangements called 'The Youth Service'.

The NYB itself did not come into being until 1973. After four years of struggle to bring it into life, Ewen saw its formation as being against the background of a high degree of suspicion in the youth work field of the putative Bureau's empire-building tendencies.

His sense of embattlement was reflected in the first leaflet describing the new Bureau which had a paragraph entitled 'Some Fears' and another entitled 'Firstly, what NYB is NOT'. The first of the 'nots' was *a controlling agency... to tell people what to do... to dictate policy, or to interfere with other organisations about their work'. The second 'not' was 'a professional institute' and the third 'a youth organisation with field workers or field projects.* (NYA, 1974 (a)). As Ewen remarked, it was rather that the NYB was 'dragged screaming into existence rather than celebrated'. Its first Annual Report identified two broad aims: *to assist the emergence of a forum on a generic and multi-professional basis between all those concerned with the social education of young people... and, secondly, to offer relevant services (information, training and research) to those who are assisting that process.* (NYB, 1974 (b)). Accordingly, the early years of the new Bureau gave much attention to its 'Forum' function - in the shape of its widely drawn Council which included teacher unions, social work and community-based organisations as well as youth service bodies. 'Forum' also was expected to be developed in national consultative groups - on Youth Research and on Youth and Community Work Training. The latter was to prove the more enduring. As the 1970s unfolded, the NYA was able to add to its specialist services and forums by establishing units for Youth Social Work (principally in respect of the then fashionable 'Intermediate Treatment' for young offenders); for Young Volunteering; for Youth Unemployment. Indeed, by 1980, the National Council of Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) was co-located in the NYB's premises as was the National Association of Young People's Counselling and Advisory Services (NAYPCAS). And the Bureau's Consultative Group on Youth and Community Work Training would soon metamorphise into the Council for Education and Training in Youth and Community Work (CETYCW) with extensive

responsibilities for the professional endorsement of initial, inservice and part-timer training. Alan Gibson's 'grand design' had taken two decades to construct but was now nearly in place, with a total staffing exceeding 70.

Financing was never easy. The original plan had been for shared central and local government funding but the principle, established in 1972, that the Local Authority Associations would also financially support the Bureau's work did not materialise. In consequence, the NYB - and its partners in CETYCW, NCVYS and NAYPCAS - depended almost entirely on central government finance, principally from the then Department for Education and Science with generally time-limited support for projects from other government departments. Both the 'forum' function and the reliance on national government funding nearly brought the NYB to its knees as the 1980s developed. Ewen, Howie and Paraskeva, in their different ways, understood the Bureau to have a mandate to address youth questions proactively and to take up committed positions on youth issues of the day. This stance was maintained into the Thatcher era when quangos had ceased to be in fashion and a concern for, say, rising levels of youth unemployment or police harassment of young black people or levels of spending on youth services all risked putting the advocates onto a collision course with government. In 1983 the NYB faced the first of several reviews, invariably initiated by the DES and undertaken by scrutineers it selected. The Cockerill Report of September 1983 commended the NYB for its publications; thought that it should collect better data; doubted the wisdom of it having a policy stance; and advocated the end of NYB's existing structure of specialist units. (Cockerill, 1983). The NYB adjusted itself to these imperatives - and survived when others, such as Schools Council, did not. By 1991, following another DES scrutiny, the NYB was re-shaped again - into the National Youth Agency. This time the Department's grand design was to merge all the national youth bodies it supported financially - NCVYS, BYC and NAYPCAS and its most obvious clients, NYB and CETYCW - into one body. The vision was flawed, not necessarily in its goals, but in its construction and fell apart on the unwillingness of the voluntary sector bodies to be swept into a quango, especially one which seemed bent on having some form of core curriculum for youth work. They decided to head for the open seas and to survive as best they could until the tide turned and the DES began to value them once more (as indeed it did). By 1992 the outcome of the Department's inadequate diplomacy, therefore, was a national support system for youth work which not only had not advanced but, as a result of the departure of NCVYS and NAYPCAS, had even lost the synergy of co-location which had previously been available.

In three years the Department for Education was back for another scrutiny of the Agency it had created. As Bernard Davies records:

Though involving consultations with some 84 interested bodies, the DfE sought to keep maximum control over this new review by carrying it out internally. In ways which did little to displease DfE officials, it nonetheless acted as a release valve for the kinds of, albeit often contradictory, critical comment which a central resourcing body like NYA was always liable to attract. The process thus provided ample 'evidence' for unconvinced central government officials to interpret unfavourably if they so chose.

Thus, the Agency's information and library services, its promotion of equal opportunities, its co-ordination of Youth Work Week and its response to individual enquiries were all well regarded. Somewhat contradictorily, however, it was seen as 'remote from the field'. It was also judged to be offering inadequate support to the voluntary-statutory partnership and 'not sufficiently committed to the ethos of the voluntary sector(1). As the NYA carried a brief for voluntary sector development (though with limited resources for fulfilling it), it was wide open to such complaints, notably from NCVYS which itself had suffered at NYA's expense in the 1990-91 reorganisation.
(Davies, 1999, vol 2, p 126)

Although the field itself had offered some of these hostages to fortune, enough of it saw the implications of the Department's intended financial re-structuring of the Agency and rallied sufficiently to divert the full thrust of the Department's blade. The outcome was that the Department reduced its support - essentially back to the old YSIC functions with which it had always been most comfortable - and the Local Authority Associations stepped into the breach and picked up the Agency's core costs by top-slicing Revenue Support Grant.

By 1996 a new NYA had emerged: no longer a quango but a partnership body with its governance and direction shared between the local authorities, voluntary sector and young people themselves. A partnership body which sought to build on the work of its predecessors - hence, information for practitioners, and for young people; a commitment to the improvement of practice through publications for service managers and field workers; networks for specialist groups; developmental activity, for instance in young people's voluntary action and through grants for innovative work of national significance; arrangements to promote and endorse high quality initial training and staff development. Not least, a renewed endeavour to 'speak truth to power' - to communicate to national and local policy-makers the distinctive contribution of youth work, within a range of services for young people. A continuing belief, maintained over forty years, that adolescence is a distinctive period in people's lives and that young people have needs and potential as well as

deficits. And that those who try to work with them in many different settings, but especially in youth work, deserve effective support and advocacy. The Agency thus sees important continuities in its work and in its values as well as changes needed to respond to new contexts.

The NYA has been re-shaping how it expresses its vision and goals and how it offers relevant services to a diverse field. What the NYA should do - the kinds of services it should offer and policies it should promote - has to spring from continuing re-assessment of the position of young people, the changing contexts of their lives, and judgements about how best to help them, those who work with them and those who make policies or manage services. Such analysis is not for this paper, but has been set out fully in the Agency's recent publication 'Modern Services for Young People' (NYA, 1999) and in

its Strategic Framework 1999-2003 (NYA, 1999). The Agency has a vision for young people. It is that they should:

- *have more opportunities for personal and social fulfilment and development*
- *achieve greater voice and influence in their communities*
- *be engaged and included in a society which values them.*

And the Agency has expressed what it conceives as its task in pursuit of these aspirations in the fashionable form of a Mission statement.

> It aspires to gather, generate, demonstrate and disseminate practical resources, new ideas and best practice that will improve work with young people. It endeavours to work alongside current and future leaders and managers to help them develop their knowledge and skills, and transform their services and policies. It tries to communicate what it knows and learns nationwide and internationally, in part through its Research Forum. It already creates, advocates, sets and seeks to enforce standards (of learning, practice and training) that will secure responsive youth work and youth services, and a supply of competent staff, committed to their own development and to better services for young people.

