

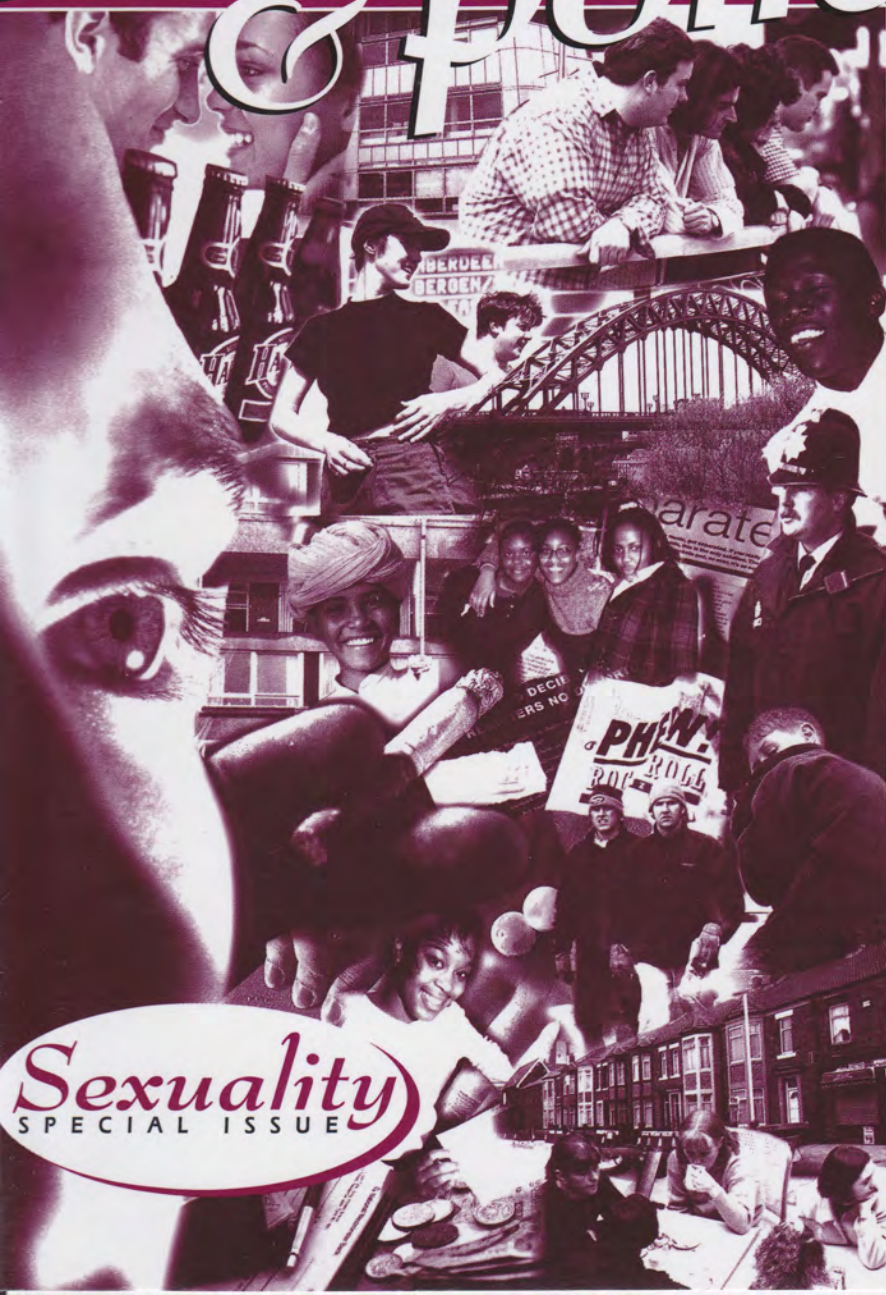
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EDITORIAL

JANET BATSLEER

My inspiration in asking *Youth and Policy* for space to edit an issue dedicated to perspectives on the experience of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people came from the work of the lesbian, gay and bisexual project at Forty Second Street Manchester. Julia Horn and Richard Moosebally were the pioneer workers at the project when it opened six years ago, in what must have been one of the first examples of the recruitment of 'out' lesbian and gay staff to a generic young people's project. Both have recently moved on, leaving a well-established project which now exists in the context of a network of provision for young lesbian, gay and bisexual young people in Manchester. Most of this provision is based in lesbian, gay and bisexual specific organisations. It remains unusual for lesbian, gay and bisexual perspectives to be rendered visible in the mainstream.

This issue of *Youth and Policy* contains articles on the position of lesbian, gay and bisexual youth in the United Kingdom, by both well-established and younger scholars who are committed to research which will enable better informed policy development and practice. The articles provide a broad mapping of the issues as they are currently being formulated. It is hoped that this focus will stimulate further practitioner and policy-based writing. In a movement which parallels that occurring in practice, lesbian and gay scholarship is increasingly visible across higher education and, as some of the articles here document, this visibility has positive material and emotional as well as intellectual effects for many young students.

I am pleased that these articles suggest some of the diversity of experience of young lesbian, gay and bisexual people in the United Kingdom as well as tracking some common issues of visibility/invisibility, the 'heteronormativity' of the school environment, the nature of family support and family pressure, and questions of transition which include issues of housing and homelessness, work and education. It should be clear to readers that young lesbian, gay and bisexual people are growing up in every school and every neighbourhood and that issues of class position and educational opportunity impact on them in ways that can have a significant effect on the possibility of making a positive transition to an adult gay lesbian or bisexual identity. This is particularly evident in the article by Prendergast, Dunne and Telford. It will be clear too - and it still needs saying - that not all lesbians, gays, and bisexuals are 'white' or are growing up in the majority ethnic communities. Valentine, Skelton and Butler's article includes evidence of lesbian experience within D/deaf culture and is a powerful example of a research team's commitment to inclusivity, challenging invisibility in ways from which other researchers in 'youth studies' could learn a great deal.

One of the difficulties of the 'social exclusion' focus of current UK social policy lies in the issue of what it renders visible and pathologises, and what it renders invisible in the experience of young people. The question of visibility is addressed in a number of articles and clearly, becoming visible as lesbian, gay and bisexual young people in a context of love and support or at least of safety is a matter of major importance. All too often becoming visible remains dangerous, and becoming visible - as what? - is a question posed over and over again. In any process of queer becoming, the existing categories through which sexuality has been defined for us are called into question. Currently the increasingly visible experience of transgendered young people is reminding us of this, if any reminder was needed.

Although the notorious Section 28 remains on the statute books there is little excuse for practitioners in schools to continue to resist 'joined-up' working now that the age of consent has been equalised. The split which bedevils social policy thinking both in Government and in Universities between Education and the rest of social policy needs to be overcome if the serious issues about homophobic bullying raised by Rivers and Duncan are to be addressed. Models of good practice, such as those occurring in Bolton and documented here, deserve wide circulation.

The intellectual work posed by the challenge to normativity of growing up happy and 'queer' needs to continue and in many ways this is only hinted at here. Casey's critique of the 'stages' model of gay identity finds an echo in the complexities of identity for ethnically minoritised young people. Sociological models of transition need to be transformed to address the 'invisibility paradox' and the convergence of sociological and psychosexual models on 'narrative' approaches promises to establish shared ground between disciplines which have found it hard to speak to each other in 'youth studies.' The creativity of work on sexuality, and of linked work on gender, which is indicated by the articles in this special issue is a relief from the only slightly modified functionalism of much current youth policy work.

One of the young men at Forty Second Street, Dan (aged 16) who worked with Richard Moosebally, offered the following insight, widely shared in the lesbian, gay and bisexual community, and deserving of attention in all future work in *Youth and Policy*:

I spent so much time hating myself for so long. I came out at 13, after going to Forty Second Street and seeing Richard. My mum lied to him about how old I was so I could come there. Most of my family thought it was a phase I was going through. After going there I realised I would not grow up to be a sad person. I have been out for three years. I have made new friends in this time, become more sociable, I am more confident in myself and my surroundings and I am not afraid to say that I am gay. Since I came out, me and my family

have become a lot closer and we have more in common. Thanks to Forty Second Street I am the person I am today. One of the first things I said to my sister when I came out was 'Why can't I be normal?' but now I realise I am normal. Being straight isn't normal, it's just common.

Janet Batsleer, Department of Applied Community Studies, Manchester Metropolitan University.

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THE VULNERABILITY AND MARGINALISATION OF LESBIAN AND GAY YOUTH:

Ways Forward

GILL VALENTINE, TRACEY SKELTON AND RUTH BUTLER

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a time when the labour market was severely depressed, structuralist explanations dominated understandings of the routes that young people follow into adulthood. The emphasis was on the way that young people's class positions shape their transitions from school to work. However, at the end of the 20th, and at the beginning of the 21st centuries, changes in the labour market, familial relations and class cultures are creating new life situations and biographical development patterns. Beck (1992) points out that the life-course is no longer structured around employment history with the consequence that the possible routes that young people can follow after school are becoming more varied. The decline in the influence of religion and the de-coupling of sex and child rearing from marriage and family life mean that young people are able to choose between a wider range of lifestyles, sub-cultures and identities. Yet, with these opportunities also come increased risks for young people, in the form of guilt or blame if they end up on the margins of society as a result of their choices.

This emphasis on the significance of individual action has contributed to recognition amongst researchers that youth are not a homogenous group (Cohen, 1997). Rather, there is increasingly acknowledgement that some groups of young people find the transitions to adulthood particularly difficult and as such are at risk of homelessness, unemployment, estrangement from their families and social isolation (Coles, 1997). The term 'vulnerable youth' has been employed to describe young people who are considered at particular risk of becoming socially excluded as they attempt to make employment, domestic and housing transitions (Coles, 1997: 81). One such group is young lesbians and gay men.

In this paper we begin by drawing on young people's own experiences of home, school and the lesbian and gay social scene to explore some of the processes through which this group can become marginalized. We then go on to consider the efforts of a range of service providers from the public and voluntary sectors to tackle some of these destructive processes, and to meet the needs of young lesbians and gay people. We conclude by suggesting some positive ways forward.

The material presented here is based on in-depth interviews¹ with 20 self-identified young lesbians and gay men aged 16 to 24 (5 of whom are D/deaf and 15 hearing), and retrospective interviews with 23 self-identified 'older' lesbians and gay men (5

of whom are D/deaf and 18 hearing) about their memories of this period and the significance that it had for the way their lives have subsequently mapped out. Six other young people also took part in email interviews and we worked with a lesbian and gay youth group, 'Outcry'. In addition to this research with young people we also interviewed 15 service providers (including housing officers, police liaison officers, health workers, youth center workers, careers officers, and representatives from various lesbian and gay information and support organizations) about their own responsibilities for, and involvement with, lesbians and gay youth. The research makes up part of a larger ESRC funded study titled *'Living on the Edge: the marginalisation and resistance of vulnerable youth'*. This has also included a second case study of another potentially vulnerable group, D/deaf heterosexual young people, and those that provide services and support for them, as well as a questionnaire survey of young people at school and college.

The interviewees were recruited from several places in an area that we will term 'the Midlands' by a combination of methods including: snowballing from multiple sources, advertisements on the Internet and in newsletters, and contact with a range of relevant support, advice and social groups. As such our respondents are drawn from a wide range of social backgrounds (in terms of their parents' social class, educational qualifications, housing situation, and employment status). They have also grown up in a range of different 'family' forms. These include conventional nuclear families, lone parent households, reconstituted families, and lesbian households. Of the 10 D/deaf interviews nine had grown up in hearing families and one in a D/deaf family. All the interviews, which were conducted in a place of the informants' choice, lasted between one and two hours. These were taped, transcribed, and then analysed using conventional social science techniques. Eight of the interviews with D/deaf young people were conducted in British Sign Language (BSL), through a fully qualified interpreter. The other two D/deaf interviewees opted to use oral methods (lip reading and speech) of communication.

As the diverse backgrounds of our interviewees imply 'family' is a problematic term because it conceals a complex and diverse range of household forms (Stacey 1990). In this paper, we employ 'family' as an umbrella term to cover the full range of social relations described above.

Lesbians and Gay Youth: Experiences of Marginalisation

Despite some signs that the general social climate in the UK is becoming more tolerant of lesbians and gay men, this tolerance does not equate with acceptance or approval. Rather, lesbians and gay men remain only partial citizens, excluded from formal rights including to the right to 'marry' and to bring a non-national partner into the country as a permanent resident. In turn the absence of these basic civil rights also

excludes sexual dissidents from wider social rights and material benefits, for example in relation to tax, inheritance etc. (Cooper, 1993, Richardson 1998). Moreover, because the legal, welfare and health systems are founded on the premise of heterosexuality, lesbians and gay men have no rights to anti-discrimination protection on the grounds of sexual orientation in relation to employment, housing, education and so on (Andermahr, 1992, Valentine 1996). As such young sexual dissidents grow up being shaped by, but simultaneously alienated from the social institutions, roles and norms of wider heterosexual society.

This is most evident in relation to the space of the school. Here the institutional presumption of heterosexuality is enforced by section 28 of the *Local Government Act* (1988). This states that 'a local authority shall not (a) intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality; and (b) promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship. Although, this law has never been evoked in practice it has strongly influenced the moral framework of sex education (Epstein and Johnston 1994). Within the classroom sexuality is constructed as a private matter that has no place in the context of the school. It usually only appears in the curriculum in relation to personal and social education where it is dealt with in the context of biological reproduction. This serves to silence other forms of sexualities (Quinivan, 1999) which are usually only referred to in language that is vague, unspecific and exclusionary (Buston and Hart, 2001). Notably, the tendency of HIV/AIDS education to align the disease with minority groups such as gay men rather than specific practices contributes to the pathologisation of homosexuality. This biological focus separates bodies from feelings which makes it hard for young people to relate to their experiences of relationships, emotions and sense of identity (Thomson, 1994).

This silencing and pathologising of same sex desires is also evident in pupils' own world of peer cultures and relations (Epstein and Johnson, 1994, 1998, Quinivan, 1999). Here, the premium placed on appropriate but limited performances of heterosexual masculinity and femininity is such that labels such as 'poof' and 'queer' are used as terms of abuse not only against young people who are known to be lesbian and gay but also those who do not fit in with hegemonic understandings of masculinity or femininity for other reasons (Mac an Ghail, 1996, Holloway et al. 1999). Indeed, children also use similar accusations of homosexuality in a derogatory way to harass individual teachers (Lahelma et al, 2000). If young lesbians and gay men experience homophobic bullying at school - which Rivers (1999) suggests is usually systematic, long term and by groups rather than individuals - they are often

reluctant to report it, suffering in silence. When young people do approach the school or their parents for help they usually fail to report its homophobic nature (Rivers 1999).

Not surprisingly as young people begin to recognize their sexuality - which is often identified first as a sense of being 'different' from their peers - they are usually very fearful of talking to anyone about how they feel. As such this can be a period of emotional confusion, uncertainty and loneliness.

Fiona:

I felt really isolated... just like really convinced that I was just evil and that I was just...just pure sin and that, cos it's like an old Christian community and there's loads of churches and that, and was like oh shit
(young lesbian, aged 20).

The sort of isolation and self-disgust that Fiona describes can undermine young people's sense of self-esteem and self respect. This in turn can knock on to their academic performance. A study by Remafredi (1987) found that one fourth of gay young men surveyed dropped out of high school before graduation. Of those who remained at school 53 per cent reported a deterioration in their academic performance because of the personal difficulties that they were experiencing with their sexuality. This was both in terms of their own identity confusion and others' responses to it. Below Robbie explains how his identity troubles undermined his academic performance while Bob describes how homophobic bullying, which went unchallenged by his teachers, contributed to his underachievement at school.

Robbie:

I was good at the subject that I did [at university], I was really interested in it but because my mind was all over the place I couldn't devote enough energy into it. So I think that was a disadvantage 'cos I was like on my own and I was dealing with these issues which had never been brought up at school in any helpful way at all and I had no one around me who I knew [who] was going through the same sort of things
(young gay man aged 22).

Bob:

I got picked on...the teachers weren't bothered, you get to the stage where you think nobody cares about you, you've got people around you but you're still lonely and you get. It was quite bad at school and I just wanted to give up, I've had enough at school, it was like fine, if this is gonna keep up then I can't go through with it anymore. I can't. I can't keep living like this because it's awful, you get no support from anybody...I started out

with a bit of verbal bullying, you know 'oh you're this' you're that...then it got a bit physical, pushing and shoving...this was a bit more serious and a bit more nasty [later he returned to the same theme] it put me right off my studies, I used to really enjoy school up until I got into secondary school, I used to love it but then I got to secondary school and I hated it. I just wanted it to be over. I just thought I can't do this. I was glad the day I walked out, I know I got really, really poor grades...

(young gay man aged 20).

As Robbie's and Bob's accounts hint, the presence of lesbians and gay men in the classroom, and the destructive processes they encounter within it remain largely invisible.

In the face of personal or school problems young people usually turn to their families for support. Yet, lesbians and gay men are commonly reluctant to do so because they are fearful that if they come out they may be rejected by their parents, with all the emotional and material consequences that this entails; and because they do not want to cause their families any hurt. Bad familial reactions - at least initially - are commonplace. Even where parents respond relatively positively they often lack the experience and understanding to support their lesbian or gay offspring. In our study young people's experiences of coming out at home included a range of forms of rejection including: being physically assaulted by a brother, made homeless by parents/co-tenants, disowned, verbally abused, banned from contact with nieces and nephews and excluded from family events such as weddings and Christmas. Not surprisingly, many described resorting to destructive 'coping strategies' to handle the stress they felt, including: alcohol, drugs, self harm and even attempted suicide. Fiona and Bob describe some of these stresses, and the impact they had upon them.

Fiona:

...trying to live what you wanted me to live, to be who you wanted me to be cos I completely denied myself, I denied any self, completely, completely, absolutely...I think it stopped me developing emotionally I think it kept me quite emotionally immature for quite a long time...[later] I felt so bad about who I was and I didn't think I was worthy of being loved, I thought my mum loved me because she had to

(young lesbian, aged 20).

Bob:

I took an overdose, I'd absolutely had enough, I've really, really had enough but at the same time I was scared so I called the paramedics, called an ambulance and I was taken to hospital and I didn't want anything to do

with anybody, I blamed myself for how I'd been treated, plus my parents and other people, that they'd not been there for me...it was a cumulative effect, it was like a bubble burst basically, everything spilled out...I felt like I was drowning, felt that I was really drowning and nobody was there...
(young gay man, aged 20).

In the face of a lack of family support or domestic hostility, young lesbians and gay men are often reluctant to seek help from social agencies such as youth groups, housing associations, mental health organizations and the police. This is usually because they are afraid of coming out or are confused/uncertain about their sexual identity; they do not believe they will receive positive support because of a perception of homophobia amongst service providers; or they do not want to be 'out' in a predominantly heterosexual environment.

As a result young people often turn to the lesbian and gay community for support. For many this is a positive experience. The sense of shared identification with a 'community' - often dubbed a family of choice - can reinforce individuals' understandings of, and attitude to their own sexuality and become a catalyst for the adoption of a more positive attitude to wider society. Fiona explains the difference it has made to her:

Fiona:

I didn't have any confidence before I came here [to a lesbian, gay and bisexual youth group]. I had no self esteem, I had no, I hated myself, I hated everything. I just like I wasn't interested in anything I just wanted to curl up and just die you know, just like life isn't worth it, and I just like found myself...it's just like one long dream I have to pinch myself to make sure I'm not dreaming you know, it's like when I, when I stood up and read, read out my poem ...I was thinking fucking hell you know I didn't even know I was a poet until I came here. I didn't know I had any talent for writing and er music or art or nothing you know. And then I'm getting, I'm doing a piece of work at the moment in the art zone to do with expressing myself which is what we're gonna get shown in the art, art gallery, I've got two, three poems which could have a go at getting published in magazines I've read out and now I'm gonna be singing on Wednesday...everyone wants me, you know, its like people grabbing me left, right and centre, saying Fiona I need you...from everyone hating me and being hated and hating everyone you know to people liking and respecting em and just letting me be and accepting me for who I am ..and it's like we don't hate you you're one of us you know
(young lesbian, aged 20).

However, coming out on the scene for the first time if you do not know anyone can be a very frightening and uncomfortable experience. Bars and clubs can be particularly intimidating environments and as such are sites of risk and vulnerability for those who are sexually inexperienced. The form of risk varies for lesbians and gay men.

For gay men HIV is a potent threat. As an at risk group the gay community has been a target for safe sex information and education campaigns and as such gay communities are relatively rich in expertise about how to prevent the spread of the virus. Yet, despite this knowledge and familiarity with the risks they face, many gay men still do not put safe sex into practice. Research suggests that failure to do so is often involuntary or inadvertent, for example as a result of substance abuse (Meyer and Dean, 1995) or being overcome by desire (both consensual and 'rape') (Adam, Sears and Schellenberg, 2000). Having unsafe sex can also be a way of escaping negative feelings of sadness, loneliness, or a product of low self-esteem (i.e. a sense of having nothing to lose) (Adam, Sears and Schellenberg, 2000). Indeed, for some men unsafe sex can be practiced with self-destructive intent, an indirect form of suicide attempt.

All of these factors were evident in the accounts of the young men we interviewed, and also in the retrospective biographical interviews. The gay men's scene was described as a very sexualized environment where the emphasis is on sex rather than relationships. In this climate young men are a desirable commodity in the eyes of older men because their youth is indicative not only of physical attractiveness, but also of HIV negative status, as the quotations below illustrate.

Gordon:

I think young people are open to exploitation, you know it's a sexualized environment and erm, I think boys are probably at some risk in those places, and you know erm it does the gay scene in Sheldon overlaps with er the prostitution scene erm, there are rent boys doing the gay scene, er there are very young boys being served in those places...who shouldn't be allowed in there anyway....and then there are certainly kind of exploited, pimps who are running them...I just don't think that anyone is really looking out for those kids on the scene...it's a competitive scene and er, the premium is on youth, er I'm not saying everybody is out to screw little boys, but there is a premium on youth and erm there are a lot of people around with enough money to use their money, and with kind of vulnerable kids, working class kids

(gay man, aged 47)

Terry:

I think the only thing being young is you think if you go with a young guy it's like oh, then he won't have HIV or anything – that's the only type of danger that I seem to fall into, is that you judge sort of age with experience ...the likelihood of getting AIDS would be with an older person
(young gay man, aged 16).

While the nature of the scene means that most gay men feel under pressure to have casual sex, young gay men often lack the self-confidence and experience to say no to unwanted sexual encounters. Most of those we interviewed recalled being pushed into having sex. Thomas suggests below that this reflects the fact that gay teenagers do not have the same opportunities as their heterosexual counterparts to develop emotional and relationship skills before they embark on adult sexual relationships. Vinnie describes his vulnerability when he first went out on the scene:

Thomas:

I've talked to those who've been through school fairly recently still often pretend to have girlfriends and I think this has a negative effect on people's emotional development and relationships, it sort of curdles in a way while heterosexual people are experimenting and playing around with relationships and friendships...most gay people are pretending and hiding and devaluing themselves and being gay's a certain amount of self loathing, so that when eventually they come to start having relationships they haven't got this background and they've got to start experimenting and finding out about themselves, and it. it has a very negative effect on gay relationships generally still
(gay man aged 54)

Vinnie:

I mean at 15 I had my first boyfriend...I could go out tonight and somebody could come up to me and say can I buy you a drink? I think you're good looking would you mind coming back to my house and having sex with me, And if I was quite attracted to them I might consider the fact that I might go back with them. But if I didn't find them attractive, when I was 15/16 I was like OK and quite pushed into it. And felt quite horrid to make a decision. Now if someone comes up to me now and I think they're a pig I would go 'You are a pig get out of my face and leave me alone. And I did that on Monday
(young gay man aged 18).

These sorts of experiences can be particularly destructive for young people who may be confused or uncertain about their sexuality, wrestling with internal homophobia,

and suffering from low self-esteem. In this way rather than providing a safe space to develop confidence in their sexuality and pride in a gay identity, the gay scene can contribute to young men feeling bad about themselves. In turn this can exacerbate their consumption of alcohol and drugs and general patterns of self-destructive behaviour, including unsafe sex. Robbie describes the pressures on young men on the scene.

Robbie:

I think it can be quite destructive for like young people who just like go out on the scene and maybe have low self-esteem and so you know this is like, I'm talking from like personal experience as well, you sort of go out, you get dressed up and you want to pull somebody who's a bit nice and if you don't you get depressed, if you do you get depressed because you know it's sort of like just a sex thing and nothing else happens, nothing comes of it. It's very difficult to have a proper relationship and its sort of self feeding. Cos its like people who haven't sorted themselves would go to the scene to try and sort themselves out. It offers them the wrong sort of answers so they get more sort of fucked up or whatever it's a vicious circle and it affects how you feel about yourself, you know it affects your psychology, and...you're always expected to be like really up and bouncy and drunk...which is a lot of pressures on a young person when they've got internal pressure themselves (young gay man, aged 22).

For young lesbians the pressures on the scene often take a different form. Here, the weight of expectation is on young women to settle down into monogamous relationships. Once in couples women commonly withdraw from the social scene. This domesticity can be motivated by an anxiety on behalf of one or both partners that involvement on the scene might create opportunities for other women to break up their relationship. Young women commonly described the scene in terms of cliqueness, bitchiness and alcohol related violence. As a result some young women find themselves living in very isolated, often closeted households with little support for their developing sexual identity or relationship. As such they can be vulnerable to emotionally or physically abusive domestic relationships.

Cassie:

I'd heard it said that if you go out on the scene a lot you get your partner pinched, that was all anybody used to say about the scene. It was very shallow and if you go out on the scene a lot you're asking for trouble...the last two or three months I've just seen so many women that are prepared to stab other people in the back erm, try and pinch your partners...and I don't, erm, I'm not that keen on it really (a lesbian aged 27).

Megan:

I don't like going out on the gay scene, it's like well one minute everybody I'll be all smiles and nice and happy and then they'll go off and they'll be, come back, and it'll be a big row and then everybody I'll be, wanna kick everybody's head in

(young lesbian, aged 17).

The scene is also a potential space of risk for lesbians and gay men because the very act of going out at night to a lesbian or gay venue can expose them to the risk of homophobic violence (Herek and Berrill, 1992; Valentine 1993). This is because being in a particular place or space, dressing in 'camp' ways for a night out or being with a partner or group of friends can all mark individuals' embodied identities as lesbian or gay. A survey by Stonewall, the lesbian and gay rights group, conducted in 1996, found that of the 4200 respondents, 34 per cent of men and 24 per cent of women had experienced violence within the past 5 years. Five of those interviewed as part of this project had been attacked or been with a friend who had been assaulted in this way, while others described being verbally abused on the streets.

Stanko and Curry (1997) argue that, like women, lesbians and gay men are expected to regulate their own behaviour in order to avoid putting themselves at risk. For example, 88 per cent of the respondents to the Stonewall survey reported that they always avoided kissing or holding hands in public. As such gay men who are assaulted while cottaging are often reluctant to report their experiences to the police, both because they may have been breaking the law at the time and because the assault may be constructed as their own fault for acting irresponsibly. These fears are compounded by the fact that many men who use cottages do not actually identify as gay.

The evidence of this section of the paper therefore is that young lesbians and gay men encounter, or are fearful of encountering, homophobia at school, home, from support agencies and in public space. This has two major consequences. First, homophobia can contribute to young people's feeling bad about their own sexuality and developing low self-esteem or even self-loathing. These emotions can, in turn trigger self-destructive cycles of behaviour such as drinking, drug taking, unsafe sexual practices, self-harm and so on. Second, a fear of coming out or a bad coming out experience can alienate young lesbians and gay men from a range of institutions and forms of social support. This vulnerability is particularly evident in relation to the family – a traditional safety net and source of assurance for most heterosexual young people (Jones, 2000). In the face of such experiences of marginalisation or exclusion young lesbians and gay men often turn to the lesbian and gay community, a family of choice for support. While for some this is a very positive experience it can also expose young people to new gendered forms of risk.

In the following section we look at how the public and voluntary sectors respond to the needs and experiences of young lesbians and gay men, and how this service provision might be improved.

Service Providers: Meeting the Needs of an Invisible Group

In a recent survey of teachers, Warwick et al (2001) found that while 72 per cent of the respondents recognized that Section 28 of the Local Government Act does not make any discussion of homosexuality at school unlawful, nonetheless 44 per cent claimed that it did pose difficulties for them in meeting lesbian and gay pupils' needs. Indeed, 82 per cent of the respondents acknowledged that verbal homophobic bullying occurred in their schools and 26 per cent stated that homophobic physical bullying was present in their institution. Other studies suggest that few schools are prepared to address such behaviour. A survey by Reach Out (1999), a lesbian, gay and bisexual youth group in Reading UK, found that while all of the schools that returned its questionnaire had an equal opportunities policy, only 4 out of ten of these policies included sexuality. Likewise, while all the schools had an anti-bullying policy, only two of these included sexuality. Not surprisingly four of the head teachers acknowledged that they did not consider their school to be a safe place for a lesbian and gay pupil to be 'out'

Although the Department for Education and Employment (now Department for Education and Skills) issued Guidance Circulars to try to make it clear to schools that they have a responsibility to address homophobia through sex and relationship education programmes and pastoral support (NASUWT, 2001), both teachers and youth service workers suggest that it is the legal uncertainty about the meaning of Section 28 that makes it too politically sensitive for schools and the youth service to provide support for young lesbians and gay men. As such teachers are often effectively complicit in pupils' homophobic behaviour (Buston and Hart, 2001). While some individuals may use Section 28 as a convenient smokescreen for their own homophobia, others recognize the need to address the matter but are reluctant to talk to young people about sexuality issues. This is either because they fear that by talking about such matters with individuals they may open themselves up to accusations of inappropriate sexual involvement, or because they fear that by publicly addressing young people's homophobic behaviour they may be labelled 'gay' themselves. As the quotations below, and other studies (Lahelma et al, 2000) demonstrate, young people also subject teachers and others in authority to homophobic taunts and harassment (Lahelma et al, 2000). This is a particular deterrent to lesbian and gay teachers and youth workers coming out themselves and acting as role models or sources of support for young people questioning their sexuality as these women explain:

Elaine Pepper...

some of the youth workers are nervous about what they can say and can't say because they, they've they often not totally well-informed ideas about what Clause [Section] 28's about and how it relates to schools but they know that the youth service is technically part of educational provision of the local authority so they get nervous about you know whether they're going to be punished, drawn up to their managers or whatever for talking about you know the fact that there are lesbian and gay people in the world at all, let alone talking maybe to a young person who's come out to them or something, so we do actually have to correct a lot of misconceptions around that and say no you can talk in general terms in a positive way because its about anti-discriminatory practice and the youth service as the city council or county council both have equal opportunities policies so it is incumbant on you to work in [an] anti-discriminatory way
(a lesbian and gay health worker).

Peggy Morris:

I mean, I used to, I worked up until recently, I worked for the youth service, and I worked for 6 years in a youth club and I would not have come out to any of them if you paid me...so how a young person would have felt I do not know...people say 'Oh Clause [Section] 28 I can't talk about', but read Clause 28 and you can actually talk about it, this is a smokescreen to stop people thinking 'Oh I can't talk about's that's a good excuse of them and they won't talk about it, and they won't do the training and they won't talk to anybody...'
(a housing officer).

The isolation and lack of support available in most educational institutions and youth services, can according to Elaine Pepper and Josie below, contribute to the self destructive behaviors, including drinking and drug taking, a lack of experience of sex and relationships and a fear of coming out, that were outlined in the young people's accounts cited in the previous section. As such both argue for the need to create more 'safe spaces' where young lesbians and gay men can receive the support they are denied elsewhere. A need borne out by the evidence of other research that suggests that where teachers are able to develop positive relationships with lesbian, gay and bisexual youth they are less likely to experience school troubles (Russell et al, 2001).

Elaine Pepper:

I do think we could probably do with more social spaces, whether its youth clubs or other kinds of networks, pen pal schemes, I don't know but just

something to break the isolation that isn't about going out drinking and drugging, you know cos I mean its been documented....about how lesbians and gays use alcohol a lot more and so alcoholism is a much bigger problem amongst lesbian and gay communities because like the social scene is based around social venues which involve alcohol like pubs and clubs, and for men as well there's often the drug scene you I know I think...just needs to be a lot more kind of social forums
(a lesbian and gay health worker).

Josie:

We do advertise the group in colleges and place like that but because of Clause 28 we do find that we have to be careful about schools really. We do get, I mean...it's really quite surprising how many people have had really traumatic experiences at school because they've been stereotyped already by friends at school or even you know to be honest by teachers as well...[Clause 28] it's basically you know stopped people from being, coming out really, I think its, its stigmatized the issue a lot...I think its' just disempowering for young people...they are being discriminated against...and you know all the other things that go along with it you know like not being able to go into a school and actually learn about sex from any other angle apart from you know straight people...it make[s] them feel pretty cut up really and I think it does stop people from coming out you know from being upfront about it cos they're scared, scared about what's going to happen when they do
(a lesbian and gay support worker).

In particular, service providers argue that it is young people from 'working class' backgrounds who are most in need of out-reach work and safe spaces where they can develop their sexual identities and can be given the support and skills to help them deal with the homophobia they may encounter in everyday life. As Tony French explains below University commonly provides a relatively tolerant and supportive environment for young 'middle class' people to develop a lesbian or gay identity away from their families. In contrast, Elaine Pepper and Sharon Rochester claim that working class culture places more expectations on young people to fulfil traditional gender roles and paths to marriage and parenthood. Working class families are also more likely to react to news of their son or daughter's sexuality with violence or rejection than those from more middle class backgrounds where common responses are to seek professional (from psychiatrists or counselors) help or to go into denial (Valentine et al, 2001).

Tony French:

Middle class young people: 'they get away from family, they get away from all their friends from school, new life, new start, its an opportunity to reinvent

yourself. I mean quite a lot of students do that in the transition between school and college...so its one of the opportunities to reinvent and to suddenly go – ha haha I can get the sexuality in here
(outreach health worker).

Elaine Pepper:

working class culture is particularly macho so its particularly sexist in terms of gender role division and that in a way the homophobia falls in around that because you know to be a gay man is to be a not real man, and you must be a real man and you must drink real beer and so you know it kind of goes hand in hand with that and, and women must know their place and they must, they must relate to men and they must relate preferably subservient to men and they must need men and they must gratify men and obviously erm lesbians are quite independent of men in many ways and just aren't interested in playing subservient stereotypically feminine roles
(a lesbian and gay health worker).

Sharon Rochester:

I often think that you know a lot of young people particularly in working class, people rely on certain transitions in life, getting married 'cos that's what you're supposed to do, and if you're lesbian or gay you don't have those obvious markers in life and what it can be like to go through that without having obvious rituals I suppose and the effects of that on you. Maybe that's just my personal interest but I think the future can seem very, very bewildering
(a lesbian and gay youth worker).