In turn, the mission has been turned into three broad aims for the Agency's work:

- *to support the improvement and extension of youth services and youth work*
- *to enhance and celebrate effective youth participation and voluntary action*
- *to promote youth policy, provision and practice which is young people centred.*

Of course, the Agency would wish to achieve these aims across a broad field of activities but it does not have the resources to do so. It has a staff of just over 50

and, leaving aside its grant-making role, a budget of a small secondary school or a median county youth service. On its creation, the NYA was not given the level of resource made available by the DfEE to those bodies it supported before its abortive 'merger' attempt of 1991. While NYA has diversified its funding in recent years, it cannot escape some difficult choices for its priorities. In the next period NYA's strategic objectives are to increase support for the management and leadership of organisations and to generate significant innovation in youth work. In programmes it wants to strengthen links between citizenship, inclusion and the achievement of young people. Its major grant-giving, under the DfEE's Neighbourhood Support Fund will focus some £3m pa on these tasks in some of the country's most disadvantaged communities. At the heart of good work with young people is effective performance, so the NYA tries to secure better training for youth work and to create resources which will improve direct youth work practice and its management.

To these ends the Agency has concluded that it needs to modernise its own practices by having a stronger focus on value, outcomes and customer satisfaction. It seeks financial growth, but also to diversify its funding so as not to depend on a few bodies for its survival. It aims to upgrade its analytical, evaluative and consultancy capacity and to improve its speed and flexibility of operation. Increasingly it seeks to harness electronic and mobile working.

Since 1996, the NYA is no longer a creature of central government, with a Board appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and its programme of activities closely scrutinised by DfEE officials. (Indeed, on at least one occasion under the previous regime, officials required the NYA to desist from continuing a piece of work, on Youth Service funding, on pain of losing its grant). Even so, the Agency is still a public body, in receipt of substantial public funds, and has to take proper account of the interests and any concerns of its various paymasters. In the Russian saying: 'the only free cheese is in a mousetrap'!

While the DfEE and the Home Office continue to fund NYA for specific services or projects, the Agency's 'core' grant comes via a topslicing of revenue support grant by local government which is negotiated annually with the Local Government Association (LGA). In any case, the Agency wants to work closely with local government in order to encourage responsive local services for young people. It is being seen increasingly by the LGA as one of its strategic partners. It also seeks to influence central government and has concluded that, on the whole, long-term influence is not won by gesture politics. So any campaigning has to be balanced and based on reasoned argument: this can result in a frustrating slog of attrition, even with governments which are concerned about youth issues (although less persuaded of the efficacy of youth work in meeting them).

Relationships with the field, especially the voluntary sector, are rather more complex. The sector is diverse - in its services, structures, scale and value base. Many large national voluntary bodies provide services to their own members which NYA could not aspire to match, even if it wanted. Strategically the Agency has chosen, so far, to eschew the option of providing a direct service to young people but being only an intermediary body may diminish some of its influence with government even if it avoids it being in competition with other service providers, especially in the voluntary sector.

Those outside the direct youth work constituency who are opinion formers on social policy expect the NYA to be more than just a champion for youth work or the Youth Service - they expect it to be challenging practitioners towards the improvement of services to young people.

The disputatious nature of the youth field ensures that NYA is rarely without its critics, even opponents, especially when it seeks to offer leadership on policy matters. Despite the inclusive nature of the governance, activities and staffing of the Agency, it is still seen in some quarters as being 'too biased to the voluntary sector', or by others as 'only interested in local authority youth work'. Some appear to see a value in diffusing the sources of influence upon the field: the fears of 'empire-building' of which John Ewen wrote twenty-five years ago still cast a shadow. Democratic dialogue and critical solidarity notwithstanding, the youth work field seems to find it difficult to give whole-hearted support to its national agency: it pays a political price for this begrudgery.

One enduring fault-line has concerned the initial training of the field's practitioners. The NYA has an important responsibility to try to uphold high professional standards. It has sought to do this, not through staff control, but through drawing in the widest field - employers, unions, training providers - into the scrutiny and endorsement process. (This is sometimes, inaccurately, described as 'peer review' but, in fact, the NYA's scrutiny process is richer than just fielding an institution's 'peers'.) The process, inevitably, invites challenge: it is in the interests of training providers, and even of trade unions, to argue that training equips people for the widest possible range of professional tasks and roles. Not all employers agree. And the NYA has a particular concern to ensure that professionals who emerge from initial training have received a formation which, above all, enables them to work effectively, deploying youth work skills and values, with young people - regardless of the professional setting for such work. This author has argued elsewhere (Wylie, 1997) what some of the implications are for youth worker training. But, as befits a democratic Agency, his is but one voice among many in the elaborate processes of governance which shape the NYA's Education and Training Standards system

and now the work of the National Training Organisation, Paulo, in whose creation NYA played a leading role.

Thus, the National Youth Agency is re-shaping its activities for new times but the architecture of local services to young people is likely to be further re-ordered by several external pressures. These include the Best Value regime which is requiring local authorities to look again at all their services. Central government in England is re-constructing post-16 education and training with new arrangements for planning, funding and governance through the Learning and Skills Council. The Social Exclusion Unit is underlining the necessity for local and national policies and services to be better attuned to the needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable. One reflection of this drive is the creation of a new youth support service, Connexions, with a planned cadre of 'personal advisers' with their own distinctive training and who will become in time, if government has its way, a new profession. Local youth bodies, both voluntary and local authority (what some of us see as 'the democratic sector') will have to respond to these pressures to re-configure their services for the young. The NYA has sought to help youth services to engage with these issues and to influence governmental thinking.

Responsiveness and advocacy nationally is probably not helped by the continued splitting of the voice of and services to voluntary and maintained youth work sectors or by the co-existence of three separate national bodies with overlapping boundaries - NYA, the British Youth Council and the National Council of Voluntary Youth Services. This must appear a curious arrangement to the external observer of the youth sector: no other European country has anything comparable. The field has colluded in the continued separation or a policy of 'divide and rule', some might say. It is surely the moment to re-open the thinking which led, a decade ago, to the attempt to construct a multi-purpose, cross-sectoral National Youth Agency? And, this time, to 're-mould it nearer to the heart's desire'.

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Yspace.net

INFORMATION

The Yspace network has been formed to foster and support the development across nations of youth inclusive policy and practice in the design and management of public and community accessed spaces. *Yspace* seeks to provide a mechanism for researchers, young people, various levels of government, planners, and youth services to share information, insights, good practice, resources and concerns.

The network aims to:

- *Support research and critical examination of issues around young people's utilisation of various types of space, identifying areas of commonality and difference across different states and localities.*
- *Share ideas and strategies for responding to conflicts arising from the design and management of public space, with a view to young people being acknowledged and valued as members of communities and as citizens with legitimate rights and interests.*
- *Promote a recognition that public and community accessed space form key sites for young people's participation in social, cultural and economic life and should be designed, planned and managed in recognition of this.*
- *Encourage the development of inclusive and youth friendly policies and practices that can be disseminated to governments, business and community interests.*

Young people are substantial users of public and community accessed spaces. Malls, shopping centres, parks, streets and footpaths are an essential part of the fabric of many young people's lives being used for a very wide variety of purposes. The perception of young people's use of public space as problematic has become a central feature of both national and international debates about young people's rights and responsibilities, and their place in contemporary societies. It is relatively common for young people's use of public space to be constructed as a threat to the social order, in need of surveillance and control. Intervention is often targeted on the basis of appearance.

In many locations around the world there has been a heavy reliance on the use of restrictive and at times exclusionary strategies, including selective curfews (or so called child safety initiatives), police move on powers, exclusion from shopping malls/centres and the public facilities often located within them, the increasing use of CCTV (closed circuit television) technology to police public space, and the promotion and application of 'crime prevention through environmental design' approaches.

At the same time a wide variety of organisations (government, non-profit and commercial) and individuals around the world are attempting through various strategies to respond to public space issues related to young people in ways that build more inclusive and socially just communities. Experience to date indicates there are important connections between social policy, urban planning processes, the design of spaces, and the management of those spaces, connections which point to a more multi-dimensional approach than has been traditionally employed.

Few mechanisms exist to respond to the critical issue of how young people's needs can be better reflected in how public and community accessed space is understood, designed and managed. *Yspace* is envisaged as a global vehicle for connecting people and organisations to assist in this.