Yet, this is not to suggest that universities are without problems of homophobia and discrimination. As Clare Carter explains below there can be a reluctance to fund lesbian, gay and bisexual groups. This problem is compounded by the fact that it is difficult to prove the need for such support groups when many students are reluctant to come out. As such producing a visibility paradox; homophobia produces a need for a support service, but fear of homophobia prevents individuals being visible, this invisibility can then be used to justify the lack of need for such a service, which in turn contributes to rendering homophobia invisible.

Clare Carter

...things that have come up in meetings, it's like yeah you know trying to get money for budgets and payment for the worker, that has like kind of led onto like erm, well why do you need the group, I explained why for support and blah, blah, blah and then they like well you need a certain amount,

number of people to establish the group and I've tried to explain with them, with a group like LGB people are reluctant to come along at first, it's gonna take a while to establish that and then they're, I've just had the reaction, like well, what's the point in running it?

(lesbian and gay student officer).

Where lesbian, gay and bisexual support groups exist in higher education the group itself often experiences the same sort of discrimination as its individual members. For example, Clare Carter described posters being torn down, or having offensive comments written on them and objections to the groups.

The groups also have to work hard to create and maintain the safety of their space, notably by establishing rules about respecting each others' confidentiality. Given many young people's concerns about anonymity, it is not surprising that email and the Internet are emerging as important spaces for young lesbians and gay men to express themselves and to meet others in a safe environment (McKenna and Bargh, 1998). Although, the Internet also contains a lot of homophobic material that can be unintentionally recovered using lesbian and gay search words that might reinforce a young person's internalized homophobia, and can also put young people in touch with older lesbians and gay men who might take advantage of their isolation and inexperience.

Homelessness is a relatively common problem for lesbians and gay youth. The main causes of eviction are usually coming out to parents, landlords and co-tenants, relationship break-ups or harassment from neighbours. In many cases serious experiences of homophobia in local authority properties go unreported which can jeopardize future housing opportunities. Peggy Morris provides two examples of lesbians' experiences below.

Peggy Morris:

...the two I've just moved on [two young lesbians she has resettled] one of them's been to us 3 times now, hopefully this time she'll settle but that's all about homophobia from parents...In fact that's about the main reason they do become homeless. One of the women I have at the moment, she's been with the [service] twice now, she was with us before I started, from quite young, and that was homophobia from the parents and now she's back with us through neighbour homophobia...bricks through the window...in fact it's happened to two of them in similar circumstances, in a similar area of [the city] and it's a neighbourhood thing, neighbours harassing them, fireworks through the letterbox, all sorts of dreadful things
(housing officer).

Peggy Morris:

I've had problems like, the couple, two women that have been forced out of their tenancies through local homophobia...and because people don't realize you have to give a month's notice...sometimes that puts them into 4 weeks arrears already, and this particular women didn't tell me till she'd been with us at least 6 weeks that she handed the keys in...the housing office have got it down as an abandoned property, the arrears continue to mount up, and if nothing's recorded [the homophobia that forced them to leave] there's nothing at the local police station, they're after evidence...no one's going to believe them...

(housing officer).

Young homeless lesbians and gay are vulnerable not only because of their lack of family support network or resources but also because the homophobia that has contributed to their position has often undermined their self-esteem. This process can be compounded within the housing service where young people require a degree of self-confidence in their own identities to ask for, and access, appropriate support. Sharon Rochester, Peggy Morris and Josie explain some of the issues:

Sharon Rochester:

A lot of it the young people work with is around low self esteem and a lot of that can come from being discriminated against, being made to feel less, made to feel that their needs aren't as important. I suppose for me a lot of them then bounce onto other problems like for example being bullied at school, then their low self-esteem and then they maybe don't attend school, then they end up being kicked out of home or they end up homeless and it's like a spiralling effect. All the way along the line the discrimination can get worse because you're in an agency which maybe doesn't cope with the issue of sexuality as well. So for example a number experienced quite a lot of discrimination at hostels which, they can be frightening places anyway and if you're lesbian or gay can be extremely frightening, so quite a lot of bullying and intimidation. I think also something about not knowing where to go for support, just feeling really quite lost and keeping a lot hidden away so again the self esteem would get lower and lower because they're not being themselves, they're covering up and trying to be somebody else' (lesbian and gay youth worker).

Peggy Morris:

I wanted to see provision within my women's houses of lesbian only, it's a safer space for lesbian women to be together. I think there's a lot of discrimination goes on, I mean I've got a 5 bedroomed younger women's house, and if I

put a lesbian in that house, I know it would be absolutely...it would be uncomfortable, that she wouldn't stay there. There's a lot of homophobia. I'm sure you know, the usual sort of stuff...harassment, picking on people, bullying, especially the younger ones ...It's a much better atmosphere, and it's a safer place to be if they're all together
(housing officer).

Josie:

I've had to actually [put] young gay men into night shelters where I've known that they are totally, its totally inappropriate for them, they are at risk but there's no where else for them to go...you know it's like, putting a young gay man into a night shelter is just like throwing him into a lions den really, you know its awful and even though obviously the staff try, they will challenge homophobic comments they can't be watching all the the time what's happening and there's some pretty nasty incidents happen in places like that
(lesbian and gay support worker).

As such Sheldon² housing association has designated accommodation that is prioritized for lesbians and gay men. The staff must manage the space carefully. On the one hand, they need to keep it free in case demand arises from the lesbian and gay community; on the other hand, they are not allowed to have vacant properties if there are heterosexual women on the waiting list. Often they find it hard to keep the specially designated accommodation for lesbians and gay men because the housing association has difficulties identifying and reaching those in need. They are not allowed to advertise the accommodation as exclusively lesbian or gay because it might deter heterosexual clients from seeking help. As such most referrals are by word of mouth, particularly through the services' connections with the local Lesbian and Gay Switchboard (a telephone help-line). Although the city's housing advice centre know about the specially designated accommodation for lesbians and gay men, questions about sexuality are not asked on housing forms or in interviews. The onus is therefore on the potential client to take the initiative to 'come out'. Yet as Peggy Morris explains below it requires a lot of self-confidence (and confidence in the housing officer) for 'vulnerable' lesbians and gay men to do so. If a person does not 'come out' for themselves, whether a particular individual is informed about, or offered a place in the specialist accommodation is also dependent on whether the person interviewing them identifies them as lesbian or gay from their embodied performativity. In other words, those who are not stereotypically 'butch' women or 'camp' men are rendered invisible. This reliance on appearances has other consequences too, Peggy Morris illustrates, for example, how lesbian victims of domestic violence can go unrecognized.

Peggy Morris:

...it's quite intimidating to be talking to a Housing Officer that has control of where you might be, to actually say, Well actually I'm a lesbian and I'd like lesbian accommodation', you know. And the more sort of assertive women are the ones that came to us first time and they're the ones that are referring other people to us...One of my older women that came, quite well dressed, well presented woman, went to various agencies and they wouldn't believe she was actually homosexual, she was a victim of domestic violence, her partner was bouncing her off walls in their flat so it's all about how you present (housing officer).

The Sheldon housing service recognises that it is not enough just to provide a roof over its clients' heads. Rather, the reality of being homeless is also often loss of self-esteem, loneliness, and emotional stress (especially if a relationship breakdown contributed to their situation). The service therefore has links with other agencies (e.g. mental health, careers etc.) that enable it to attempt to provide a level of individual, user-led support.

Like the University lesbian, gay and bisexual groups described above, a visibility paradox is also apparent within housing services. Lesbians and gay men are often homeless because of homophobia, yet because of their vulnerability they do not have the self-confidence to come out. As a result of not coming out their needs are invisible which makes it difficult for service providers to justify the setting aside of appropriate specialist accommodation.

The same visibility paradox is only just beginning to be tackled by the police force. Sergeant Williams, a police community officer in Sheldon described how low figures for reported homophobic incidents have been used by some officers to argue against the need for lesbian and gay liaison posts, such as her own. However, as she explains below, figures recorded by the police are not a true reflection of the extent of homophobic hate crimes. Rather, her outreach work (which has included meeting with community groups, visiting lesbian and gay bars, leafleting, poster campaigns, radio broadcasts, and establishing a confidential telephone line for the reporting of incidents etc.) has uncovered a diverse range of experiences. She also acknowledges the limitations of relying on community groups and venues to contact a cross section of lesbians and gay men, given the invisibility of some closeted lesbians and gay men.

Sgt. Williams

...the numbers [of incidents reported to the police] are a partial indication of what's going on but I don't think they bear any resemblance to the level

of activity and experience of lesbian and gay people. What I've found in the 15 months since I've been in office, the manifestations are huge. I mean you know you talk about homophobia, its about people being physically assaulted, people being verbally abused, literature being displayed and offensive, you know the displays. We've had people's property damaged by fire. We've had neighbours harassing lesbian and gay women, making comments if they go by. So a whole multitude of things have occurred...

[Later she continued]

...Locally now I think I'm probably in touch with many of the lesbian and gay groups that are established but not all lesbian and gay people actually participate and are involved in these groups. And it's difficult sometimes to reach out to what are an invisible group in some respects. You know race, you know coloured skin, yeah you wear that but your sexuality isn't something you wear on your sleeve...But what we've done, as you've seen, we've advertised in the local press you know that we are policing homophobia and as a direct result of that I have been contacted directly, instances have been reported

(police community service officer).

However, homophobic incidents are often not recorded as such, not just because 'victims' are too fearful to report them (as we explained in the previous section) but because there is no specific legislation that defines such crimes. Whereas offences can be aggravated if they are motivated by racism, there is no comparable way of acknowledging crimes motivated by homophobia. Rather, the police have to rely on anti-social behaviour legislation and other normal sanctions available under the criminal law. In recognition of this the Sheldon police are attempting to use their framework for responding to racially motivated crimes as a model for defining and recording homophobic incidents. There are also plans to provide all officers with specialist training in an attempt to combat personal and institutional homophobia, and to increase the sensitivity of the police to lesbians' and gay men's fears of being publicly outed through the process of reporting incidents. Indeed, even the vice squad, are being encouraged to recognise rent boys as 'victims' rather than just as offenders.

Lesbian and gay switchboards or support groups, rather than the police, are often the first port of call for lesbians and gay men in trouble. As well as information they usually offer counselling, befriending, and an introduction to the scene. Despite their wide ranging profile most have little or no resources and are reliant on raising their own funding and on the time and efforts of volunteers. Because of their own sexuality these volunteers are usually highly committed to their work but

burn out is also common. As such the success and activity levels of lesbian and gay support services can fluctuate widely in-line with the energy levels and commitment of their volunteers. When key individuals leave, their knowledge and contacts are often lost with them.

One cause of burn out is the personal price individual volunteers can pay in the course of their work. For example, the sort of homophobic harassment (described above) that is perpetrated against individuals is also perpetrated against organisations, as well as discrimination and exclusion. As such individuals working for these groups are often emotionally affected by their work and are sometimes called upon to adopt a public profile that may risk or compromise their own private lives or professional status. Malcolm Brent and Grace describe some of their experiences:

Malcolm:

It's terribly threatening at times...from the point of view of hate calls...it's an awful, it's an absolutely awful experience...we've had phases where we've had repeated voice, you know the same voice on the phone, on the tape [answering machine from when the switchboard is not staffed]...it's been a tirade of abuse

(representative of lesbian and gay switchboard).

Grace:

It was winter, dark night and there are some nights we're here just the two of us, we always work in twos, so we have to take steps, that, which as I suppose really for our own safety, and I suppose really we were a little bit afraid because of the nature of the calls [lesbian line was receiving abusive hate calls], that when we were on duty we each waited for one another in the car and we both came into the building together, we both went out together, you know for our security, we didn't know if the, we termed him the pervert, knew where we were actually based [Later she explained]...when we were going through this trauma with the phone and this chap...I was the one dealing with it, i.e. because I was the one not working, all my colleagues are professionals, in very professional fields, various, you know and very closeted most of them but I thought, you know, he can't be allowed to get away with it, and I said...I'll take him on, no problem, you know, if we have to go, if they catch him and we have to go to court I will go to court...and it didn't matter to me in the respect I couldn't get, you know booted out to anything because I'd actually retired from work

(representative of lesbian line).

Lesbian and gay support groups can also be a victim of their own success. The more that they succeed at raising the profile of lesbian and gay issues the more

they are called in to provide training or support for professional agencies such the probation service, prison education services, schools etc. Malcolm Brent explains:

Malcolm:

It's a small group of volunteers, so its volunteer based, we have no paid staff...we'll probably be making contact with a couple of thousand people a year, through various things, now it's not just phone based, there's letters, there's telephone contacts, there's letters via, there's contact via written, there's contact with other professionals, there's input to other professionals' programmes, 'cos we get phone calls or contact or requests for help from people like probation, youth service, so that we're providing a sort of consultation role quite often, and then of course there's the work that we've done on the gay scene, like HIV prevention, sexual health promotion type of things which have been many and varied, so whereas years ago it was just telephone based, it's wider now. The difficulty with that is that you create an expectation because you raise your profile so high that people think hang on a minute there's an organization I can contact, but that relies on no funding and volunteers (representative of lesbian and gay switchboard).

Voluntary groups face a number of ethical difficulties responding to the needs of lesbians and gay youth - particularly in relation to advice or support in terms of sexual activity because of the age of consent laws. Here they commonly apply what is known as the Gillick competency test. This derives from the actions of Victoria Gillick, who took her local health authority to court for prescribing her daughter, who was under 16, contraception without gaining her consent as the child's mother. The case, which went to both the Court of Appeal and the House of Lords, developed a definition of a young person's competence to consent known as Gillick competence. This states that a competent child is one who 'achieves sufficient understanding of and intelligence to enable him or her to understand fully what is proposed', and that the competent child has 'sufficient discretion to enable him or her to make a wise choice in his or her own interests' (Morrow and Richards 1996: 95). As such voluntary groups working with young lesbians and gay men will provide safer sex advice and condoms to young people below the age of consent provided that they are confident those concerned understand the ramifications of their behaviour and are making an informed decision to be sexually active.

Nonetheless, these organisations are also sensitive to child protection issues, and acknowledge their duty to report incidents where they believe young people to be at risk. At the same time they generally adopt a policy of confidentiality. This means that while they would have to notify the police, if for example, a young person

who had run away from home sought help from them, they would not normally pass this information on to parents or relatives.

Voluntary groups also struggle with the limitations of the definitional categories such as lesbian and gay that they work with. Targetting information, for example about safe sex practices, at this group can implicitly exclude who may engage in homosexual practices but not identify as gay such as Men Who Have Sex With Men (MWHWSM) and bisexuals. This is a particular problem because these groups are also generally invisible to General Practitioners. Likewise, young lesbians and gay men may look for information and support in different places, have different sexual practices or respond to public campaigns in different ways to their older counterparts. To this end some organisations try to employ their knowledge of the local microgeographies of sexual behaviour so that they can reach particular groups with particular types of message. Mark Spencer and Tony French explain:

Mark Spencer:

*I think we need to re-visit sexual behaviour again because although it keeps getting looked at I think things are changing very quickly with sexual behaviour ...how young gay people access information cos you might find that ...they may not be accessing information in the same way as older people are, might not even find somewhere comfortable for them to access information or talk to people
(gay men's sexual health worker).*

Tony French:

*We then have our street programme. This is our work in public sex environments, erm so its cottaging and cruising sites really we'll go and hang round the toilets and make contact with men using the site that way, that can be urn time consuming you know cos we maybe reaching people that are harder to reach erm, more likely to be ostensibly heterosexual (Tony) [later reruns to same theme] we're also through our street work programme - er ist where we started to come into contact with the renting scene, which is where it tends to be young men who sell sex. In this city there's a few sites which are, which have freebee areas where the cruising goes on and then a renting area
(outreach health worker).*

Given that many of those who work in the voluntary sector providing services for lesbians and gay men often identify as lesbian or gay themselves individual/institutional and private/public boundary issues often arise. Mark and Peggy describe some of the 'problems' this can pose.

Mark Spencer:

I'm actually friends with an awful lot of the people that I'm working together with, so finding a way [of contacting and getting involved in the community] hasn't been a difficulty [later he returns to the same theme] it is weird working with people who have been friends in the past – well are still friends now, but then sort of working with them on a professional basis...It's a completely different relationship, it's really weird, we'll have an hour meeting and then as soon as that's finished it will be completely different [laughs] – now we've done the work bit can we have a cup of coffee? (gay men's sexual health worker).

Peggy Morris:

If I go into town with friends or whatever to a lesbian venue, then I will probably bump into somebody that's been through a house, because of it being a smaller community...so it could be if you became over friendly...you have to have a line so that does limit things, you know its unfortunate, but that's the way it is (housing officer).

In the first section of this paper we identified the fact that young lesbians and gay men often suffer from internalised homophobia and low self-esteem, have difficulties 'coming out' and as such can become alienated from traditional sources of support, such as the family. The evidence of this section is that service providers often fail to recognise and respond to the needs of this vulnerable group. First, institutional homophobia is evident in a range of institutions such as schools and the police. Second, because of a fear of homophobia, identity confusion and low self-esteem young lesbians and gay men are often reluctant to come out to social agencies. As such a visibility paradox sets in. A fear of coming out means that this group does not visibly demand resources or support from service providers. This enables service providers to claim that because there is no demand evident from lesbians and gay men, that there is no need to provide specialist support for them. Yet, because there is no visible provision for lesbians and gay men or acknowledgement of their needs they anticipate that they will encounter institutional homophobia and so are fearful to come out.

While the voluntary sector attempt to fill this gap, services provided by lesbians and gay men, for lesbians and gay men are hamstrung by a lack of funding and a need to rely on volunteers who encounter a range of personal and emotional pressures in the course of their work.