The network is intended to be informed by a wide range of insights and views: to foster linkages being made between areas of work and issues not usually linked sufficiently. It is based on the premise that there is benefit to be gained by local and state governments, designers, planners, community service providers, police/security and young people adopting a communicative and problem solving approach to understanding, designing and managing public space.

Yspace is an open network that actively seeks the involvement of:

- *the widest diversity of young people,*
- *those who work with young people and communities,*
- *those who research and publish,*
- *those who write, make and manage policy, and*
- *those who are directly involved in the design and management of public spaces.*

To reflect this the *Yspace* web site is designed to be built and kept up to date through the input of interested people across the globe, supplemented by a team of site administrators who undertake network development and the clearance of material for posting on the site.

Yspace has grown out of work undertaken by researchers and organisations in recent decades, and more specifically, the work undertaken by Brisbane City Council and the Queensland University of Technology over the last ten years. The catalyst was connections made at the International Young People and Social Exclusion Conference held at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow in September 1999. Following this conference a small working party was formed to discuss how an international network could be developed.

The Yspace: International Youth and Public Space Network was launched at the First International Youth Service Models Conference held at the Adelaide Convention Centre, South Australia, from March 12-15,2000. Dr Maria Henriques Mueller, Head of the Youth Coordination Unit UNESCO (Paris) and Bruce Harris Executive Director of Latin American Programs Casa Alianza (Amnesty Internationals Hero of the Year 1991 and winner of the Olaf Palme Peace Award in 1997) launched the Network.

The response to the setting up of *Yspace* has been one of enormous support. There is very widespread recognition that young people have been generally left out of civic thinking in the design and management of our cities.

The key strategy of *Yspace* is the development of a web site that allows interested organisations and individuals from around the world to share information and insights. No fees are charged for participating in the network or accessing the web site. As well as various types of posted information the web site has a world wide email communication facility. This allows anyone who signs onto the network to ask for and receive information from others on the list. For example people will be able to ask of others who have 'subscribed' (at no cost) for information or advice on areas of interest to them.

The task of the next twelve months is to develop the web site into a well regarded resource for information and communication. Please contribute information of your own work or that of others to the various parts of the site. In time the network hopes to hold international conferences and produce an electronic newsletter, as well as both produce and provide links to a variety of publications.

The network is hosted by the School of Human Services, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane Australia. Establishment costs for *Yspace* have been met by QUT and Brisbane City Council. Organisations and individuals who support the aims of *Yspace* are able to list themselves on the Who's Who section of the web site.

For more information about the Network, email **info@yspace.net**

Website:https://olt.qut.edu.au/udf/yspace/

Classic Texts Revisited

Supervision in Youth Work,
M. Joan Tash (1967, reprinted 1969 & 1984).

MARY CROSBY

My first experience of supervision was during my qualifying training in youth work at the then YMCA National College, where Joan Tash was a tutor and trainer of fieldwork supervisors. Initially it seemed strange, sitting down and telling a stranger about my practice. When was the supervisor going to give me some advice? What the supervisor did instead was to ask questions which helped me think so that I could open up my experiences, make sense of them, and form judgements about my own work rather than rely on her. It seemed to me then, and still does, that in this way Dewey's description of education as '...an emancipation and enlargement of experience' (1933: 240) is given practical expression through the supervision process.

Joan Tash's book, *Supervision in Youth Work,* describes a two year project in which she trained ten senior youth workers to become supervisors of newly qualified practitioners, using supervision with herself as the primary training method. The project had two main aims. First, to train youth workers in supervision. Second, to provide material on the nature of supervision.

Since it was first published in 1967 demand for the book has continued unabated - it being reprinted in 1969, 1984 and 2000. Writing in her preface to the 1984 edition, Tash regrets the lack of new writing on supervision based on the evidence of youth workers' experience of both supervising and being supervised:

> *I hope the writing will not be left to those, perhaps with less training and experience, who prefer to dwell on titles - personal developmental supervision, managerial and non-managerial ...*
>
> *This simply causes confusion in the profession ...*

This position remains little altered. There is still a scarcity of evidence based studies, and, apart from Christian and Kitto's short working paper (1987), there is little that addresses the central purpose and function of supervision. Consequently, it seems to me, supervision in youth work is often poorly understood.

With this in mind, I recently completed some case studies on youth workers'/informal educators' experiences of being supervised and was impressed both by how relevant Tash's study still was, and with the integrity of her research method. In a fairly extensive literature search across disciplines, I found that most of the research into supervision used methods which could not reveal its processes in much depth and subtlety so that: '...somehow the reality slips through the net of our research paradigms...' (Bullough, Knowles and Crow, 1991: 13)

Tash's study, however, was firmly grounded in the experience of supervising and being supervised. Her meticulous recording, analysis and evaluation enabled her to capture the complexity of this experience and reveal its underlying processes as they developed over time.

Today much rhetoric is banded around about 'evidence-based practice' in youth work and elsewhere. Sadly this often means little more than manipulating the evidence in order to show that certain pre-set outcomes have occurred. Tash's study has integrity because she set out simply to learn from the evidence of the work she and the workers did together. It was a process of learning and discovery which involved studying herself as a supervisor as well as those she supervised.

Setting the book in context

In the mid-sixties, as Tash points out, supervision was uncommon in youth service. Youth workers were also rarely able to find any continuity of in-service training which helped them to understand their work and themselves as practitioners.

The value of supervision in this respect had, however, been recognised in social work (case work and group work) for some time and it was from this that Tash derived the method and philosophy of her approach. She recognised its appropriateness to the task of youth work where workers had to 'think on their feet', drawing on their own perceptions and judgements of situations, and taking responsibility for their own practice. In addition this thinking had to be done within emotionally demanding practice situations, often full of conflicting needs and values.

It is interesting that more than thirty years on, although fashions in youth work have come and gone, the demands of the job and the need for thinking workers are largely unchanged.

Supervision as an educational process/learning through supervision.
If you ask youth workers what supervision is for, you may get a variety of answers but central to Tash's understanding and approach is the belief that supervision is fundamentally about learning in order to become more effective practitioners: For Tash it is '... an educational process, a form of individual adult education, in which the workers learned about the work of which they were a part' (p 10).

Further, Tash suggests that in order for workers to benefit fully from supervision they must become adept at using 'all of themselves' in the learning process. She examines a number of aspects of this:

1. learning to relate theories and practice
In supervision workers can come to understand the meaning of theories by bringing their practice experiences to bear upon them. They can also bring new meaning to practice by reflecting on theories. In her study Tash sees this bringing together of theory and practice as a way of producing new ways of thinking about practice by those she supervised:

> *(it) has given them wider terms of reference from which to ask questions and make decisions as to how they will work. They learn how a theory can be used to improve practice and provide them with new concepts from which to describe their practice. (p 54)*

2. learning to use feelings
Our feelings are often the gate through which we return to our experiences and reflect on them in order to learn (Dewey, 1933; Boud, Keough & Walker, 1985; Schon, 1983). Tash discusses the importance of workers firstly recognising and accepting their feelings - bringing them consciously to mind, and secondly, beginning to understand the meaning of these feelings in relation to their work situation.

Tash found that underlying feelings of fear about aspects of their work situation were common amongst the workers she supervised. Once they could acknowledge the fear and think in more concrete terms about the effect it was having on their behaviour she found they could '...perceive its meaning, how it is affected by the situation, and how it affects the situation' (p 55).

However, she recognised that this was only a first step for '...they have yet to learn how to deal with the feelings, and this can take a long time' (p 55). This, for me, brings out one of the most important qualities of

Tash's approach to supervision; the need for patient, focused work over time so that workers may learn at their own pace.

3. Learning to use values.

The youth workers Tash supervised often felt '...blown by the wind...' (p 61) because they were paying lip service to values they felt were expected of them by their employers, but not really understanding what their own values were, and how these affected their actions. I suspect many of today's workers will identify with this experience.

As Tash encouraged the workers to explore their actions in supervision they were able to become more conscious of their own values, so that they could be thought about, not necessarily in order to change them, but to examine them and be open to change as their understanding developed. In this way they became more able to use their own judgements as workers rather than relying on those of others:

> *...as he (sic) learns to explore total situations of which he and his values are a part, he becomes more confident in using the results of this exploration as a basis for his judgements instead of searching for an outside authority. (p 61)*

4. Learning from the situation.

Tash found that once the workers had learnt through supervision to use their theories, feelings and values, they became less prone to making superficial judgements about their work situations. They were less likely to see their opinions as facts.

She saw the supervision process as encouraging workers to observe their practice situations in the light of what they had learned about themselves. They were then on their way to understanding the situations of which they were a part rather than simply 'imposing themselves' on those situations (p. 62). By recognising the impact of their own behaviour they were able to extend the base from which they could question and learn from their work:

> *...such learning helps the worker to change from giving a subjective opinion to drawing considered conclusions and being able to explain to others what is happening. (p 65)*

Tash found that no two workers on the project learned in the same way and she shows this clearly in case studies of ongoing supervision sessions with different workers. The question of the pace of learning was also important:

> *A function of supervision is to help any worker learn from his situation in his own way and at his own pace ... and to help him to relate at his own pace three areas: the situation, his role in it, and his behaviour as it affects it'. (p 79)*

Tash believes that supervision is primarily developmental for the worker and the role of the supervisor is to facilitate that learning rather than seeking to direct or control it.

This leads us on to another strong theme within Tash's book, that of the nature of the relationship between supervisor and supervisee.

The supervisory relationship

Tash recognised that because supervision functions within a relationship between supervisor and worker, this therefore had to be examined:

> *... so that the factors within it could be recognised - the feelings, attitudes and expectations of the two people, the part that each played, and the way in which these affected learning. (p 7).*

She found that if the supervisor brought qualities of acceptance and support '...without sentiment...' (p 11) to the relationship this helped create an effective learning environment.

Acceptance of the workers, as they were, did not depend upon how Tash as the supervisor felt about them, but was a principled attitude which she took up toward them:

> *... the worker was a person with his own feelings, attitudes, expectations, strengths, weaknesses, ideas, skills and knowledge, and his own understanding and ability in a job ... he had a right to these. (The supervisor's) acceptance was first then, an attitude of mind. (p 11)*

Tash sought to demonstrate this principle and attitude through paying close attention to her supervisees. She found that they were often very sensitive to the quality of this attention:

> *A worker soon knew if the supervisor was waiting to make a point, or was thinking about something else. When the supervisor was listening, interested and relaxed, the worker felt that he was important to the discussion and that there was plenty of time to express himself as he wanted or was able to do.... The acceptance was active, not passive or neutral. (p 17)*

If you have ever had the discouraging experience of talking to a supervisor whose attention is not fully on you, or who clearly cannot wait to put forward their own point of view, then you will warm to Tash's point.

Tash also sees acceptance from the supervisor as a means through which workers may learn to accept themselves, develop independent opinions and be more objective.

Whilst she recognised the value of the supervisor being completely detached from the worker's employment situation, as she was, she also acknowledged that supervision was unlikely to be developed thoughout the youth service on this basis. Senior staff, youth officers, project managers, for example, were likely to be called on to supervise their staff and volunteers, and this has proved to be largely the case.

Tash states that if a supervisor has other roles and responsibilities toward the worker, then the relationship and to an extent, the nature of the supervision will be changed. For the manager offering supervision to their own workers, the question arises as to how far they can help the workers to learn at their own pace and to think for themselves, and how far must they ensure that they conform to agency ideas and patterns. Tash sees it as essential in such situations that issues are brought out into the open and discussed with workers. Managers must recognise their different roles in relation to the worker, understand how they can deal with them and how they may effect supervision as an educational process.

In my experience, it is important that this process takes place at the beginning of the supervisory relationship and that the discussion is ongoing, so that a clear understanding of the boundaries is established and maintained and difficulties identified as they arise.

Having said this, my case studies showed that supervisees often found it difficult to express dissatisfaction with the supervision they were receiving, even when the supervisor was not their manager. So managers (and all supervisors) need to work in ways which demonstrate to the supervisee that this is something which can be discussed openly and will not be held against them.

In order to do so, Tash asserts that the manager/supervisor has to develop a certain attitude of mind, that of:

> *... believing that one's authority as a supervisor comes not from one's official position/appointment but from ...one's ability to*

learn from the situation, and to accept another person, and then to develop ways of working with them ... and a conviction that supervision is there to help the supervisee learn and think for themselves ... If you don't believe this, then you will hand out advice. (p 82, 84)

In my case studies the youth workers' experiences of being supervised by their managers was sometimes negative, and I would suggest that this is not uncommon. The managers tended not to use supervision as a means of training and development for staff, but as an opportunity to put forward their own agendas, give instructions and have workers report back to them. Whilst these may be the legitimate functions of line management, they do not have a place in the educational approach to supervision advocated by Tash.

A further problem was that managers did not protect supervision time and found it difficult to put aside their own issues in order to listen and explore the workers' perceptions. This left workers feeling mistrustful and cynical about the process. As a result they tended to go through the motions, taking part in supervision but they avoided revealing their real concerns and issues.

Relevance to current youth work policy and practice

Tash's study remains relevant today for a number or reasons. First, by asserting that supervision should be about learning and development rather than control she highlights an important issue for youth work managers. How much do they really want their workers to develop as independent, creative thinkers? Organisational research has consistently found that workers who are encouraged to think critically and independently take greater responsibility for their practice and are more creative and innovative than those managed prescriptively. However, such workers might feel like a threat rather than a resource to some managers.

Second, supervision as a developmental, educational process still seems to be poorly understood in the field and although commonly regarded as 'a good thing', by youth work employers it is rarely encountered. Yet good supervision provides the thinking space which is so essential to good practice. In some professions where practitioners work closely with clients, supervision is a professional requirement. This acknowledges how easy it is for workers to become entangled, ineffective, and even potentially damaging. It also recognises the importance of regular opportunities for

workers to reflect on their practice with the aid of a skilled person. Youth workers often work closely with vulnerable young people in situations which may be full of conflicting needs and emotional demands. Given this, I find it surprising that so many practitioners and their employers appear to regard supervision as an optional extra rather than a professional necessity.

We owe it to ourselves and to young people to take supervision seriously. Why do so many pay lip service to the value of supervision yet do not take part in it on a regular basis? Could it be a wish to avoid the vulnerability which reflection on practice often involves? Or, more disturbingly, do they '...find nothing in the world of practice to occasion reflection'? (Schon, 1983: 69).

Finally, perhaps the most important message we can draw from Tash's work concerns the values which it upholds and exemplifies about youth work practice; values which are, I think, currently under threat. Embedded in Government policy is a view of young people as disaffected, socially excluded and generally 'in deficit'. With the advent of Connexions, and similar initiatives youth workers are in danger of adopting these categories, leading, inevitably, to working more and more prescriptively with young people, creating dependency, and viewing them in terms of 'targets to be met' rather than as unique individuals.

Joan Tash's study demonstrates a very different approach to practice centred on working with, rather than on people; valuing their uniqueness and autonomy; affirming their right to learn at their own pace and in their own way; and their ability to take responsibility for themselves. It seems to me that unless youth workers can experience this process for themselves, in the way they are trained, supervised and managed, then they are unlikely to put such values into action in their work with young people.

Mary Crosby *teaches at YMCA George Williams College.*

Note

'Supervision in Youth Work' by Joan Tash is about to be reprinted by the YMCA George Williams College. Further details can be obtained from Kevin Robinson on 0207 540 4909, email k.robinson13@ymca.ac.uk, or by post to the College at 199 Freemasons Road, Canning Town, London E4 9PY.