Both public and voluntary sector initiatives to support lesbians and gay men are also circumscribed by the law. Specifically, section 28 of the Local Government Act and laws relating to the age of consent provide a framework that service providers must negotiate.

Conclusion: Ways Forward

In this paper we have argued that young lesbians and gay men are shaped by, but also alienated from the social institutions, roles and norms of wider society. As such they often suffer from internalized homophobia and low self-esteem and therefore find it difficult to access support from appropriate service providers. A visibility paradox sets in, whereby lesbian and gay men's alienation from various social agencies renders them invisible, while this invisibility is used to justify an insensitivity to or awareness of their needs. As a result some young people are vulnerable to turning to inappropriate coping strategies such as drink, drugs and unsafe sexual relationships.

There is therefore a need to tackle homophobia across a range of scales, from the State, through institutions such as schools and the police force down to the level of individuals. Here specific legislative changes required include the repeal of Section 28 of the Local Government Act; mandatory recognition of sexual minorities through anti-discrimination legislation; and changes in legislation to enable offences to be aggravated if they are proved to be motivated by homophobia.

Specific institutions also need to address their own institutional homophobia not least because under the *Health and Safety at Work Act 1974* employers have a duty of care to their employees to ensure their physical, mental health and well-being. Strategies to achieve this might include: developing 'lesbian and gay awareness' among staff and through the ways that services are delivered; including lesbian and gay issues in training programmes; and encouraging positive lesbian/gay role models or mentoring schemes. The provision of such in-service training needs to be institutionalized through policy development and its implementation rather than be dependent on energy/commitment of individuals. An important measure of the success of such initiatives would be the extent to which individual employees within an institution feel confident enough to come out.

Schools have a particularly important role to play in challenging homophobia and creating a more positive social attitude towards lesbian and gay lifestyles. Notably, they need to include sexuality in anti-homophobic bullying policies and to keep written records of incidents of bullying/abuse, to provide pastoral support for lesbian and gay pupils, and to revise sex education. In particular, school sex education and wider public and voluntary health promotion campaigns, rather than focusing

on the mechanics of sex, might usefully pay more attention to relationships, how to say no if you do not want to have sex, and on and how to negotiate safe sex.

In order to challenge the visibility paradox identified in this paper organisations need to provide more information about their commitment to recognising lesbian and gay needs. Outreach work within local communities is one way of building up positive relationships, and of carrying out needs assessment with young people themselves. The Internet is also emerging as an important media through which young people can be informed about the availability of, and how to access, services and resources. In particular, the disembodied nature of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) offers individuals the option to access information and support anonymously.

At the same time it is important to recognise that lesbians and gay men are not a homogenous group. The processes of marginalisation that we have identified in this paper can exacerbate socio-economic or other forms of disadvantage, and may take gendered or age specific forms. Moreover, not all those who have homosexual sex or engage in same-sex relationships identify as lesbian or gay.

If strategies such as those we have outlined here can be used to raise the profile of lesbians and gay men, and reinforce the unacceptability of homophobia, then young lesbians and gay men may be empowered to: overcome their feelings of difference and estrangement; to develop their own self-esteem and self acceptance; and to have the confidence to be out and proud.

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Notes

1 The names of all those quoted, and the people and places referred to in these quotations have been changed in an effort to protect their anonymity and confidentiality.

2 A pseudonym for one of the places in the Midlands, UK where we carried out the research.

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UNDERSTANDING HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING IN SCHOOLS:

Building a safe learning environment for all pupils

IAN RIVERS AND NEIL DUNCAN

Introduction

For many head-teachers and school governors, homosexuality is perceived to be a social issue that is not relevant to the educational environment. Since the introduction of Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act there has been some reticence on the part of Local Education Authorities and maintained schools in dealing with issues of sexual orientation in an open and supportive manner. This has been due primarily to the often cited concerns of teachers and local authority officials that any discussion of homosexuality or bisexuality may be perceived to be a 'promotion' of the associated lifestyle (see Douglas et al, 1997). However, Section 28 has never directly applied to the provision of objective information about homosexuality or lesbian and gay families nor, as the Act states, has it prevented schools from doing anything to prevent the spread of disease. Indeed, Section 104 of the Local Government Act 2000 amended Section 28 stipulating that the 1988 Act does not prevent head-teachers, teachers or governors of schools from doing anything to prevent all forms of bullying. Thus, Section 28 currently reads:

28 (1) The following section shall be inserted after section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986 - prohibition of political publicity

2A (1) A local authority shall not:

(a) intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality

(b) promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.

(2) Nothing in subsection (1) above shall be taken to prohibit the doing of anything for the purpose of treating or preventing the spread of disease;

or (b) prevent the headteacher or governing body of a maintained school, or a teacher employed by a maintained school, from taking steps to prevent any form of bullying.

(3) In any proceedings in connection with the application of this section a court shall draw such inferences as to intention of the local authority as may be reasonably drawn from the evidence before it.

Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 as amended by Section 104 of the Local Government Act 2000)

Of course, Section 28 only applies to England and Wales having been repealed in Scotland in 2000 and having never applied to Northern Ireland. However, despite this clear statement relating to the application of the 1988 Local Government Act, it is evident that homophobic bullying continues to be a serious problem within our schools, and one against which few schools are willing to take preventative measures (Douglas et al [1997] found that only 6% of the 307 Schools they surveyed had anti-bullying policies that included homophobia), preferring to seek advice or guidance only when an incident of homophobic bullying arises.

Who is called 'gay' and why?

There is a great deal of debate surrounding how many young people there are in our schools who currently identify or may identify at some point in the future as lesbian, gay or bisexual. In a recent study, the Medical Research Council's (MRC) Social and Public Health Sciences Research Unit (SPHSRU) at the University of Glasgow undertook a series of studies in Scottish schools (the SHARE Project) in which they asked young people about a range of sexual health and educational issues. This was followed up a short time later by a second survey which included questions relating to same-sex attraction. (It must be noted here that the inclusion of these questions was the result of young people asking why issues such as sexual orientation had not been included in the first study). Based upon data gathered from a sample of 5,854 secondary school pupils (average age 16.2 years) drawn from 25 schools, researchers found that 3.2% indicated that they were attracted to members of their own sex and a further 4.9% did not discount the possibility of being attracted to a member of their own sex (Henderson, 2001, personal communication¹). By way of comparison, in the United States using the data gathered from 35,000 high school youth who participated in Minnesota's Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (YRBS), Remafedi et al (1992) reported that only 1.1% reported a lesbian, gay or bisexual orientation, but that 11% of youth were questioning their sexual orientation when surveyed.

Based upon the data from the SHARE Project which conforms to many of the demographic characteristics of school attendees today, it is possible to provide a theoretical extrapolation relating to the number of young people in secondary school currently that may be attracted to members of their own sex, or questioning their sexual orientation. Data provided by the Department for Education and Skills (DFES) indicated that, in 2001, there were 3,859,300 young people registered as pupils in UK secondary schools. On the basis that 3.2% currently or by age 16 will have sexual feelings towards members of their own sex, it is estimated that there are approximately 123,500 young people who may identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual, and a further 189,100 (4.9%) who, at age 16, are or will be unsure of their sexual orientation.

Although such figures are speculative, they do provide a useful framework upon which to reflect upon our understanding of the development of sexual orientation. For example, it may be necessary for us to move away from linear or stage models of human development, and consider sexual orientation development in terms of multiple time lines and trajectories with each trajectory being moulded by familial, social/communal, cultural and educational experiences. Consequently, some young women and men may choose not to 'come out' as a result of their experiences of negative social pressure at home, in their local communities or at school (see Rivers, 1997). Indeed, many lesbians, gay men and bisexual men and women never reach a point when they disclose their sexual orientation to others or develop a meaningful relationship with a member of the same sex because the community or society in which they live may prohibit open homosexuality through custom, doctrine and/or law. Furthermore, it is the stigma associated with homosexuality that ensures that homophobic bullying not only impacts upon those who openly identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual, but also upon those who are unsure of their sexual orientation, and those who wish to remain hidden, fearing abuse or accusation. Indeed, homophobia can have an effect upon those who may differ from the majority of their peer group in terms of behaviour, expression, ethnicity, ability/disability, dress or personality finding themselves labelled with the generic term of abuse 'gay'. For example, in a study of racism following the murder of Ahmad Iqbal Ullah in the playground of Burnage School in Manchester (see Macdonald et al, 1989), Kelly (1988) found that the names that were frequently cited as causing most distress to young people were not related to ethnic or cultural origin, but names that were 'sexual' or 'anal' in nature.

This finding is supported by Duncan (1999) in his seven year study of gender conflict and pupil culture in four UK secondary (High) schools. In Duncan's research both boys' and girls' groups concurred that the most hurtful thing a boy could be called was 'gay'. All the groups were well acquainted with the idea of 'gay' referring to homosexual males and all the interviewees understood that this meant males who were sexually attracted to one another. However, Duncan found that this was not the operational meaning for the vast majority of times the term was used. Being 'gay' was seen as the opposite of being 'a real lad'. To be 'a real lad', one had to show certain qualities that were highly esteemed by the arbiters of masculinity in these schools – the tough boys. To qualify, a boy should exhibit all or most of the following: sporting prowess, physical strength, mental toughness, a propensity for aggressive and violent behaviour, a low regard for adult approval, an abusive relationship with those perceived to be weaker, and an exploitative attitude towards females. This last attribute was found to be especially vital in the context of wider social

relations, but all these 'qualities' have a great relevance with regard to (working class) boys' scholastic achievement.

Those boys that fell well short of the mark of this ideal masculinity were not simply called 'gay', but also became the butt of casual, sometimes physical, abuse from both boys and girls. There were other, non-sexual, insulting terms with which 'lesser' boys were abused, however, the term, 'gay' was described as the insult par excellence, and if such a label could be applied to any boy in a class or year group then abuse would follow:

Y11 Boys (Age 15)

Carl:

We get on with them all really, except for the gays.

ND:

What gays?

Adie:

Cos they are wimps, most of them we've battered in lower school, when we were younger like, and they wouldn't want to be mates with us anyway. I've got nothing against them, like.

(Duncan, 1999: 107)

A denial of homosexual existence

During a series of interviews with secondary school aged boys, Duncan (1999) encountered a powerful denial of the possibility that any of the so-called 'gay' boys were actually homosexual; such variations in human sexual orientation were imagined only to exist in some other world. Some students said that, 'if this school let any gays in, I'd move to another school where there were none' (p. 109)! He then asked what these boys would do if their best friend was to confide that they might be gay. The most humane responses indicated that the best course of action was to swear the confessor to secrecy, but the usual response was that, to ensure they would not be tarnished by association, they would tell their other friends who would then beat up the gay boy.

Reports from organizations working with lesbian, gay and bisexual youth have also described the nature of the discrimination young people often face in schools. For example, research focusing upon the experiences of young lesbians, gay men and bisexual men and women in educational contexts can be traced back to 1984 and a series of reports published by the London Gay Teenage Group under the auspices of the Inner London Education Authority (see Trenchard and Warren, 1984; Warren, 1984). These reports identified so-called 'homophobic bullying' as a

major factor in the development of young lesbians, gay men and bisexual men and women. From a sample of 416 young people who identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual, Warren (1984) found that 39% reported having experienced overt physical or verbal harassment or pressure to conform, not only from their peers but also from teachers. Subsequent studies focusing upon the social and educational experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual youth conducted both in the United Kingdom and the United States suggests that just over one third of all lesbian, gay and bisexual youth (37%) experience victimization at school or college as a direct result of their actual or perceived sexual orientation at the time.

Table 1: Meta-analytical Review of Research on Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth in Educational Contexts

	Participants	% Victimization
United Kingdom		
<i>Warren (1984)</i>	416	39
<i>Mason and Palmer (1996)</i>	84	40
<i>Rainbow network (2001)*</i>	262	33
United States		
<i>NGLTF (1984)</i>	2,074	37
<i>Aurand et al (1985)</i>	167	33
<i>Gross et al (1988)</i>	721	49
<i>Pilkington & D'Augelli (1995)</i>	194	33
<i>Gross et al (2000)</i>	3,014	42
MEAN		37
* Unpublished		

Based upon the demographic data provided by the SHARE project, and the extrapolation cited above relating to the DFES' record of registered pupils in UK secondary schools, it is possible to estimate the number of young people today who are being bullied or will experience being bullied because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation. A conservative estimation based upon the projected number of young people who admit same-sex attraction at aged 16 (123,000) suggests that approximately 46,000 young people have experienced or will experience homophobic bullying in British schools. While such a figure represents only 1.2% of the secondary school population, the numbers aptly illustrate the pandemic nature of the problem.

Research conducted by Rivers (2001) illustrates the experiences of 190 lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender men and women who were bullied at school because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation. In his 3 year study, Rivers found that participants' experiences of bullying were both long-term (mean duration of 5 years), and systematic, and were perpetrated by groups of peers (usually all males or groups of males and females) rather than by individuals. The most frequent form of harassment experienced at school was found to be name-calling (82%) and

being ridiculed in front of others (71%). Teasing was also reported by a large number of participants (58%) and slightly more (60%) reported being hit or kicked at school. Forty-nine per cent said that they had also their belongings stolen by their tormentors as a form of harassment. In terms of less direct and more insidious forms of aggression, 59% of participants said that rumours had been spread about them and 52% said they were often frightened by the way in which a particular person looked or stared at them. Twenty-seven per cent reported being isolated by their peers and 11% (21) admitted being sexually assaulted either by peers or by teachers while at school.

Being hit or kicked was found to be most strongly associated with sex, with gay, bisexual and transgender men recalling such behaviour much more frequently than lesbian and bisexual women. Gay, bisexual and transgender men were also much more likely to recall being ridiculed publicly or being called names at school. However, lesbian and bisexual women were much more likely to recall that no one would speak to them. All other forms of behaviour were found to be equally distributed between the sexes.

In a comparatively small-scale study 15 young gay and bisexual men who attended support groups in the North East of England were asked to complete a brief survey on their experiences of school (Ford, 2001). The young men who completed the survey were all white (British) and ranged between 14 and 26 years of age, with an average age of 19. Just under half of the participants were aged 18 or under and therefore had experience of school no more than two years previously.

A number of themes emerged among those members of the group who had been bullied at school. Comparable with the findings of Rivers (2001), verbal bullying was the most frequently cited form of abuse: 'Every day was full of verbal attacks e.g. every time I walked down the corridor'. (Ford, 2001: 2) Specific examples included being called 'queer' and groups of young men shouting 'Bums to the wall, lads' as the victim walked past. Two participants had received death threats whilst at school.

Although most participants felt that verbal abuse was more common than physical abuse, the majority also reported that they had been physically assaulted on at least one occasion, with one participant stating that he had been physically assaulted on 'regular occasions'. One young man was banned from physical education lessons because of fears for his personal safety. Specific examples provided included being punched in school corridors and being pelted with various projectiles including a pair of scissors. One participant had property damaged and one recalled inappropriate touching from other young men who were 'pretending to be gay' (p. 2)

The frequency of incidents and the duration of the bullying were also noteworthy. One young man commented that he experienced harassment every time he walked down a school corridor and another had been 'verbally abused daily'. The duration of the bullying was often lengthy, with one young man commenting that it took place over 'many, many, many years.' This would suggest that once a young person has been labelled 'gay' by their peers, they are likely to be a potential target for bullies for the duration of their school life. As one young man stated:

When I came out three years later, I found that I was only called [queer] because it was their favourite insult...I feel they singled me out 'cos I was different, quiet.

(Ford, 2001: 2)

The above quotation corroborates the findings from Duncan's (1999) research, that young men will label other young men as 'queer' or 'gay' if they do not conform to rigid and stereotypical gender roles. Young men who perform well academically, who socialise with young women or who are poor at sports are often labelled 'gay'.

While experiences of homophobic bullying were common to the young men who completed the Ford survey, the failure of schools to adequately support these young men is very noticeable. Reluctance to seek support from parents was common. While the majority of those who were bullied chose to tell a teacher, there was some reticence on the part of individuals to disclose the reasons why they were being bullied. Two teachers chose to ignore the bullying when the student asked for assistance, and one young man reported that: 'I couldn't tell any of the teachers as their views contributed towards the homophobia'. (Ford, 2001: 3)

Although the sample size for this study was small, the findings do provide corroborative evidence on the nature and prevalence of homophobic bullying. Significantly, the findings suggest that despite growing awareness of homophobic bullying and clear guidelines for schools to prevent it, there remains either an inability or unwillingness to adequately protect young lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Proactive strategies to protect and support such young people or indeed any young person exposed to homophobia, are a priority. In the US, Hershberger and D'Augelli (1995) found that along with reports of depression and anxiety, 42% of the lesbian, gay and bisexual young people they surveyed have attempted suicide. In the UK, Warren (1984) found that 20% of the young people he surveyed reported contemplating or attempting suicide. In a follow-up study of 119 lesbian, gay and bisexual adults who were bullied at school because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation, Rivers (2000a, 2001) found that 53% had contemplated self-harm or suicide, 40% had attempted at least one, and three quarters of those more than

once (Rivers, 2000a, 2001). There is also increasing evidence of a small minority of lesbians, gay men and bisexual men and women who experience violence or intolerance using both prescription and non-prescription drugs, or alcohol to help them cope with memories of being victimized or harassed (Otis and Skinner, 1996; Rivers, 2000a). In terms of educational achievement, an analysis of data gathered in the UK by Rivers (2001), suggested that lesbian, gay and bisexual youth who were socially isolated at school were more likely to have a history of absenteeism, and left school at 16 years of age, often despite having achieved grades that would allow them to take 'A' levels and go on to university (Rivers, 2000b).