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Alan Marlow and John Pitts (eds)
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Judith Million

Given the somewhat frenetic pace of change in the world of community safety, one could be forgiven for thinking that events may have overtaken this book since it was first published in 1998. This would be far from true. Alan Marlow and John Pitts have skilfully combined an eclectic mix of commentators, academics, policy makers and practitioners united around their central theme, that of planning safer communities. In so doing, they have produced a text that is as relevant today as it was then.

The book falls neatly into three sections. The first section addresses the central question of how statutory crime and disorder partnerships can translate strategies into meaningful action that makes a real difference on the ground. The reader is reminded forcibly that crime does not occur in a vacuum and that an understanding of the social context at both local and national level is an essential pre-requisite for developing preventive strategies. Equally, as Helen Edwards (Chapter 1) and Jock Young (Chapter 2) remind us, whilst the focus of crime and disorder legislation is quite properly at local level, action to tackle factors that place people at risk of crime, such as social exclusion, substance misuse and poor school attainment, needs to take place at several levels. Essentially, local action needs to take place within an enabling and supportive national framework. Imaginative local projects on their own are simply not enough.

Andrew Elvin and John Marlow explore the essentially political nature of community safety with considerable insight. The transient nature of powerful support will strike a chord with many a community safety practitioner, as will the dangers in raising public expectations through consultation and dialogue. The discussion of the relationship between community safety and strategies to involve the public provided by Usman Khan is a must for those tasked with developing a systematic 'joined up' approach to generating and sustaining dialogue with the public. At a time when members of the public are being consulted about a whole raft of policy initiatives this common sense practical discussion has much to commend it, as has Steve Osborne's straightforward approach to the thorny issue of evaluation.

Section 2 of the book brings together a stimulating series of contributions that focus on young people both as victims and perpetrators of crime and anti-social behaviour. As the editors point out 'the section concerns a group of people who will constitute a major target for any community safety strategy'. Through examination of the research and exploration of practical examples the complex interrelated factors that place young people at risk of crime and victimisation are highlighted. The contributors both individually and collectively support the irrefutable logic underpinning the case for 'joined up' thinking and working at all levels in this critical area.

The 'inclusion' of marginalised children and young people is threaded throughout. John Pitts' analysis of the erosion of citizenship as it relates to young people at risk of, or involved in, youth crime in this country provides a telling critique of the social and economic policies of the 1980s and 1990s. The theme of marginalisation is taken up by Philly Desai in his discussion of a violent incident in North London and the nature of agency responses to it. The section concludes with a thought provoking piece on child prostitution that gets to the heart of a very emotive issue.

The final section of the book is a more challenging but nevertheless very worthwhile read. Tim Hope contextualises contemporary approaches to crime reduction and community safety and explores the implications and challenges for local governance in the 'new public duty' being placed upon local authorities.

With the advent of centrally determined crime reduction targets, many partnerships are grappling with the question as to how far national targets and local strategies can be meaningfully aligned. In this context, the 'view from the street' provided by Kate Evans is a timely reminder that communities are not homogenous; what might be appropriate in one neighbourhood would be irrelevant in another. She explores community dynamics and argues for the importance of locally determined strategies which reflect the unique dimensions and needs of disparate neighbourhoods.

Alex Hirschfield and Kate Bowers describe a truly evidence based approach to tackling anti-social behaviour at local level. The approach is certainly worthy of broader application, although it does pre-suppose a level of sophistication in terms of data analysis and mapping which is as yet an aspiration rather than a reality for many statutory partnerships. Beyond the technical aspects of this work, there is undeniable appeal in work that is demonstrably effective in reducing anti-social behaviour and has positive outcomes for young people.

In summary, this text is well worth the investment. It deserves a place on the bookshelf of every community safety practitioner. Not only is it a worthwhile read, it provides an accessible point of reference on many contemporary issues in community safety.

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Janet Batsleer and Beth Humphries (eds)
Welfare, Exclusion and Political Agency
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pp 253

Mark Geslik

This volume is based on a collection of papers written by staff and former students at the Department of Applied Community Studies at Manchester Metropolitan University. There are chapters exploring a wide variety of social welfare issues and debates, for example around issues of immigration, exclusion from school, children at risk, sexualities, welfare work in prisons as well as chapters exploring more general issues such as citizenship, social exclusion and critical and reflective practice in the social welfare field.

The introduction outlines the key aims of the book. Firstly to explore the uses of post-structuralist theorising for contemporary social welfare. Secondly, to examine the possibility of developing a critical practice amongst practitioners at a time when increasing managerialism has eroded much of the professional autonomy and radicalism of the social work profession.

One appeal of this volume is that the editors' introduction and several chapters argue, (quite rightly in my view), that at present there is a real need for the re-establishment of a critical and radical social work which interrogates the sorts of policy and practice being promoted by the present government. Certainly, those with experience of working in the state education system, and no doubt other areas of welfare, will feel a real sense of déjà vu on reading these chapters. Many of the papers document the restructuring of welfare services and the growing disillusionment and powerlessness of those working in these fields.

Another theme running through the book that many readers will find familiar as well as interesting is how social, material and cultural exclusion influences the lives of many people today and has numerous implications for professional practice in the welfare services. For example the chapter by Tuck examines 'harm to children' and how the long-term experience of multiple disadvantage contributes to such problems. The Chapter by Humphries provides an account of the shifting debates around immigration and the work of welfare professionals in this arena. In particular she explores the usefulness of various interpretations of inclusion/exclusion for this important field of study and professional practice.

However this reader did find several problems with the volume. The most obvious of these being that few of the chapters actually reflect the supposed key themes of the book which were set out by the editors' introduction. Most of the papers fail to engage in any systematic way with post-structuralist theorists- so the reader is left wondering how such theory could be of use to either academics of practitioners in the welfare field- I suspect such theorists are not always that useful!

Moreover, Humphries' chapter, like others, discusses the issue of the values which underpin social work and how some form of radical professional practice may be aided by a crisis in global capitalism. These comments only serve to make the volume seem dated (the book was no doubt edited during the slump in Japan and Far East during 1998). But also, to this reader at least, it felt as if I had been transported back to the 1960s and the naïve discussions of how popular protest could somehow undermine the capitalist system.

There are also other weaknesses with the book. For example, Tuck's chapter on self-harm has a number of elementary problems, namely that the author explores research into self-harm in relation to socio-economic factors yet fails to provide any insight into what is meant by self-harm. Moreover, he repeatedly refers to his own doctoral work to support his arguments yet offers the reader few details of this research.

Cockburn's chapter gives an historical account of children and citizenship yet presents the emergence of education systems in a rather mechanistic way - more like the traditional political economy of Bowles and Gintis (1976) than a more up to date post-structuralist informed work. Consequently he neglects how struggle and competing interest groups are at the heart of any historical analysis of educational reform- the sort of approach that the standard texts in this area, (written by those such as Margaret Archer, [1979] and Andy Green, [1990]) have developed over the past 20 years.

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Packman's chapter on school exclusion includes a rather crude typology of how one could explain the growth in those being excluded from school. However in discussing this issue she neglects the now large literature on schooling, difference and identity which is central to recent debates on school exclusion. Moreover, throughout the chapter she employs rather problematic concepts such as 'alienation from school' and the 'hidden curriculum', concepts which most researchers in education now avoid. The use of such typologies and concepts also seems at odds with the supposed post-structuralist approach of the book.

On balance I imagine some readers may find this a useful text, for example undergraduates and practitioners in the many fields within social welfare who are seeking an introductory overview of literature within a particular area of research and practice. However, in several chapters there are some serious omissions in the literature review and in places key arguments need further development in order to be sustainable. The book is also poorly edited so that it lacks coherence and fails to do what the authors claim for it in their introduction. Now these criticisms may stem from the reviewer's background as an academic sociologist who teaches general sociology, youth studies and modules around education. I also appreciate the hard work that goes into producing such a volume and do not wish to unnecessarily criticise such work. Nevertheless, the issues which this volume supposedly set out to explore are important ones and warrant investigation- unfortunately most readers will have to go elsewhere to do this.