Policy, practice and the law

As noted in the introduction to this paper, despite the introduction of an amendment that seeks to clarify the application of Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act, it continues to be a significant barrier to the development of curricula and resources both by schools and by local authorities in preventing acts of bullying or discrimination against lesbian, gay and bisexual youth. Douglas et al, (1997) found that 82% of their sample of over 300 teachers identified Section 28 as a major stumbling block to the provision of advice and counselling for lesbian, gay and bisexual youth. Indeed, 61% of teachers reported that they knew of the existence of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils in their schools, but only 15% of those schools included lesbian, gay and bisexual issues within their policies of confidentiality.

In addition both the Health and Safety Act (1974) and the Prevention of Harassment Act (1997) provide for the protection of all pupils, employees and citizens from negligent authorities, institutions and/or managers (this includes local education authorities, head teachers and, where personal liability is applied, class teachers), and protection from actions that may be deemed harassment whether intentional or unintentional on the part of the perpetrator (McManus and Rivers, 2001).

For many teachers, social workers, doctors, nurses and mental health practitioners the issue of whether or not to afford confidentiality to lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils under the age of 16 years has been one that continues to be hotly debated. Until very recently, guidance on this issue had been sparse, however, following the publication of the Department for Education and Employment's pack 'Bullying – Don't Suffer in Silence' co-ordinated by Professor Peter K. Smith at Goldsmith's College, guidance is now clear with respect to the way in which schools should address the issue of sexual orientation:

Strategies for reducing homophobic bullying include:

- *Incorporating it into the school's anti-bullying policy – so pupils know discrimination is wrong and the school will act*

- *Covering it in INSET days on bullying in general*
- *Guaranteeing confidentiality and appropriate advice to lesbian and gay pupils*
- *Challenging homophobic language*
- *Exploring issues of diversity and difference – discussing what school and society can do to end discrimination*
- *Exploring pupils' understanding of their use of homophobic language – they may not understand the impact.*

This guidance provides schools and local authorities with an entry point whereby they may introduce issues of sexual orientation justifiably into PSE/PSHE classes and into citizenship programmes. It is also clear that if teachers are to support lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils actively in school, that they should be trained in these issues, not simply through INSET days, but also through BA QTS (Qualified Teacher Status) BEd and PGCE courses. It is also argued that there is a need for the development of appropriate classroom resources, and it is worth noting that there has been no appropriate evaluation on those resources currently available.

An example of best practice from Australia

Discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability and sexual orientation have been illegal in New South Wales (NSW) since 1977. Since the early 1990s, the state government has pro-actively sought to prevent discrimination related to sexual orientation in schools by producing a number of resource materials that assist teachers and school psychologists in challenging homophobia (see NSW Department of School Education 1991, 1994, 1996). One of the resources currently available to all schools is a teaching programme entitled 'Mates' which is linked to a 23 minute video. The video tells the story of Steve, a champion swimmer who goes to a new High School. Initially, he is accepted by his peers because of his athletic background; however, when it becomes known that he is gay, Steve experiences both physical violence and verbal abuse. In this video pack, comparisons are made between the discrimination experienced by Steve and that of Tran, a young Vietnamese boy who attends the same school. The educational materials associated with the video not only address homophobia, but also the discrimination experienced by those who are HIV positive, and actively seeks to challenge the myths surrounding the transmission of HIV. The pack includes a number of discussion sheets dealing with issues of privacy and confidentiality, name-calling, teasing and conflict resolution. It also includes guidance on role-play and provides case study material focusing on HIV/AIDS discrimination, as well as a list of additional resources for students, teachers and parents (see Rivers and D'Augelli, 2001).

Towards best practice in the UK

In the UK pioneering work conducted by two secondary schools in Bolton has resulted in a proactive strategy to counter incidents of homophobic name-calling and violence through a collaborative venture between the schools and Bolton Health Promotion Service. Together they have produced a 'Homophobic Bullying Charter' which outlines the aims of the schools in terms of policy, practice and, above all, staff and pupil behaviour (Mulholland, 2001). Pupils at one of the schools produced the following charter which not only seeks to challenge homophobia, but also promotes the discussion of diversity, and provides support for those who are discriminated against:

We will aim to:

- *Offer counselling/support around issues concerning sexuality*
- *Create more opportunities for discussion in schools to raise awareness about homophobia and its effects*
- *Treat all people with respect regardless of sexuality*
- *Value other cultures and lifestyles – its OK to be different*
- *Challenge name calling no matter what the nature of it*
- *Ensure equal rights for everyone*
- *Publish telephone help lines around school*
- *Promote self-esteem of all students through all aspects of school life*
- *Punish those who use homophobic language*
- *Judge people for who they are not their sexuality*

(Mulholland, 2001, School Charter by students of Westhoughton High School, Appendix 6)

This charter demonstrates that it is possible for schools to take action against homophobia or any form of discrimination where there is a will to change the environment or ethos. In light of developments such as Section 104 of the 2000 Local Government Act, there is clearly no reason why schools in England and Wales should not take a proactive stance against all forms of bullying, and have the confidence to tackle homophobia without fear of prosecution under Section 28.

Conclusion

In this article, we have attempted to provide an overview of the key issues affecting professionals working with young people and particularly young lesbians, gay men and bisexual men and women. While there undoubtedly remains some reticence on the part of local authorities, head-teachers, governors and school staff in tackling

issues such as homophobia, such reticence should no longer be founded upon a misconception of the application of Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act. Homophobia is not just an issue for lesbian, gay and bisexual young people, names such as 'queer', 'poof', 'faggot' and 'dyke' can be heard in most of our schools on the playing fields and in the school yards during lunch- and break-times. However, such names can also be found in the classrooms and corridors, and often go unchallenged. As a final note of caution for those who remain unconvinced, it is worth remembering that the 1998 Human Rights Act guarantees the right to education (Article 2) for all, and it is with this in mind that we will ultimately look to our schools to determine whether or not all pupils enjoy this right free from fear of intolerance.

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Notes

1. Reported here with permission of the SHARE Project.

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Edited by Ruth Gilchrist, Tony Jeffs and Jean Spence

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A LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL?

Experiences of leaving home for two contrasting groups of young lesbian, gay and bisexual people

SHIRLEY PRENDERGAST, GILLIAN A. DUNNE AND DAVID TELFORD

Researching a cohort of young people aged 26, Bynner et al (1997:127) noted in 1996 that compared to a previous cohort, born just 12 years earlier, the adult lives of these young people promised to be much more challenging and difficult, with evidence of a widening gap between those 'getting somewhere' and those 'getting nowhere'. Considering trends underlying contemporary transitions, MacDonald (1997:186) argues that there is broad consensus that the institutions, arrangements and policies that guide and shape young people's lives in Britain have undergone dramatic restructuring in recent years, making 'youth transitions riskier, more insecure and for already disadvantaged youth, more prone to social exclusion'. Young people have been under increasing pressure to acquire qualifications and a range of skills to make themselves attractive to employers: those who don't are increasingly marginalized (Bynner et al, 1997:2). While arguing against the idea of a youth underclass, MacDonald, like other commentators (eg. Coles, 1997) notes that in Britain at least, one consequence has been a continuing and even growing divide between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'.

Recent education and welfare policies, informed by ideologies of individualism and familism, (Barrett 1988: 206) increasing emphasis upon inter-generational family ties and support rather than the state, have further acted to *delay* independence, and *deepen and extend* the period of young people's reliance upon parental support. Cuts in benefits and welfare, a declining youth labour market and a reduction of earnings in relation to an adult living wage (Irwin, 1995) have undermined the possibility of independence at an early age¹. Young people who leave education at 16, even with GCSEs, have little hope of supporting an independent life, highlighting the crucial significance of parental support for young school leavers. Likewise in the context of tuition fees and loans, many young people in British Higher Education remain dependent upon families and friends to maintain their participation (Connor, 1997; Hesketh, 1999; Callender and Kemp, 2000; Christie et al, 2001)

For all young people, these trends suggest that the support and goodwill of parents has become more crucial for a successful transition into adult life than a decade ago (Jones, 1995). However, this is not without cost. For those young people who rely on parents for accommodation and/or financial help there is evidence that parents may expect in return a substantial say in how their children conduct their lives (Smith et al, 1998; Johnstone and Valentine 1995). Conversely, those young

people without parental support or goodwill, are likely to have become increasingly vulnerable in the last decade or so. These factors play a particularly crucial role in the experience of transition to adult life for young lesbian, gay and bisexual (LesBiGay) people.

This paper looks at the experiences of two contrasting groups of young people, aged between 16 and 25. On the one hand we describe, in MacDonald's (1997) terms, those who might be seen as the 'haves', a sample of young LesBiGay people who have made it through to higher education. On the other we describe the 'have nots' - a sample of young LesBiGay people who are currently homeless. Both samples were interviewed as part of a larger study of transition from the perspectives of young British LesBiGay people who were making it through to the independence associated with adult life. We look in some detail at the issues arising out of the accounts given by young people in each of our two samples. In particular we consider what they say about the processes of leaving and family support for the transition from home. We conclude by drawing together some common themes, and discuss these in the context of what we call 'living difference' for young people today.

Findings: Young, homeless and gay

Background

The experiences of young LesBiGay people have generally been neglected in the British mainstream academic literature on homelessness (Craig et al, 1996; Hutson and Liddiard, 1994; Smith et al, 1998; Strathdee, 1992) and leaving home (Jones 1995), although more visible in the North American literature (see Krus, 1991; Mallon, 1997; Crossman, 1997). The issue has been, however, noted by major homeless organisations (CHAR, 1988; Centrepoin, 1993; National Homeless Alliance, 1996), observed in some community studies (Mullen, 1999) and stressed by specialist LesBiGay support agencies. Our research has found that this neglect is more about the ways in which this group are made and make themselves invisible, rather than their numerical absence, and for a number of reasons we suggest that LesBiGay people are becoming an ever increasing proportion of the young homeless population (Dunne et al, 2002).

Research Aims and Methods

We sought to learn of the factors that had led young LesBiGay people to the extreme position whereby the vulnerability and risks of being homeless (for many are a very young age) appeared a better option than remaining within their home-base. Our knowledge about the experience of homelessness for this group comes from both quantitative and qualitative data. We sought the depth of a qualitative dimension because we recognized the complexities associated with both a housing crisis and

the negotiation of alternative sexual identities². Given the neglect of the issue, a quantitative approach was chosen to enable us to situate our qualitative findings within a wider picture.

The quantitative dimension was achieved through analysis of the records of two homeless organisations specialising in assisting young LesBiGay people with a housing crisis. 'The Trust', based in London and Manchester, provides supportive lodgings (with lesbian and gay carers) for young people aged 16-19. The second organisation, 'Out Housing' based in London, provides semi-permanent accommodation for LesBiGay people. Fifty per cent are under 25 years old and our analysis focused on data for this group. 'Out Housing' aims to facilitate more long-term independence and link clients with appropriate Housing Association properties. Both organisations keep records on the circumstances of all those who have contacted them. While kept for other reasons, variable in quality and far from perfect for our purposes, these records may represent the only detailed source of information on the situation of young LesBiGay homeless people in Britain and were therefore a valuable resource. For reasons of confidentiality the information we sought was extracted from the records by the respective organisations and then made available to us for statistical analysis.

Our qualitative knowledge comes from two different sources. First, and most importantly, we learnt from young homeless LesBiGay people themselves. We began with a series of focus groups, followed by in-depth life-history interviews with 19 respondents based in London and Manchester. The young people were recruited through The Trust, and a third organization – 'Right On Space' which is a mainstream gay-friendly hostel providing short-term accommodation in London. Second, we also conducted interviews and focus group discussions with agency workers, in both mainstream homeless organisations and those that specialised in the needs of young LesBiGay people (insights gained from these professionals are discussed in Dunne et al, 2002).

The data

Homeless young LesBiGay people share important characteristics with the homeless population more generally. First, the majority are young men. Second, for young women and men alike, their lives had often been beset by multiple disadvantages. Third, the homeless crises could only be understood in the context of sequential processes over a (sometimes long drawn out) period of time (Dunne et al, 2002; Prendergast et al, forthcoming). Like the general homeless population the young people in our sample registered a range of experiences, home situations and precipitating factors and behaviours, which together contributed towards the complex pathways whereby they have entered the homeless population (Coles, 1997; Craig et al,

1996). These included adoption, fostering and residential care, and some had suffered physical and sexual assault. Many had had physical and mental health problems. These powerful background factors may be enough in themselves to make any young person risk homelessness. However we were interested to explore whether sexuality played any specific role in this process.

The records of the two homeless organizations revealed that sexuality was an important factor for a sizable minority. A family's inability to accept their son/daughter's sexuality was recorded as the immediate trigger of a housing crisis for 30% of The Trust sample (n=213) and 17% of the under 25 year olds in the Out Housing sample (n=770). The in-depth life-history data provided a more detailed analysis of the longer-term processes involved. This data showed that for about a third of the interview sample (6/19) sexuality appeared to have little or no role in their homeless crisis. However for the great majority of the young people interviewed (13/19) their sexuality had been a precipitating influence or major factor (see Dunne et al, 2002). This has many implications in terms of understanding sexuality and young people's needs. Most immediately it highlights the personal tragedies arising from the way that homophobia transforms schools and homes into fearful and often dangerous environments from which young people take flight (Douglas et al, 2000; Rivers, 1995; Rogers, 1994).

The detail of individual stories indicates both the 'pushes and pulls' around their sexuality which so often resulted in dramatic upheavals in young people's lives. Below we have divided into two groups the thirteen young people for whom their sexuality was a factor in their homelessness crisis. The first group comprises nine young people who spoke of living at home under the shadow of fear that their sexuality might be discovered and of leaving to find the freedom to explore their identity, whatever the cost. For the second group of four young people this fear had become a reality: they had left home or been expelled because of family responses to their sexuality becoming known.

Homelessness: living in fear and leaving to find yourself

Three examples typify the fear of coming out at home and the necessity of leaving to explore sexual identity:

Simon's story: 'Terrified my secret would come out.' Getting away was a central theme for Simon. He had grown up in a Midlands town, living with an auntie then with his mother. He first had thoughts about boys at 11, and experienced gay sex at 13. He says he had always been gay, just never knew the words. He deployed his considerable wit and verbal skills at school and did well despite huge upheavals at home. By 17, unable to live with his mother's violent new boyfriend

and with no resources, Simon advertised himself for sex as a way of paying the rent. Utterly miserable and terrified his secret would be discovered he headed for London to come-out, make friends and have a relationship. He has lived in a variety of safe and unsafe³ hostels, but now has a job and hopes to get more permanent accommodation.

In Simon's account, fear and desperation drove him to risk renting in a small town where, through gossip and innuendo, everybody gets to hear what you are doing. He says that leaving was the best thing he ever did - it has allowed him the privacy to explore his sexuality and he is now in a stable relationship.

Jenny's story: 'I didn't feel safe at home.' Jenny's home-life was desperately unhappy and unstable. She was persistently abused at home and bullied at school - leaving with no qualifications. She and her siblings experienced multiple care situations culminating in a residential home when she was 13. Jenny did not feel safe. She was called gay and bullied long before she knew what that meant, and began to think it must be true. Getting no help from her carers, at 14, she contacted a lesbian helpline, came out and ran away to the Manchester Gay Village. Whilst living rough she met an older gay man who gave her shelter. Now at the age of 20, with help, she has found secure accommodation.

Jenny left Care because it was not a safe place to explore her sexuality, but when she discovered the Gay Village she says 'the scales fell from my eyes'. She describes the experience of coming-out as giving her confidence and strength; she says the Gay Village will always be her home.

Pete's story: 'My ambition is to survive.' Pete's story has similar elements. Pete's background was wealthy, but his father (a bank manager) was violent. He was severely bullied at school for being camp and came out to himself at 15, when he had a relationship with a friend's uncle. He says he felt great about being gay, but ran away just before his 16th birthday because he was terrified of his father finding out. In London he sold sex and worked in pornographic films in order to survive. Pete did the hostel scene and now has his own place. He has serious alcohol and health problems and has attempted suicide several times. He feels he won't live long. Good friends - including one who he calls his 'gay dad' are supporting him.

Like others in this group, neither Simon, Jenny or Pete had specifically been made homeless because of their sexuality, but the choices that they made about leaving home, often at a very young age, were inexplicably bound up with their sexuality. They illustrate the push to leave home, generated by fear of coming-out and the violence that could follow, in combination with the *pull* of a community where they believed they would be accepted and be able to make friends and explore

their sexuality. Jenny with a history of abuse and no resources knew that whatever the cost, life could only be better elsewhere. The nature of Pete's family relations left him no choice but to flee. Although he later came out to his family, despite his dire circumstances, no help was forthcoming. While for all three the risks were huge, the alternatives were unthinkable. Without resources, the overriding imperative to find out who they were, to be honest to themselves and ultimately to others had set them on potentially dangerous paths into the unknown. Along the way, like many of our sample, they had found support from members of the gay community, something that may, quite literally, 'make the difference' to surviving the dangers of being homeless on the streets of a large city (Prendergast et al, forthcoming). Even so some, like Pete, may not make it through.

Homeless: your worst nightmares come true

For four young people, just over one fifth of the interview sample, the nightmare became reality: because of their sexuality they were expelled or driven from their home-base with no obviously safe place to go. Brian's parents could not cope, while Ivan, Angus and Jerry were literally thrown out of home when their sexuality became known to parents or partners.

Brian's story: 'They couldn't cope with me'. Brian went into Care because his parents could not cope when he came out and began to openly explore the nearby gay scene. He has become homeless many times because of the restrictions placed upon him. Brian had lived with his mother and stepfather in London. He says that by early secondary school he was acting camp and called so by other pupils. At 12, not really understanding what was happening, he had his first sexual experience with a man. Later he saw a television programme and suddenly realised what that meant. By 14-15 he was truanting from school and visiting gay clubs. As his parents tried to exercise more control, he began to run away. Brian went into Care, continued to run away, and left school with no qualifications.

Brian says that he has always known, at some level, from early on, that he was gay - he just couldn't find the words for it. Once the understanding became explicit he felt compelled to act whatever the consequences. Brian's quest was unacceptable to his parents - in some respects understandably since he was exploring his sexuality at a young age (illegally) in an unknown and potentially risky adult environment - and they felt that they had no choice but to put him in Care for his own protection.

In contrast Angus, Ivan, and Ted were forced to leave the family home once they came out.

Angus's story: 'They said I was a pervert'. Angus describes how his well-off parents split up. Angus lived alone at home for a period and - helped by a lesbian friend - had

begun to explore his sexuality. Then his mother received an anonymous phone call saying Angus was gay, and his brother-in-law threw him out saying that he was a danger to the children in the family. Angus was outraged, he had loved and cared for these children over many years. His mother did not defend him and Angus ended up at the age of 18, homeless in London.

Ivan's story: 'I miss my family'. Ivan was married to Jane, had two small children and lived with her in a northern town. He left school with no qualifications to take up unskilled work. He had often thought about men sexually and had some limited sexual contact. Then one night he got drunk and woke up in bed with a close male friend. He was outed by the friend's girlfriend, and Jane made him leave the family home. She said, like Ivan's parents, that he was dirty and disgusting, and that he would not be allowed anywhere near the children under any circumstances. He arrived in London homeless, desperately missing his family. Ivan has slept with men since, but says he would willingly suppress this side of himself in order to get his family back. If it were not for his family, he would prefer to be gay.

Jerry's story: 'I had to tell the truth'. Jerry grew up in East Anglia. He had lived a secret life at home since his first sexual experience with a boy at 13. Aged 17, his mother challenged him and he told her the truth. He ran away after suffering a violent assault from his stepfather who said that he could no longer live at home if he was gay. He escaped to a family friend and ended up in a variety of London hostels. After some scary experiences he met and lived with a wealthy older gay man who helped him to sort himself out and find work.

In contrast with Brian, who did not, or could not, disguise his sexuality (but whose parents nevertheless could not cope with it) Jerry, Angus and Ivan tried to explore their sexuality in secret, hiding their thoughts and experiences from family and friends. In all three stories we can see the intolerable strain of living a lie and the terrible consequences once the truth was out (which in a sense justified their deceit). Ivan loved his partner but suspected his desire to go with men could shatter family life if it was discovered - which indeed it did. Angus led a double life until an anonymous phone call put an end to family life. Angus and Ivan not only lost family support but even worse were cut off from and branded as a danger to the children they loved. Since no explanation was given they fear these children assume they have been deserted.

Jerry, hiding who he was from his violent stepfather and bullied mother, knew that his only hope was to try to make it through to university where he would have more freedom to live his life as he wished. However Jerry could no longer hold on until the time when he could see an end to his misery, and the need to speak the

truth to his mother became overwhelming. For Jerry the price of honesty about his sexuality was to exchange his dream of university for the unknown perils of street life. Ironically, as we shall see, Jerry's story heralds many of the themes we found in the stories of those in our second, more privileged higher education sample.

Findings: young, gay and making it through to higher education.

We now turn to the higher education sample, who in contrast to the young homeless LesBiGay people described above, might be seen to be relatively privileged.

Methods

Again we combined a qualitative and quantitative approach to learn about the experiences of this population. In-depth life-history interviews were conducted with 20 young LesBiGay people, 10 women and 10 men. We sought a range of experience from contrasting locations, and recruited participants from old and new universities in London, Manchester, and East Anglia. Participants were contacted via university LGB societies and (to ensure the participation of more peripheral young people) through snowball techniques.

We then utilised a new research tool, email dialogue, developed by Dunne (1999) in her earlier work on gay fathers. This tool was designed to explore the extent to which our qualitative findings held across a larger sample. The Higher Education Email Dialogue (HEED) was shaped by our interview schedule and was informed by themes and issues that emerged in our interviews. While the collection of detailed quantitative data was a primary aim, this was no simple survey. Taking a life-history format (administered in two parts which focused on different time in the life-course) we were keen to encourage participants to share their stories with us by combining closed and open questions. HEED provided extensive opportunities for elaboration and clarification of respondents' individual life narratives. The degree to which they did elaborate on their experience (often in lengthy explanations and detailed asides) and the richness of these qualitative insights, highlights the value of HEED's design for extending in-depth interviews to a greater number and range of young people. In addition, the positive feedback received from respondents suggests that we successfully achieved another important aim - that participation in HEED be both an enjoyable and empowering experience. HEED was distributed, via LGB societies and snowballing techniques, to young LesBiGay students in a wide range of Higher Educational Establishments across England, Scotland and Wales. We received 117 completed HEEDs from young LesBiGay people in 28 different universities across Britain.

The Data

Given recent changes in the funding of higher education, loss of family support could seriously jeopardise a young LesBiGay student's chances of going to or

remaining in university. Here we look at one theme in the accounts of our higher education sample - the issue of if and when to come-out to parents, and the subsequent consequences. For the majority of the interview sample (and 40% of the HEED sample) coming out to parents had been delayed until they were at or about to go to university, while a minority of the interviewees (and 33% of our HEED sample) seemed to have put it on hold for a later date. Parental responses ranged from acceptance and support to longer-term processes of degrees of negotiated acceptance and support (often fraught with silence, conflict and family distancing) and for some, explicit family rejection and the removal of support. These three different parental responses are described below.

Family acceptance and support

In the interviews we found examples of unqualified parental support for their children's sexuality (in the HEED sample this was 11%) as the stories of John and Jules show. Although both respondents were initially anxious about telling their parents, their support has played an important role in John and Jules's successful higher education careers.

John: 'coming out in a small-minded place.' John is about to take his finals at a London University. He grew up in a large market town in the South-West of England with professional parents and recalls a happy childhood. He was tall and strong as a child with good verbal skills and says he was never bullied, 'despite liking arts subjects and acting, and hating football'. At 13 John had some sexual exploration with a boy the same age - just playing around he thought. By his mid-teens John became aware of gay nights in local bars - but he realised that to be seen visiting would be 'the kiss of death' in such a small place, and anyway perhaps 'it was just a phase'. At 17 John felt he was gay and although terrified, went to a gay club and later had sex with a man.

His choice of London was pretty random, although he had always intended to go to university. While his first year there was a bit lonely and disconnected, his second year was much better. He was particularly anxious about coming out to his parents and to friends at home - which he describes as a small-minded C/conservative place. When he did tell them his mother said she had suspected, hoped that he might change his mind and then became accepting. His father and older sisters were all very positive.

Jules: 'I told my mum but not my dad.' Jules too came out in his second year at a Northern university and found his mother and her boyfriend very supportive. Unlike John he is financially independent with a grant and a loan. Jules was always close to his mother who never went to University but really wanted him to

go. He says he was a clever child, seen as a 'sissy and a mummy's boy' and bullied at school for all of these. He says he has always felt gay (he was involved in early sex play with boys at the age of 12) but reacted against this by having lots of 'intense relationships' with girls. Then his best friend came out as bisexual and he and Jules had a bit of a (secret) fling.

He was determined to go to university and very soon found his college gay scene - which he loved. He came out to his mum six weeks after starting University. She was initially upset but quickly came round, and her boyfriend Pete (a cab driver) was very supportive. John says he couldn't have come-out while living at home, and he finds University 'a very sheltered place to be gay'. It's given him loads of confidence and he feels very open-minded about people now. Jules goes back most holidays although even with this high level of acceptance and support Jules feels he cannot be 'comfortably' out at home.

Neither John nor Jules really knew if their parents would stand by them, and coming out to them was an ordeal that had overshadowed their lives for some years. Like others in our higher education sample, even where parents had turned out to be supportive, all of our respondents had suffered from extreme anxiety about the unknown quantity of their reactions and what this might mean for their university career.

It also involved thinking about the reactions of wider family and community (John's parents urged him not to come-out to his grandparents, Jules knew his father would not be so accepting, and both were very anxious about being identified as gay in possibly hostile home towns). Even with understanding parents neither felt they could, or would want to, live at home as openly gay (by inviting a partner back home for the weekend, for example). Nevertheless John and Jules describe being able to depend upon parental support, both financial and emotional, and the strength and freedom this has given them to get on with their lives and their studies.

Coming out to parents: a more risky business

In other cases we find that the process of coming out to, or worse, being found out by, parents was more fraught and the outcome more negative (17% of the HEED sample had experienced mostly or very negative responses when they came out at home, and 28% were anxious about parental responses if they did come out). This was particularly so when university finances were at risk. Griff and Mira have experienced this in different ways.

Griff: 'I can't risk coming out to them yet.' Griff, aged 22, is in his final year at a new university in London. He is from a deprived working-class area of Essex and his father is a labourer. At his rough boys school he was seen as being not 'sufficiently masculine' and avoided bullying by hiding in the library - throwing himself into

schoolwork. Griff did not come-out to himself until Sixth form, and luckily he was able to talk to a teacher who turned out to be gay himself. He sees that help as being essential to staying on and getting into university.

One of the first things Griff mentioned to us was that he was not out to his parents. Like many of the young people we interviewed, early on Griff had gauged parental attitudes through the medium of TV, registering their comments on gay issues with dismay. They were deeply homophobic - saying it was disgusting - telling Griff that 'so long as he wasn't gay it would be alright'. Knowing this Griff has decided he cannot risk 'coming out' because he is financially dependent on his parents. He says he might tell them only when he doesn't need them to pay the rent any more - he is not going to jeopardise university because of what they think.

He hates this duplicity, borne of his reliance on his parents and he feels he is using them. Moreover, as a consequence, he cannot be openly out at university either, only to a very few close trusted friends. This puts him in a kind of social limbo: 'neither gay nor straight'. Griff wanted to go away to university so that he could find himself, but feels that he hasn't yet succeeded.

Mira: 'Shutting the window of opportunity'. Mira too couldn't live openly at home. She is now in her first year at a Midlands new university but has paid a high price for being true to her sexuality: she ran away and gave up her place to study law at a prestigious university in order to escape. Mira comes from an orthodox Sikh family and her parents had great hopes for her. She had done well throughout her schooling, although she had a strong sense of not fitting in, and felt isolated from others, concentrating only on her schoolwork. Life began to change when she and her parents moved from the suburbs to an inner-city area with a high concentration of Asian families in a Northern city. At 16 she found herself surrounded by other Asian children who were 'modern... who didn't follow the rules, who challenged their orthodox upbringing'. Discovering an alternative way to be a young Asian woman supported her journey of discovery. A close Asian female friend introduced her to a lesbian cousin and a gay male friend and together they visited gay clubs. Mira and her friend began a flirtatious relationship. She says it was never sexual - it was the pleasure of equality: as two women how could one person be in control?

Mira's first relationship with a woman was at the age of 18. They saw each other regularly. During this time she gained a place to read law. However her parents insisted she live at home during her student years. Financially she saw no other option - 'I could not survive independently'. She was unhappy but prepared to pay the price - she says that university was her 'window to freedom'.

Then her life took an unexpected new direction. Suspecting that she had a boyfriend, her parents started to ask what she was doing in the day. Eventually she could not stand the tension and leaving a brief note she ran away to friends. Mira's parents discovered that she was a lesbian. They finally made contact and persuaded her to come home. But now the rules had changed again. Except for lectures, she was confined to home, answerable for every action. This time she ran away for good, moving in with her girlfriend's family, 40 miles from home. Mira is now at her local new university. Rather than becoming the barrister she dreamed of, she is studying criminology. She receives no financial or other support from her parents, and funds her education with a full student loan and part-time shop work.

Losing the support of your family

We end with two stories of young people whose career at university was completely cut short by withdrawal of parental support. Alec's story has a better ending, in that, after some years he found his way back into higher education. The ending to Parvel's story we do not know, although we suspect that it cannot be a happy one.

Alec: 'We disown you'. Alec, aged 22, is now in his first year of a degree course at a London university, a significant personal achievement as he is making it through without family support (although they are relatively well off). Alec first realised he was gay at secondary school - a rough school where he had been bullied - 'for being posh and for being queer'. He realised his sexuality was a potential source of trouble - to be kept secret - worked hard at school, and did incredibly well in his GCSEs - all 'A's. During the lower sixth he felt more confident, came out to close friends, explored the gay scene and began his first steady relationship. Just before his 'A' levels, he had a row with his mother and it all came out. She was very upset and aggressive, constantly shouting, calling him names like 'poof' and 'queer'. It was horrible and he couldn't concentrate on schoolwork. Although Alec had a university place to read English, she refused to support him, saying she wouldn't give him money to go and would disown him. His dad remained silent.

Unable to stand the strain, Alec left home, took a supermarket job and lived in a shared house with his boyfriend. He sat his 'A' levels but had to give up his university place. The two young men have been together ever since. Realising he needed a degree to get on, Alec became increasingly motivated to go to university. Using money that he has saved over the years and a student loan, he is now studying accountancy. He continues to have a very difficult relationship with his parents.

Parvel: 'Disappeared'. Parvel was unusual amongst our respondents because he contacted us via email while confined in his parents' home. He could not meet us, but he spoke of urgently wanting to have the opportunity to tell his story and to

have it recorded. We learnt this over several weeks in a series of email and telephone conversations. His story is only partial as he was unable to maintain contact.

Parvel was 23 years old, had been attending a London university and defined himself as British Indian. He had grown up in a small Midland town. He felt gay at secondary school, but knowing no other gay people he kept his sexuality a secret. He seized on the opportunity to do a degree and chose a university where he knew there was an accessible gay scene. Parvel spoke of the importance of having the chance to explore his sexuality away from his family and have a good time on the gay scene. He says he realised it was OK to be of a different colour and sexuality; he was meeting really nice guys and feeling happy and confident.

As his confidence developed he felt he was ready to tell his family. He first told his brother, who said Parvel was normal, not a 'weirdo', so he must be sick and needed to see a doctor. His brother agreed to keep this information confidential until Parvel could tell his family himself. Unbeknown to Parvel however, his brother immediately told them. Parvel then got an urgent call to return home - his father was seriously ill. But when he got back he found himself a prisoner - he had to agree to give up his education: they had lied to him about his father. Parvel wrote to us that he could not argue his way out 'I am really stuck'.

We never heard from Parvel again (his email address was closed down) so we do not know the details of how his family responded when he returned and what prevented him from simply running away. Importantly, we do not know what kinds of threats and sanctions the family imposed to keep him at home. Perhaps he believed that he had to choose between two families and two communities - his family/community of origin, and his new family/community of choice.

While many questions remain unanswered, including Parvel's religious and social background, our brief relationship with Parvel brought great insights in allowing us contact with a young man on the margins of gay experience. He represents one of the most invisible contact groups and our inability to meet him and hear his (partially told) story speaks to both his importance as a research subject and the invisibility of his experience.

Discussion

Let us return now to consider the issues that arise when we compare these accounts from our two different samples of young LesBiGay people. Clearly their current situation provides a sharp contrast. On the one hand we have a group of young people who, by any definition would be judged as amongst the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and excluded members of society. Many have had seriously interrupted schooling. At a relatively young age their homelessness poses a serious threat to

their mental and physical well-being. In contrast the young people in higher education can be said to be successfully on track towards the independence associated with adult life.

Nevertheless, the study has revealed that, despite these *differences* in resources and positioning, the two samples articulated themes *in common*. These commonalities cluster around experiences that must be familiar to young LesBiGay people more generally as they explore a sexuality against the norm over a time of extended dependence and in the context of homophobia. We explore some of these themes below.

The meaning and consequences of difference

One striking commonality across the two samples is that the great majority had identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual during their mid to late teenage years and we believe that in doing so at such an early age they are unusual. Dunne, for example, has collected life-history data in three previous studies of LesBiGay experience (Dunne, 1997; 1998a; 1998b; 2000; 2001) and has noted a tendency for people to come-out in their early to late twenties or later. An early suspicion of difference, evident for many of the participants interviewed in these earlier studies, was unlikely to have had the label lesbian or gay attached to it until further along the life-course. We argue that the meanings attached to difference have to be seen in their historical and cultural context whereby alternative narratives of gay lives are coming to be more widely available to young people as they negotiate their identities today (Donovan and Weeks, 1997; Plummer, 1995; Ciddens, 1992).

Ironically, however, the greater visibility of alternative sexualities in popular culture, which may facilitate the questioning of heterosexuality, and may encourage greater tolerance, appears also to provide powerful weapons for others to police identity more effectively. For example, homophobic bullying may actually be more widespread than it was a decade ago (Douglas et al, 2000; Rivers, 1995; Rogers, 1994). The young people in our sample usually did not immediately attach a name to their difference. For the young men in particular, names were supplied in the form of bullying at school. This naming almost always arose because they did not quite fit in with prevailing gender stereotypes – the boys' dislike of football, their pleasure in the company of girls, their interest in school-work, or their avoidance of the lads. Discovered in this way, the labels lesbian or gay appeared both tantalising and horrifying, supporting their initial rejection of these labels as applying to them. Immensely attentive and sensitive to the reactions of others (parents, teachers and peers) and to any representation of gay issues, most struggled with their suspicions in silent turmoil. Thus, for almost all of the young people in our study, the social frameworks of understanding available to them at a key time of sexual exploration

both facilitated gay identification and at the same time signified that it could only be a source of trouble, exclusion and possible danger.