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Martin Woodhead, Dorothy Faulker and Karen Littleton (eds)
Making Sense of Social Development
Open University/Routledge, 1998
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pp 288

John Player

In many ways the disciplines presented in this text are outwith my ken (especially social psychology). However, as a Community Educator in Edinburgh, I have had to engage with the notion of Family Literacy (Partly for resource/structurally driven reasons). For, as Auerbach (Heywood, J, ed. 2000) commented, 'Family Literacy is the new "designer" literacy'. It is seen as a state of the art way of connecting parents and children by promoting the literacy development of both. However, its more radical proponents (Auerbach 1989) articulate a socio-cultural perspective of this text.

One of the central themes of this book, is the importance of seeking children's perspectives, as active meaning-makers in specific socio-cultural contexts. This book is about children's social development during the school years, especially their peer relationships, playground behaviour, moral understanding and social competence. Again, as a Community Educator in Edinburgh, I have been experiencing the impact of the Osler Report (1999), which has informed a major review of the Community Education Service around three themes. These themes being Active Citizenship, Lifelong Learning and Social Inclusion. Of particular interest to me about this text is the proposal that the notion of Active Citizenship is as an important concept to children as it is to adults. Short, Burman and Haste in the section on moral development are helpful in their critique of the (non-mandatory) cross-curricular theme of citizenship promoted in schools. This has been described by Haste as supportive of the status quo and by Carr as 'depoliticised'. It has also been criticised for promoting passivity. Short makes the astute point that research has demonstrated that concepts of democracy, leadership and accountability of government were accessible to 9 year olds and, as importantly, research has also debunked myths by showing that 4 year olds are not only sensitive to racial differences but they can also express racist remarks. The point being made by Short, Burman and Haste is that there is a need for a definition of political literacy and active citizenship that pays regard to the political capabilities of young children. Inherent in their critique of the

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manner in which citizenship has been broached on the curriculum is that children's development is constrained and guided by a series of universal developmental stages.

The theoretical roots of children's developmentalism are, of course, linked most often with the name of Jean Piaget. It was Piaget who provided the best known description of cognitive development as a series of discrete stages, each defined in terms of specific cognitive structure (or unique way of understanding the world) and associated with an appropriate age range. According to his account, most children under the age of 7 or so are incapable of logical thought. To contradict these Piagetian theoretical roots the authors, Short, Burman and Haste, rely, in the main, upon the work of Vygotsky. Haste maintains that Vygotsky saw the individual adult and child, as an active agent, making sense and constructing meaning within a social and a cultural environment. This differs from what Burnman describes as the argument intrinsic to Piaget's thesis documented in his *The Moral Judgement of the Child* (1932). In this work, Piaget held that most moral rules children learn are imposed and enforced on us ready-made by adults. Vygotsky, on the other hand, portrays children as active meaning-makers in specific socio-cultural contexts. The theoretical fusion to resolve the contradictions resulting from the unversalism of Piaget's theories and the relativism of culturally specific theorists exploring child development is then a synthesis based on Vygotsky work. In many ways this dialogue mirrors the debate underpinning post-structuralism and structuralism. However, as someone who would advocate the mining of the insights of post-structuralism and post-modernity for the emancipatory and, indeed, socialist project, the resolution of the dialectic proposed by Haste is a touch disappointing as it falls at the feet of a neo-pluralist perspective.

With that philosophical rant off my chest, the text begins to deal with issues that are, perhaps unconvincingly, addressed by the neo-pluralism and that is a discourse about power. The power relations inherent in the classroom and playground are discussed and issues of bullying, teasing, aggression and struggles between rival groups individuals are dealt with. Smith, Bowers, Binney and Cowie review research into the relationships of children involved in the bully/victim problems at school. They conclude that the social skills deficit model in relation to bullies is, in the main, unhelpful and would suggest that some bullies are deliberately pursuing goals that humiliate others publicly and downplay others' feelings, possibly for their own advantage. This dichotomy between the social skills

deficit model and the authors preferred model lead to differing prescriptions. They, Smith, Bowers, Binney and Cowie, would therefore advocate strategies that may include moral development programmes but would also create an institutional and peer environment that sanctions against, rather than condones, the kinds of continuing hurtful actions that occur in bully/victim relationships. Cowie also believes that young people themselves can, and indeed do, play an active part in reducing bullying, to the benefit of bullies, victims and themselves. This may seem obvious or axiomatic, however, it is worth remembering what is at stake here. In a study carried out by Glasgow University it was surmised that around a third of 11 to 16 year-old boys and 8% of girls in Scotland have carried weapons (Boseley & Seenan 2000). At the risk of further demonising young people and giving in to cheap sensationalism, the point here is that unless young people are supported in devising strategies to overcome our deeply abusive culture that promotes this bully/victim relationship then young people will continue to devise 'armed' strategies as a psycho-social response to inequality and inequity.

To briefly conclude, I feel that this text raises important issues especially regarding political education, power relations, children and active citizenship. Moreover, the text sets out to effectively dethrone Piaget and offer alternative theoretical models that recognise young people as active participants, and as principal stakeholders in the developmental process. As importantly, intrinsic to this socio-cultural perspective is a clarion call to education for democratic citizenship. In fact, more than education for citizenship, the authors call for an education for active and critical citizenship. This call is not out with my ken especially with the recent development of a Scottish Parliament but more importantly it underpins my hope and aspirations, as a Community educator, for the flowering of models of direct democracy that would encompass children and young people.

__John Player__ is a Community Educator working in Edinburgh.

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Bob Holman
Kids at the Door Revisited
Russell House Publishing, 2000
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£13.95 (pbk)
pp 105

Jonathan Roberts

This is an encouraging book for anyone who has done youth work or neighbour work. Bob Holman has gone back to meet people he worked with 15 years ago. The book describes them and how they have got on. This in itself is fascinating. But the main point of the book is to ask whether the work Bob and his colleagues did between 1976 and 1986 made a difference to their life chances.

There are no excessive claims made for the work in terms of innovative practice and many people who were involved in similar work will recognise the curious collection of resources and the standard repertoire of mugs of hot water, conversation, games, trips out, and times away. In fact, there is an awareness of the lack of overt agendas about gender and race, which might look inadequate today. There is some number crunching to reflect on the life chances and actual outcomes of the 51 people he tracks down. This is modestly done, noting that there is no control group. But the numbers quietly help us to take a step back from the drama of the young people's lives so that we can soberly assess connections between the work and the lives they have led. This modestly speaks for generations of youth workers who have quietly got on making a difference to the lives of those they work with.

But out of this ordinary looking material Bob Holman draws our attention to some vital and extraordinary conclusions. The young people he worked with were given the chance to find more stable relationships, better prospects of not offending, fewer chances of drug and alcohol abuse and better work prospects. These are key outcomes for this government's concerns about social exclusion. You need to read the detail of the stories of these young people because the truth of the claim lies in these very normal British lives. I was convinced that the connection between the interventions made by the neighbourhood project and the difference to people's lives is real.

Bob Holman challenges working practices - especially management and funding regimes - which expect evaluation to take place within a few months or a year taking no account of the long view. This study offers

evaluation over 20 years. Anxiety we may have about insights based on a shorter period is replaced with confidence in the light of his research. The old stud *Born to fail* which also used a big picture, suggested inevitability about poverty's reproduction down the generations. This is challenged by what he describes.

He also challenges the over-specialism of community and youth work that takes a particular group or target and is only interested in them. The picture of work responsive to the neighbourhood's people and agenda is in contrast to this. He criticises his own work saying that it was not responsive enough to the neighbourhood and has learnt in Easterhouse to be more careful about imposing external agendas. For me, this showed the paradox of a government that advocates joined up thinking while seeking very tightly managed outcomes. I hear Bob Holman arguing that if the work were done with greater respect for the people who are the focus of so much concern the outcomes would be achieved in ways that were kinder and more effective. I hear his ex-youth group saying that it would be more fun and inspiring too. Bob Holman takes on the short sharp shock approach of Jack Straw's legislation and the contribution of *Surporting families.* These points are characteristically well put, and it is a measure of the debate and attempt to build effective policy that the material Bob Holman offers has wider implications in current and forthcoming areas of government work.