We argue that it is likely that more people will come to question and move beyond heterosexuality and at a younger age than has been possible in the past⁵. This is important because it raises the crucial question, what resources are available to a person of this age who seeks to negotiate an identity against the norm?

A light at the end of the tunnel?

A second theme relates to the pushes and pulls which shaped respondents' desire to leave their home-base, as well as their choices of where to go. For many in our study these two factors overlap: in experiencing the home and/or neighbourhood as landscapes of fear from which they seek to flee (Dunne et al, 2002), young people are often drawn to areas with well developed, visible gay communities. Others found the experience of a home life predicated on hiding their emotions, lying about relationships and policing all manifestations of a gay or lesbian identity intolerable. Thus, a common and powerful theme - their quest for an authentic sense of their own sexuality - united the two samples.

Here again, material and social circumstances shaped the solutions available. At some crucial moment of crisis young people with little support or reason to stay at home and with no sense of an independently viable future had cracked. With little to lose they had simply upped and left, becoming homeless, often by their mid teens or earlier. Importantly, they commonly spoke of this as their first experience of agency, exchanging the constraints and sometimes dangers of home-base and locality for the opportunity to find alternative communities where they could experience and live more authentic lives. This quest was often punctuated by trauma and danger as they set about exploring their new identity in a strange city. Cut loose from their home-base, with no other means of support, they had fallen through the welfare safety-net, ending up in hostels and relying upon the mercy of strangers. Although homelessness was a dire step, as one young woman commented, 'nothing could be as bad as staying put'.

In contrast, university could be seen to represent a light at the end of the tunnel for the higher education sample. These respondents spoke of having initially put their sexuality on the back burner. Thus university provided a 'marker' beyond which they would gain more freedom to 'be themselves' - they would not have to wait forever. Certainly their interviews resonate with images of 'hanging on', being patient, biding time until this moment arrives, and this is reflected in the fact that the higher education sample tended to wait until they were about to go or were at university before exploring more adult same-sex relationships or coming out to parents.

Like Mira, respondents' choice of university location often reflected their desire to explore their sexuality away from home (over 70% of the HEED sample noted this as an influence). None of the interview sample and only 6% of our HEED sample lived at their parental home during term time. Moreover, choices for interviewees were often influenced by whether there was a known gay community within the university or in the locality (for 67% of our HEED sample). However, the achievement of a place at university did not guarantee the end of anxiety. As we have seen for our interviewees, the withdrawal of financial support was always a possibility. This anxiety was evident for a large proportion of the HEED sample (40%) and these concerns were not without foundation, as 47% of HEED respondents knew of someone to whom this had happened.

The 'dark side' of family life.

A final and overarching theme, which ran through the accounts of all of the young people in the study, was both the fear of and the reality of negative reactions to their sexuality and subsequent loss of support from family members. This can have serious consequences. First, most young people experienced deep levels of anxiety about this possibility while others took extreme actions to ensure their parents (and others) did not find out. Others, as we have seen, experienced the withdrawal of financial and practical support once their parents knew of their sexuality, and some the equally damaging withdrawal of emotional support. Yet others found their worst fears came true: they suffered physical violence and/or were completely rejected and thrown out of home.

Most of the young people in the study had experienced anxiety about parental reactions from an early age. For example they had worried about letting them down, disappointing parental expectations of marriage and grandchildren, and had been scared by hearing dismissive or homophobic comments while watching TV or witnessing family responses to openly gay relatives or neighbours. Some may also have experienced parental or carer abuse which made them fearful of coming out to their families. Thus, for a variety of reasons, far from being able to explore early feelings of difference, almost always these had to be kept hidden. Crucially, anxieties about parental responses meant that they usually kept silent about homophobic bullying at school, both to parents and to teachers. To complain might elicit unwanted questions about their sexuality; 'no smoke without fire', as one interviewee said.

They reported a variety of strategies for concealing these feelings of difference and minimising their vulnerability at home and at school. Some had become 'loners' avoiding all group situations, and for boys, opting out of games or spending time mostly with female friends. Some had retreated to their rooms as soon as they got home from school. Yet others had engineered conspicuous heterosexual relations

as a cover. Thus, because of their sexuality, almost all of those in our study experienced degrees of alienation and isolation in the two environments where young people are meant to feel most protected and supported: home and school. Ironically however, some of the higher education sample reported strategies which may have enhanced their school career – like becoming lunch-time library monitors, attending homework sessions or (for boys) avoiding lads groups – while our homeless sample had often opted out of school completely.

These problems became more acute over time. Increasing peer pressure and parental expectations of romantic/heterosexual activity left respondents more vulnerable to exposure. For all there was the overpowering desire, at some point in their teenage years, to be able to explore their sexuality. As we have described, some put this on the back burner, but others took the plunge, testing the water, falling in love or having a relationship. Thus throughout these years many of our sample carried a heavy and lonely burden of confusion, anxiety and sometimes real fear about their identity and what would happen if their sexuality became known at home. Few were able to be openly out about their sexuality, and if they were it was likely to be at Sixth Form College, 'when the bullies had left', and a more liberal and mature ethos prevailed.

We have described the weight of these anxieties for those in the higher education sample, for whom the watershed of going to university represented a new life away from home. While at school and fearful of the consequences of speaking about their sexuality they usually kept silent. Once exposed some did indeed lose support - financial, practical and emotional. Others found that support was often predicated on playing straight and returning to the closet at home. This parental banning of any explicit recognition or discussion of their children's sexuality, thus withdrawing the emotional and practical support of a family base where the young people could be accepted for who they were could be equally devastating. For many in our homeless sample, there had not even been this choice. Seeing little to hang on for they risked the streets in pursuit of their identity. As we noted earlier, our quantitative analysis revealed that a parent's intolerance of their child's sexuality (including physical abuse) triggered a housing crisis for up to a third of the young people contacting the agencies. The life-history interviews highlight a range of more complex and subtle links between the difficulties associated with negotiating alternative sexualities and homelessness.

Unable to activate or stripped of parental support because of their sexuality, many young people in both our samples felt a real sense of abandonment. At a practical and financial level, with no alternative means, this absence precluded, cut short or

made vulnerable the educational careers of many. This sense of abandonment had often arisen early for the homeless sample, coming later for those in higher education. At the emotional level, in the words of one respondent, 'your family was NOT there for you as families should be'. This meant that young people in our study had often negotiated and rehearsed their sexual identities over many years, alone, with no support from parents or indeed from professionals who may be able to help, like teachers (Trotter, 2001). This can be a particularly painful experience for young people who were being bullied at school for being gay, who may be trying to delay coming out until they were away from home and for whom thinking about such issues was not a sudden whim but a long term search for authenticity which had quite literally turned their lives upside down.

Conclusion

The 'haves' and the 'have nots' in our study, despite their very different social locations, appear to share many common features in the transition towards an independent life away from home. These shared vulnerabilities, we argue, spring from their common experience of negotiating their sexuality against the norm. However, as Savin-Williams notes (1998:xii) it is crucial that this is not translated by policy makers and professionals into a view of young LesBiGay people as *inherently* vulnerable: clearly it is social interpretations, processes and attitudes which make them such. Our research (Prendergast et al, forthcoming) suggests that in 'living difference' they not only find innovative and imaginative ways of overcoming obstacles, but they also often create new forms of living which the mainstream has much to learn from (Dunne, forthcoming).

We have stressed the need to locate respondents' experiences in the wider social context, and have illustrated ways that the lives of many have been negatively affected by shifts in educational and welfare policy. We argue that the visibility and vulnerability of young LesBiGay people is a product of the paradoxical social circumstances faced by all young people in Britain today - and possibly more widely across Western Europe and North America (Dunne et al, 2002). Young people may have greater opportunities to imagine different sexual identities and lifestyles (Plummer, 1995:154; Donovan and Weeks, 1997) but if they act upon this knowledge they are likely to discover that this difference has yet to achieve wider social tolerance. The problem is exacerbated by familial ideologies and policies, which act to extend the period upon which young people are dependent on their families of origins. In this wider context of increasingly eroding or absent social and material infrastructures to support difference, negotiating an alternative sexuality can be a risky business.

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Notes

- 1 It must be noted however that the desire for early independence may vary across Europe, notably Spain (see Holdsworth and Elliott, 2001).
- 2 See Prendergast et al (forthcoming) for a discussion of our approach to interviews and the extent to which they aimed to facilitate empowerment rather than introduce/reinforce a sense of victim hood.
- 3 See Dinne et al (2002) on the difficulties that can be faced by young LesBiGay people in mainstream provision.
- 4 We note with interest that a recent National survey of sexual behaviour for 11,000 adults in Britain, aged 16-44, found that by the age 24, 1 in 19 men, and 1 in 20 women have experienced a gay relationship (Guardian 2001)

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YOUNG GAY MALES EXPERIENCES OF COMING OUT IN THE CONTEXT OF SCHOOL

MARK CASEY

This article seeks to understand the 'coming out' experiences of young gay men using material produced from in-depth semi-structured interviews that employed a life history approach with a group of six from a large town in the North East of England. The sample were contacted using the method of 'snowballing', (via word of mouth, through mutual friends), with those taking part self-identifying themselves or their sexuality as 'gay'. The age range of participants was set at 18-30, 'youth' now being approached as stretching well into the mid to late twenties. Eighteen was set as the lower age limit, as research with gay males under this age (the then legal age for gay male sexual intercourse) could have been ethically problematic (Epstein and Johnson, 1998:100). I was interested in the experiences of the research sample of coming out to different audiences in different spaces and times, especially their experiences within the education system, coming out to friends, and to family members. I also wished to explore strategies they may have employed to 'hide' their sexuality before their initial coming out. I aim to explore the differences and similarities in respondent's accounts of coming out, and chart the development of their gay identities, illustrating some key aspects of the theoretical debates concerned with coming out experiences, and their adequacy in the context of the research presented here. I will also examine whether, coming out experiences of those within the research sample mirror the 'stage models' first developed in the 1970s by those such as Plummer (1975) and Cass (1979), suggesting that the coming out experiences of contemporary young gay males are more complex than previous academic theorising suggests (see Troiden, 1988). The analysis discusses first, the academic understanding which uses 'linear stage models' and '*queer theory*', second, the identity of the 'gay self', and third, the 'public self', concerning the audience with whom those in the sample have shared their gay identity.

The School.

The experiences of the sample in the education system have been chosen as the main focus of this paper as it is often through the school, a place of every-day life activity for the child, that sexual identities are constructed and given meaning (Epstein and Johnson, 1998:2). Within the UK, the school is legally obliged, as well as expected by wider society, to educate the pre or asexual child about sex or more specifically, about appropriate and socially acceptable (hetero)sexual relationships, particularly reflected within the ever present 'Section 28'. Epstein comments that within UK culture, the split between the public and the private is one that is

approached as unproblematic, one in which we are accustomed to making. The school falls clearly into the public domain; sex and sexuality fall clearly into the private domain and yet, it is the very public space of the school where sexual identities are developed, practised and actively promoted by pupils, teachers and other participants (usually heterosexual mothers and other carers) (Epstein, 1994:5). Though the process of school based identity production can never be final, it can have long and significant consequences on individual lives (Epstein and Johnson, 1998:3). The experience of the gay male during his time within schooling, and the sharing of his sexuality with his friends/parents are intrinsically linked to his experiences of coming out and the development of his sexual identity. When adolescents are likely to be identifying with a sexual identity for the first time, they are likely to be still within the schooling system. Rogers, (1994), comments that there is little help or support for the pupil in this situation. Schools are microcosms of society at large and where pupils do not conform to the expected (sexual) norm, they often experience negative discrimination (Rogers, 1994:31). Unks, (1995) and Herdt and Boxer, (1993) argue that the education system has a significant role in the 'culture of heterosexism' that exists in western societies. This 'denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behaviour or identity relationships', (Unks, 1995:6). For the school pupil, encountering the sexuality of students and teachers is part of the school experience and initial sexual encounters often occur during this time. The school culture expects such interactions, and will often promote them through school discos, school paper gossip columns, sports groups, sex education, the yearbook and so on. However, it is heterosexual relationships that are encouraged and supported, while the possibility of other sexualities is largely ignored (Unks, 1995:5). Epstein (1994) suggests that the secondary school in particular provides a site for practising heterosexuality within the context of developing conventional gender roles, and there is a presumption that girls will have boyfriends and boys will have girlfriends (Epstein, 1994:5-6). If students act upon same sex sexual attractions or are even suspected of being homosexual, they face the risk of punishment and judgement from their peers, and sometimes even from their teachers. Masters, Johnson and Kolodny, (1992) comment that adolescents are more likely than any other age group to commit violence against homosexuals (Cited in Unks, 1995:6). The presumption of the 'naturalness' of heterosexuality for school pupils (and teachers) is encoded within the encounters, language, and institutional practices of the everyday life of the schooling system. Through their experience within the school, gay teens learn that most space is heterosexual and that they will have to develop strategies and tactics for negotiating what Skeggs terms, 'this unremitting normalisation' when moving through and occupying public (heterosexual) spaces (Skeggs, 1999:214).

Linear Stage Models.

Theorists such as Cronin, (1974), Dank, (1971) and Hooker, (1965) typically understand coming out as a single or discrete event where an individual defines themselves as being either gay or lesbian (cited by Nardi, 1998:230). This analysis can no longer be seriously accepted. Research by Plummer, (1975), Cass, (1979) and Troiden, (1988) using life stories of gay men and lesbians, suggests that coming out should be understood as a 'linear process', that includes various milestone events along the way (Rust, 1996, cited in Hunter et al, 1998: 58). Numerous theoretical models have been developed concerning the possible 'stages' that gay males go through as they come out to themselves and to others, with each model having been influenced to some degree by its predecessor. The most widely accepted and supported of the 'linear stage models' concerning the coming out process, were those developed by Plummer, (1975) and Cass, (1979).

Linear stage models conceptualise the process of coming out within an essentialist framework. The sexuality of a gay man or lesbian is said to develop over a period of time, and as this development progresses, the individual passes through a number of 'coming out experiences'. During these stages, it is argued that individuals will become aware of same sex feelings, will come out to themselves, eventually coming out to others, (friends or family), and meet and socialise with other gay men and lesbians before eventually reaching an 'end stage', within their coming out and sexual identity development.

In Plummer's early work (1975), homosexual identity formation should be approached as part of the larger process of what he calls 'becoming a homosexual'. He argues that 'becoming homosexual' involves a decision by an individual to define themselves as homosexual, learning homosexual roles and deciding to live as a practising homosexual. Plummer suggests that there are four stages: 'sensitization'; 'signification and disorientation'; 'coming out'; and the final stage, 'stabilization' that gay males pass through in the development of a homosexual identity (Cited in Epstein, 1987:136-47). Further research by McDonald, (1982), and Kahn, (1991) along with Troiden, (1988) who engaged in research concerning the 'acquisition' of gay identity, provided empirical support for Plummer's four stages of homosexual identity 'development'.

One of the most respected theoretical accounts of homosexual identity formation, (Hunter et al, 1998, Troiden, 1988), which was the first to attempt to explain identity development for both gay men and lesbians was developed by Cass (1979). Cass suggested that there were six stages of 'homosexual development': 'identity confusion'; 'identity comparison'; 'identity tolerance'; 'identity acceptance'; 'identity pride'; and 'identity synthesis' (Cass, 1979, cited in Troiden, 1988 and Hunter et al, 1998:58).

The linear stage model developed by Cass, (1979) was one of the most widely used theoretical accounts for understanding the coming out experience during the course of the late 1970s and 1980s. However, social developments in the contemporary western world, and the characterisation of these developments as 'postmodern' have subsequently affected the issue of homosexuality in general and thus the coming out process itself. Taylor et al (1998:59) argue that the earlier coming out models may not be generalisable beyond the cohorts that entered adolescence when they were developed in the 1970s and 1980s (Butler, 1993, Zizek, 1989 cited in Medhurst and Munt, 1997:188). For the gay adolescent/young gay man coming out since the late 1990s, the whole experience and reactions from others towards their sexuality are significantly different from those of previous generations. These differences are framed by the presence of an increasing gay visibility within the media, the infamous 'pink pound', gay spaces (such as Soho in London, and 'The Village' in Manchester) and a Labour Government that is increasingly liberal on gay rights. The differences are further complicated by issues such as ethnicity, social and economic deprivation and geographical location (Skeggs, 1999, Smith and Mancoske, 1997, Bell and Valentine, 1995). During the course of the 1990s, changes such as gay youths coming out at an earlier age have been documented, with the time between the suggested 'coming out stages' being condensed into smaller time scales. This may be particularly relevant in the large urban areas and the heavily media-saturated communities in which the majority of individuals now live. Coming out literature generally suggests that youths who live in large urban areas have potentially increased opportunities to make positive homosexual contacts, whether this is through the local gay community, support groups, the media or the general higher acceptance of 'different lifestyles' in urban areas (Anderson, 1987, Robertson, 1981, Silverstein, 1981 cited in Hunter et al, 1998:10). New research indicates that the self-awareness of a lesbian or gay identity may now occur, for some individuals, during the middle and late teens years, rather than in the early to mid twenties as previous research had documented (Hunter et al, 1998, Unks, 1995, Troiden, 1988, Dank, 1971).