There is a further interesting strand to the book: that of a Christian trying to do something about what he believes. How unlike the aggressive recruiting admen of much of the churches' work! He expresses a conviction that each person has dignity and that the poor are to be in a central place in the life of Christians. He puts life into the words that are heard at Christmas 'dwelt among us', presenting clearly the nature of living long-term in estates of deprivation and arguing for the work to be done in that way. He tells how an ordinary group of Christians in the local church managed to express their faith plainly and with integrity to offer values and a connection with the faith to others. There is the interesting case of a young man in a difficult state of illegal and antisocial behaviour for whom a conversion to Christianity was an opportunity to start over again and offer new things to others. Bob Holman and his own family offered their own lives to make the ancient activity of hospitality come alive. Again and again the tiny acts of kindness, welcome, and friendship are the things that really seem to have been valued. Finally the book covers the period when *Faith in the City* came out and those involved in that will be interested to see how this fits with those insights and policies.

This is a good book for people doing the work and for people making the decisions. I am glad Bob Holman wrote it and I am pleased that Russell House continues to encourage this sort of reflection to be shared.

Jonathan Roberts *coordinates the Community Work Assessment Consortium for North East England.*

Roger Bullock, Daniel Gooch & Michael Little
Children Going Home: The Re-Unification of Families
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pp 261

Anna Whalen

It is widely known by Social Services Departments that the majority (87%) of children and young people who are looked after do return home to their families within 5 years, even if this is short-lived. However, whilst much attention has been given to the process by which children become looked after by local authorities, less has been given to the process by which they may return to their families and the features which can make a return a more visible plan. This book goes some way to filling that gap.

The authors are all researchers from the Darlington Social Research Unit and have updated an older text, *Going Home: The Return of Children Separated from their Families,* (1993) to incorporate new indicators used to predict the success of a child returning home.

The authors use several pieces of both primary and secondary research to create a text that is thorough and rich in detail, convincing because findings from intensive research done with 31 children and their families is then tested against much larger study cohorts and is compatible. Also, those factors that help to predict the likelihood of a child's return are explored in detail, then followed through in a retrospective study to give indications of which factors are the most critical to children returning home.

Most of the results were not particularly surprising, yet I found them fascinating because behind these lay simple home truths about the complexities of family life and the social work task. For example, the research reveals that whilst stress factors such as poverty, illness, single parenting and poor housing are predictors for a child to become separated from a

family, the resolution of such factors is not a significant indicator in their return home. The family's sense of being cohesive unit and the role of the child within it came up as strong prospective indicators with all three groups of children, the *early returners* (within 6 months), the *intermediate* returners (within 2 years) and the *long term returners* (within 5 years). There are also interesting differences between these three groups in terms of predictive and retrospective indicators.

Whilst a child is looked after the authors identify factors that indicate a more likely return home. The overall theme is that of continuity, in terms of keeping sibling groups together, high levels of contact with the parent/family, remaining in the same school and maintaining contact with friends and extended family. All of these will, if in place, assist children to maintain a sense of identity and belonging with the family. Those children who *oscillate* between family and the local authority are also mentioned and comparisons drawn between this group and those who have more planned respite care. The data for both groups is remarkably similar.

Paradoxically, where a child becomes highly integrated into placement (with foster carers or a children's home) there is more likelihood of disruption for the child when they do return home. The authors briefly touch upon an innovative scheme with foster carers in the USA, which has produced some positive outcomes for children. Foster carers receive higher rates of payment if they work with the birth parents on restoring the child home; the enhanced focus on contact and the sense of purpose surrounding such a placement has given foster carers a higher level of personal satisfaction as well as assisted with a return home.

Children and adults are often worried about change and for those who are looked after, changes back at home can be a source of great anxiety. Most children tend to imagine the family situation as static whilst they are away from it. But when children or young people return home, they may be going to a changed family structure, new stepsiblings and parent, a new baby, a new house. These factors are not necessarily negative, but will be difficult to adapt to. Of the *intermediate returners* only 38% will return to an unchanged family home. Clearly regular contact with the family will alleviate some of the difficulty in adjusting to the changes.

The return home is a very stressful time for all concerned and after an initial *honeymoon* period, the authors go on to describe *the row*, which can actually assist the family in adjusting to the new situation. The expectations that parents have about how difficult and anxious this time

will be is again a strong predictor of the likely success of a return home. The role a social worker plays is critical here in helping the families to prepare for the emotional roller coaster once a child comes home.

In addition to major changes, those which are seemingly minor in the scheme of things, are hugely significant to children and young people. Furniture that has been moved in a child's bedroom, re-decoration, toys or clothes disappearing can be highly symbolic to a child and affect the way they view their role and position within the family.

The social worker's role with the family is referred to throughout the text in relation to the process of return. For example, if the child was removed from the home in a crisis and against the wishes of the parent, this can taint the way the parent views any further intervention and may affect the level of contact with the child, which in itself is a critical factor. Keeping siblings together and promoting contact, planning with parents and child the return home are all daily tasks for social workers. The authors point out that an approach which excludes parents from decision making and values formal power over informal negotiation, is one which will severly jeopardise the chance of a return home.

The market for the book is social workers and the other professionals associated with the care of children and young people in need. However, given the time pressures on these professionals and the paucity of such books within many Social Services Departments, it is unlikely that its valuable contribution will be realised widely. A distillation of the findings, available for training purposes, would be a useful source and could be achieved easily, as most chapters have succinct conclusions and summary points and there are comprehensive checklists.

The re-focussing agenda for Social Services Departments across the country and the Quality Protects programme introduced by the Department of Health in 1998 makes this book a timely additional source of information for those working with children and young people who are looked after or accommodated by a local authority. There is a wealth of information within the text that will be welcome food for thought for those concerned with restoring children home.

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M Chakrabati & M Hill (eds)
Residential Child Care
International perspectives on links with families and peers
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Derek W. Hall

This is quite a clever little book which, overall, tries to aggregate a good argument for the retention and development of maintaining strong family and friendship links with young people who find themselves, for whatever reasons, in residential care. As the title says, it uses an International perspective in order to give the reader an insight into how some nations and cultures try to tackle this issue. It was literally assembled from a number of workshop papers discussed at a conference in Glasgow, *Dreams and Realities*, in 1996.

Malcolm Hill provides the two opening chapters - the first of which seeks to put residential child care in an appropriate, although rather generalised, context - whilst the second is more specific in looking at his anaysis of its 'inclusiveness'. What is somewhat strange at the outset though, is the fact that, whereas the first chapter is written in clear and quite precise language, the second appears at times to ramble with the text seemingly littered with both jargon and relatively needless 'academic' words. The point is, contextually, that for the bulk of those who might read and be able to best benefit from this book in terms of being better practitioners, the more easily understandable the theories and propositions, the more expediency might be used in enacting them. Nevertheless, Hill initially explains how residential child care has changed over the last few decades in the UK. He shows, for example, how not only have the numbers of children who are being looked after, residentially, been drastically reduced over the last generation, so too (perhaps understandably) have the actual numbers in each residential home (now no longer classed as units) dropped significantly. And, as he shows how the lengths of placement have also vividly shortened, on the one hand, he is equally adept at explaining how the nature of residents has moved away from being generally 'difficult' towards the much more serious concern surrounding 'developmental and behavioural problems'.

The book then splits into a number of diverse, but relevant, dimensions which look, as earlier heralded, at some international perspectives relating to residential care. A services manager from the Perth and Kinross district

(Andrew Turnbull) gives a very good account as to how that part of Britain has radically changed its outlook by starting to acknowledge the rather simple, yet massively important, factor that different needs require different treatments. Thus, they now seek to provide residential care for young people in groups of no more than two or three residents. They had learned the fundamental truth that, where large numbers of children were being looked after together - and due to their differing age groups, problems and desires - the youngsters could effectivley control their care establishment through the practising of negative behaviours. This, in turn, made their enviroment unsafe. Turnbull is quite keen to point out that, in Scotland, the ability to modernise child care thinking is rooted in the astute creation of the Children's Hearings section of the Social Work (Scotland) Act of 1968 which enabled the work being done with children and families to move away from a confrontational model, towards one which concentrated upon the welfare of the children themselves - and this piece of legislation is equally very much seeded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In all, he claims that the modern approach adopted led to such beneficial things as: staff having more clarity about their roles as they embarked upon a greater use of intergrated networking with many other agents and agencies (especially parents and families); more job satisfaction for the staff, not least because of the reality that care plans could actually be properly implemented; greater freedom for both staff and young people (in the sense that neither felt 'tied' to specific buildings); less chances of placement breakdown; and so, less 'incentives' for young people to feel the need to abscond.

Sadly, however, the international perspectives covered are drawn from a somewhat narrow band in that two are taken from Australia, with one each from Canada, North America, and Israel. To be fair, though, there is no pretence that these examples should be viewed as being somehow exhaustive - and those looked at do have relevant things to declare. For example, the chapter written by Nova Fariss gives a political insight into how a non-governmental agency, the Uniting Church, essentially seeks to return children to their families rather than pursuing a policy of almost apparenly accepting that, due to whatever reasons such children are in care, then the solution must be to put the greater part of the care effort into 'corporate parenting' by the state and/or its agencies. And she expounds that this is at least partially down to the fact that Australia, which has a federal administration, hasn't yet decided to devolve statutory child and family services (or powers relating to these), down to the levels of local

governance. Other points to note include: the bewildering fact that the contemporary legislation in this field dates back to an Act of 1947; and the awful statistic that, as with ethnic minorites globally, the numbers of Aborigines in care amounts to 25% of the national total, despite them making up only 4% of its population. Nevertheless, the other Australian outlook reveals a different aim altogether. This one, described by Father Denis Halliday (who sadly died during his work on this chapter), looked at the use of an apporach in which the basic view seemed to be to give parents the opportunity to get closer to their 'other' children whilst those of their own offspring posing problems were managed elsewhere. Thus, at Boys' Town (in Sydney), the emphasis is put on reassessing and realigning relationships through the nurturing of 'trust and respect'; but there is also an acceptance that there are bound to be difficulties with this model when it comes to the issue of 'reintegration'.

Whilst the Canadian perspective (offered by Ridgely and Carty) goes along the lines of that of the Uniting Church, in the sense that it too puts its emphases on the desire to keep young people within their families, instead of in care - and with The North American discussion (by Irene Stevens) technically suggesting that such an outlook is unrealistic by highlighting the point that, for most young people in care, there is virtually no such thing as a 'nuclear' family - it is extremely illuminating to read from Nechama Gluck on how the Israelis deal with this predicament. Over there, it is perhaps unsurprising to learn that, in a nation which is known for its use of the *Kibbutz* programme (not least for reasons of political survival), it is to a very similar *Mifal* model upon which they rely. I'm quite sure that, for most of us who might think we live in supposedly open and democratic societies (in which liberty and free speech is said to be sacrosanct), the idea of a massively communal programme for looking after children who have not been able to live with their nuclear families may seem at least a little abhorrent.

Yet in Israel, where no effort is spared in trying to maintain the nuclear family structure, it still comes as something of a shock to learn that the *Mifal* is based upon perhaps as many as 200 young people living together (in up to 20 units of 10 children in specific age-related groups). But the evidential outcomes show that, unlike in Britain (for instance) where generally four-fifths of the youngsters leaving care tend to end up metaphorically almost *'in the gutter'* (my emphasis) so to speak, in Israel a staggering 91% of *ex-Mifal* children end up in education, employment or national service.

Hence, this book is throughly recommended as an enlightening and educational tool with which those involved in the field of working with children and families - at whichever level, be it from commissioning senior management down to elementary residential social worker - can observe how a variety of others both perceive and deal with the problems of trying to understand and ameliorate the plights of young people in residential care.

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Bob Franklin (ed)
Social policy, the Media and Misrepresentation
Routledge, 1999
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pp 287

Steve Rogowski

As a social worker I am only too well aware of how the media has mis-represented our work, notably in the fields of child protection and youth justice. Concerning the former we are seen as unjustifiably taking away children from their families or of being dithering busybodies too slow to act, and concerning the latter we are seen as being soft on crime and not taking it seriously. This book looks at these issues in the wider context of media representation of social policy as a whole, with issues such as homelessness, poverty, education, health and disability also examined. What is particularly worrying is that this misrepresentation takes place in the political context of a government committed to promoting policy by media advertising and news management, and the book also argues that the reporting of social policy represents a growing problem for democratic states where citizens are poorly served by the media with information about policy issues.

There is a useful introduction by the editor where he notes that social policy does not normally make the news unless there is a crisis and that this neglect is curious because: public expenditure on social policy is substantial; social policy has significant implications for every citizen; social policy is a key concern for media audiences especially during

elections; and social policy is a central ingredient in all governments policy agendas. It is also important to emphasise that media reporting is central to the *construction* as well as the reporting of crises with, for example, headlines concerning unemployment and homelessness being able to transform these problems into panics about scroungers and beggars. Such reporting also has the ability to stimulate policy developments not least in relation to youth crime, a point I will return to.

Franklin goes on to show how misleading messages about social policy have been exacerbated by two recent developments. Firstly the 'dumbing down' of the news in an increasingly competitive media market has led to a revision of editorial priorities in which the need to entertain has superseded the need to inform. And secondly, the shift in national newspaper allegiances since the 1990s from the Conservatives to New Labour, albeit the Murdoch press is hostile to collectivist solutions to social problems; this is in turn now finding congruence with New Labour.

In examining the media reporting of social policy and its influence on the policy making and implementation, this book evaluates three perspectives on the role of the media in the policy process of democratic states. Firstly, as a critical watchdog of government and its activities, with the relationship between journalist and politicians seen as essentially adversarial; this leading to accountable and responsible government. Secondly, as a conduit for the flood of information emanating from government, with the journalist-politician relationship being seen as collusive. And thirdly, many journalists instead see the pressure of deadline, availability of information, shortage of space and programme time, and the like, as shaping news media content - 'cock up' rather than 'conspiracy' rules!

Moving on, there are many chapters in this book that are worth a read but two were of particular interest to me. Muncie looks at media, politics and criminal, in particular youth, justice highlighting how the Bulger case of 1993 was a watershed in the media and political response to youth crime. In fact there were three related consequences: it saw the change of the social construction of ten year olds as 'demons' rather than 'innocents''; it coalesced with and helped mobilise a moral panic about youth crime in general; and it legitimised a series of tough law and order responses to young offenders which are still with us. Jordan also stresses the importance of the Bulgar case, tracing the origins of New Labour's communitarianism, a conversion to notions of responsibility, obligation and community, to the media response to the murder. Briefly, this form

of communitarianism is 'backward looking, nostalgic, authoritarian and focused on social control' and 'drives New Labour's Programme'. The Bulgar killing epitomised Thatcher's economic individualism, and when there is no such thing as society, community had to be re-created. Major tried with 'back to basics' and now Blair, supported by the media, mounts his moral crusade.

Other chapters that will be of particular interest to readers of this journal cover, for instance, images of young people in care, education and the media (by Tony Jeffs) and media representations of homelessness. As an example, West argues that press reporting of care is part of a continuum of tales about children and young people in care which ranges from nostalgic ideas of childhood to a notion of children out of control. From this, children and young people in care are especially demonised and associated with courts and crime, and during this process the nature of care itself is simplified and the characters of children and young people in care are homogenised.

This then is a likable book; a collection of chapters by academics, journalists and broadcasters; well put together and easy to read. It should appeal to all those interested in social policy and media studies.

Steve Rogowski *is a Social Worker in North West England.*

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