Contemporary queer theorists, (e.g. Taylor, 1999, Munt, 1997, Rust, 1996, Olson and King, 1995) suggest coming out must now be considered as a life-long process and experience for most gay men. Gay men are continually stepping out of and stepping into new situations where they meet and interact with new audiences in new spaces where their sexuality is not known. As Rust (1996) argues, the early linear stage models do not acknowledge the coming out process as being a life-long experience (Cited in Hunter et al, 1998:58-59). The 'end stage', discussed by the linear stage models implies a developmental process of sexuality that can and will have an end. Yet even where individuals come out to everyone they know and are

happy with their sexual identity, they will still go through future changes and experiences as new situations arise in their life and as new meanings become available to them for defining their sexual preference, activity and identity/(ies). The process of coming out is a constant process of negotiation which is more contextual and contingent than suggested by the linear stage models.

Queer Theory.

The suggestion that earlier coming out may not be generalisable beyond the cohorts that entered adolescence during the time these were developed has increasing empirical support from more recent developments in the study of sexuality. During the late 1980s and into the 1990s a new and controversial, yet powerful area in the research of sexuality has emerged, 'Queer Theory'. The emergence and popularity of Queer Theory can be approached as generally denoting a poststructuralist and postmodernist approach to understanding categories of sexuality and gender (Richardson, 2000:37). Queer sexual identities can be characterised by their fluid character, to be deployed in numerous forms, in different spaces, times, and to different audiences (Jackson and Scott, 1996:15, cited in Richardson, 2000:38).

The emergence of Queer Theory indicates that a significant change has occurred in the way that society, academics and homosexuals themselves approach sexuality, homosexuality and the place of the homosexual in the contemporary western world (Altman, 1996:1). The term 'queer', that previously had negative connotations, has now become a positive 'umbrella term', used to cover the coalition of culturally marginalised sexual self-identifications. Anything that is not understood as being heterosexual is identified as Queer (Jagose, 1996:1). For those such as Roof, (1997), Queer is trying to occupy an 'identifiably postmodern position' in relation to the modernist identity categories that it challenges. The term 'queering' stands in for identities such as gay, lesbian, trans-gender, trans-sexual, in other words anyone who is not purely heterosexual or aligned with traditional gender categories. Queer enables the individual to think beyond the simple modernist categories of heterosexual or homosexual allowing whole new sexual identities and lifestyles to emerge (Roof, 1997, Medhurst and Munt, 1997, Altam, 1997, Gamson, 1995).

Despite a number of early reservations and concerns about Queer Theory, such as that it may be assimilationist, insofar as it 'masks' the numerous and important differences between lesbians and gay men; that it was also a term of the oppressor; and that it may be increasingly used to be specific to gay males experiences, it has become an important phenomenon for gay men and lesbians in the contemporary context (Medhurst and Munt, 1997). Queer has been adopted as a means of taking action against negative stereotypes and inhumane discrimination, and it provokes

a collective sexual politics that seeks alternative ways of being and existing. It also illustrates the continuing development and fluidity of sexual identities, challenging old certainties and divisions, including *'the epistemology of sexuality itself'* (Hearn, 1994:49). Queer Theory has ruptured the more traditional and rigid models and theories through approaching sexual identity as *'fluid'*, created within the specific historical and social moment. Within Queer theory, *'homosexual identity development'* becomes impossible.

The development of the theory, but more importantly the term *'queer'* and its use by an increasing number of gay men and lesbians, particularly *'queer youth'*, suggests that the present cohort of contemporary gay males are significantly different to previous generations. It is now important to understand the implications that queer has for gay male identity/(ies), and coming out experiences. Changes which have occurred within contemporary society, and the emergence of queer theory, imply that previous models are too prescriptive and are no longer helpful for explaining contemporary experiences of coming out, particularly for *'queer youths'*. The research used to inform this paper set out to discover whether or not this is the case

The Trouble With School.

The self-awareness of identifying as a gay male, or what Plummer (1975), and Cass (1979), would define as the initial stage in an individuals sexual development, is most likely to occur during the teen years while the gay male is still at school. D'Augelli (1991) concluded from his research that self-labelling by most gay males of themselves as *'gay'* occurs from age eleven upward, when the physical and personal transformation of puberty begins (Cited in Hunter et al, 1998:59). The initial suspicion and questioning of their sexuality or gender identity by gay teenagers and their peers can be a harrowing and stressful time. During this time the school system will often ignore the needs of the gay pupil, while the child is bullied and harassed by fellow students (Duncan, 2000, cited by Stellmacher, 2000:56). Yet the bullying by peers concerning a victim's sexuality will often occur long before the child has began to question and suspect their own sexuality:

In the first year I felt the same as the other lads, there were six of us, real good mates and we just hung out and did stuff really, but by the second year they started getting into lasses and I didn't. and that's when the bullying started, getting called 'puffter', 'queer' and stuff like that, real nasty stuff (Gavin, 23).

I was bullied from an early stage at secondary school, for being a 'puff' or what-ever, even though at the time I was unaware of those feelings, and so should have been the others. But they just picked me out and bullied me

for it... but at the same time I had a girlfriend, I was sexually attracted to girls, and that was that. Just because these retards were calling me 'puff' did not mean that I was suddenly going to think 'oh I am gay'
(Darren, 28).

The more they said I was gay or what-ever the more I thought I was
(Lee, 20).

The secondary school can be a space where gay teens, whether suspicious about their own sexuality, or sexually suspect to others, are open to the constant gaze, questioning and potential bullying (verbal or physical) by others, concerning their sexuality (Unks, 1995, Isay, 1994). Verbal and physical bullying by other students concerning a pupil's suspect sexuality, is used to police gender and sexual categories, to ensure no challenge is made to the hegemonic 'norms' present within the school (Mac An Ghaill, 1994:164). The gay teenager, in the school environment, may for the first time encounter the idea and subject of homosexuality, but this is unlikely to be through the school curriculum. Rather it occurs through the bullying and victimisation. It is during this time that the child may have initial doubts and questions regarding their own sexuality. Gavin, in his first year of secondary school was unaware of any difference between him and the 'other lads'. But by his second year the suspicion by others concerning his sexuality had been aroused in his peers, with the bullying initially beginning concerning him being a 'puff' or 'queer'. For Lee the more intense the bullying became during his time at school, the more he began to doubt and question his sexuality, and consider the possibility that he could in fact be gay. For the gay teenager, bullying experienced within the school system can be harrowing, and often unexpected. Such victimisation often occurs long before the child themselves are aware of the possibility that homosexuality as a sexual preference is open to them (Durby, 1994, cited in Hunter et al, 1998:129-133, Herdt and Boxer, 1993, Telljohann and Price, 1993). The school then becomes the space where the acceptable and the unacceptable sexual identities for the teenager to choose from are developed and fought over.

For those who are suspected of belonging or having the 'wrong' sexuality, or gender role identity (anything that isn't active heterosexuality) the consequences can be severe. The school environment can become the place where the gay male will experience his first 'outing' to others, regardless of whether it is a true reflection or not of his own understanding of his sexuality:

*I had began to loose a lot of friends, I am still not sure why but may-be it was not cool to be seen with someone that was increasingly **the** (emphasis from respondent) school 'puffer'*
(Gavin, 23).

They would tell my friends, not to hang out with me, cos' I was a queer and a puff, and that I would come onto them too, even though I didn't
(Mike, 20).

Though Gavin at this stage in his sexual development was unaware regarding his homosexuality, he was increasingly recognised, by himself and others within his school, as what he terms, '*the school puffer*'. For Gavin this was his first (forced) outing concerning his sexuality to others, and his first experience of living as an 'outed' gay male. Yet he was still a number of years from identifying himself as a gay male. For Mike, the decision of whether or not to tell friends that he was gay was taken from him by other pupils at his school, who labelled him as '*queer*' or a '*puff*', and told others so. The experience of being bullied for the gay teen is usually a gay male's first experience of the potential negative reactions by society to those whose sexuality is not heterosexual. Though such an 'outing' is premature and often unfounded it can still carry many of the problems, issues and stigmas that someone who has come out through choice will experience concerning their sexuality (Martin and Hetrick, 1988 cited in Hunter et al, 1998:132).

For the sexually suspect pupil, the teacher or the school system is often the only hope to help end their victimisation. But all too often bullying and victimisation concerning a child's sexuality, particularly homosexuality is ignored by the school. This is often attributed to the continued presence of Section 28 (Duncan, 2000 cited by Stellmacher, 2000:56, Telljohan and Price, 1993, Martin and Hetrick, 1988). In this context, within sex education, many schools will not deal with or approach the topic of same sex relationships. Thus the education system aids the presumption by other school pupils that heterosexuality is the only acceptable, and only possible sexual lifestyle for a child to attain (Redman, 1994:147):

I used to get taunted non stop, it was fucking awful and the teachers would do nothing about it... they would just pretend they had not heard it
(Gavin, 23)

Well they knew he got bullied in the class and if something was said to him, they would tell who-ever to shut up, but as far as I know they never got the bullies after the class to leave him alone
(Wayne, 19).

I'm not sure if the teachers knew that I was being bullied or not, but to be honest I don't think they would have done anything about it anyway
(Mike, 20).

I never told them once, I was scared to, but I do think they were aware. At the end of the day they were present in the classes when it was going on, and they would just say stuff like 'shut up' to the bullies
(Darren, 28).

The learning space of the classroom, even with the presence of a teacher does not offer the sexually suspect child a safe space from victimisation and bullying (Martin and Hetrick, 1988). The classroom setting then becomes yet another space for the battle between the assumed prescription of heterosexuality, and the undermining of the existence of homosexuality. The classroom is one of the few spaces where the child's bullying is clearly visible for the teacher to witness, but the subject area that the bullying concerns, 'homosexuality' is to remain invisible, along with the child so associated (Uribe and Harbeck, 1992, cited in Hunter et al, 1998:134). For the child who thinks he may be gay, the culture, spaces and environment of the schooling system ignore and devalue the homosexual, and in doing so support the dominant ideologies of heterosexual culture (Epstein, 1994, Herdt and Boxer, 1993).

All but one of the research sample had developed and acted upon their same sex attraction a number of years before their twentieth birthdays. However, the reason behind the awareness of same sex attraction or homosexuality as a sexuality that is available does vary. For some gay males bullying within school can arouse suspicions regarding their sexuality, while others may become aware that they are 'different' from other boys their age. For others the development of a gay male relationship can occur after the break up of a heterosexual relationship:

Well I think I was aware from a young age that I was different from other boys...probably when I was 12 or 13 that I realised that I was gay, or should I say I began to know the feelings that I had were known and described as gay
(Gavin, 23).

I first had sexual feelings for men at the age of 11 or so, when I first started puberty, but I did not think much of them until I was 17, when I started to think about them again, and then decided that I was in fact gay
(Rob, 19).

I think if I admit it, when I started puberty, about 12 or 13 I would look at other boys getting changed at school during P.E...but I really didn't think about it much
(Wayne, 19).

The arousal of potential gay feelings and attraction occurs in the early teen years for the majority of gay males (D'Augelli, 1991, McDonald, 1982). But this initial

interest within the same sex is not considered by all teens as being a homosexual interest, as Plummer, (1975) and Cass, (1979) would suggest. Instead it is often regarded as a passing phase or a simple interest:

During P.E. I noticed them getting body hair and stuff, but I don't think I fancied them or anything

(Wayne, 19)

Wayne acknowledges that he had an attraction to boys at the age of 12 or 13, but this is put down more to an interest in other boy's bodies as they go through puberty and the physical transformations associated with this. He does not associate this with sexual feelings after all, '*I had girlfriends*'. For some gay males the initial feelings of being attracted to other males are soon forgotten. For gay adolescents the culture of the school is not one that permits the coming out of the gay self, due to the associated stigmas, dangers, social penalties and lack of support within the school, for doing so. It is the freedom of the post-school years that offers the potential and space to the gay male to come out and explore his sexuality. The freedom granted by the removal of the heavily heterosexualised institution of the school is the time that for many gay males they come out to themselves and to close friends:

It would have been probably my 2nd year at sixth form. I was head over heels in love with this lad called Graham Clare, even though he was straight...I just remember feeling so strong for him that I had to tell my best friend at the time Vicky, and she was cool with the whole idea... and that was the first time that I ever came out to anyone, and some how I think I also came out to myself, that this is it, 'you are gay, and men are for you', and there was no going back from there

(Gavin, 23).

I was about 17, in college doing my A'Levels, and I knew this lad who was gay, and one night I asked if I could go onto the (gay) scene with him and he was cool with it. I never sat him down and said 'oh by the way I am in fact gay', but I fancied him, and after a few drinks I got up the courage to snog him and that was that

(Rob, 19)

Well I was about 17 at the time, I told my best mate. She said she knew anyway and was cool with the whole idea, she even came on the scene with me

(Lee, 20)

It was when I was at art college, I met this gay bloke called Alan, I mean I didn't fancy him, but I was just amazed to know that gay people really

exist. I told him at New Year, after I had known him for about six months that I was gay too, I mean he was cool with the whole thing, well he had to be, he is gay!

(Wayne, 19)

For all but one respondent, (Darren, 28) coming out to themselves and a close friend occurred when they were 17, roughly one year after leaving secondary school. The response to the revelation by an individual about their homosexuality is crucial for the future coming out situations that the individual is to go through. If the response is negative the implications can be long lasting with the gay man possibly 'returning' to the closet for a significant period of time (Rust, 1996). On the other hand, a positive reaction can induce further coming out to larger audiences and the 'speeding up' of the sexual development of the individual:

Well I told my friend Adele just before my 18th birthday, sat her down on the patio at some party and told her, which was real hard, but she said she knew and was cool with it, just like Vicky. Because the feed back had been so good off Vicky and Adele I told all my other friends at my birthday, and they all seemed ok with the idea which was cool

(Gavin, 23).

Well I go to uni at Dundee and when I first went there I suppose I was pretty 'closed'... after the first couple of weeks my new best friend as such just came out and asked me if I was and I told her I was and she was like 'that's so cool, I've never had a gay friend before'. Her positive response made it easier to tell others

(Rob, 19).

The positive reaction from female friends here, and other gay men, for many regarding their sexuality, are often in complete contrast to those that they had previously experienced so far in their lives as gay teens/young gay men. Acceptance by others can, and will, entail the increased acceptance by the individual of their sexuality, and the growth in their confidence as a gay male.

Conclusion.

The research sample used here, due to its small size, is not intended to be representative in any way of all gay males experiences. Nevertheless, the findings do support previous work of queer theorists who have questioned the prescription of the earlier linear stage models.

The different personal experiences of gay adolescents of the schooling system, and the coming out to their friends, afford different coming out experiences for gay

males. For those in the research sample there were few shared experiences or stages as suggested by the prescriptive nature of the linear stage models. For those in the research the development of their sexual identity and many of their experience of coming out can be characterised as unique, complex, and lengthy.

The self-awareness by those in the sample of sexual feelings that could be characterised as 'gay' occurred for some sample members as early as eleven years old. For others, this initial self identification did not occur until the mid to late teens, and for one, their early twenties. These findings are in line with other current theoretical understanding that suggest that for the majority of gay males, coming out or the identifying of sexual feelings as gay can occur from the early teen years up into the early to mid twenties (Unks, 1995, Isay, 1994, D'Augelli, 1991). Contemporary young gay males are characterised as becoming aware of their sexual feelings from anything from eleven years old, to their early twenties. Thus the possibility of experiencing the same developmental 'stages' as suggested by Plummer, (1975) and Cass, (1979) are unlikely. For those who are aware of their same sex sexual feelings while still in school, or are at least sexually suspect, the experience of their developing sexual identity will be very different to someone who is not aware until their twenties. The culture of heterosexuality that is a dominant theme within the school culture (Epstein and Johnson, 1998:108-9) entails the gay pupil or sexually suspect child to be the victim of homophobic bullying, with the added pain and confusion associated with their sexuality. Those who did experience homophobic bullying within the sample, such as Gavin (23), were often victimised, having their behaviour policed for not conforming to the hegemonic norms of the school space, *'they started to get into lasses and I didn't'*. For those who are not sexually suspect or aware of any same sex attraction during school, such as Rob, (19) and Wayne, (19), the experience of the school environment, and thus their sexuality, is very different to that of those who do suffer from homophobic bullying due to their known or suspected sexuality (Mac An Ghaill, 1994).

For those in the research sample the reasoning behind coming out to friends varied considerably. For linear stage models such varied reasons are not considered. The linear stage models prescribe that positive contact with other gay men will aid in the coming out of a gay youth, to themselves and friends. But for four of the sample, coming out to close friends occurred initially, before making contact with other gay men. For these respondents, such as Rob, (19) the mixture of positive 'feedback' off friends and his brothers to his sexuality were crucial in his own acceptance. To characterise Rob's coming out experience as that prescribed by the linear stage models is not possible due to it being significantly more complex and less fixed than they suggest. The linear stage models are too simplistic in their approach and

too fixed in understanding the potential reasons behind the contemporary gay male coming out. Queer Theory is much more suitable for understanding these varied experiences because it acknowledges that the coming out experiences of contemporary gay males are now more likely to be numerous, complex, varied and continuous, in a society that carries few of the characteristics of the society of the 1970s and 1980s.

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Classic Texts Revisited

R.F. Mackenzie

State School

Harmondsworth: Penguin 1970

KATE PHILIP

State School documents an attempt to humanise education for working class children in Scotland in the early seventies. It is a synthesis of three books written by R.F. Mackenzie about his experience as head teacher of Braehead, a 'junior secondary school' in a declining mining village on the coast of Fife in Scotland. Mackenzie's challenge to traditional approaches to education was very much in tune with wider themes of social change of the time. It also coincided with the emergence of social movements that Mackenzie viewed as elements of a new 'cultural revolution'. For Mackenzie, education had a key role, 'to put life and purpose and community back into a society which is at odds with itself' (Mackenzie, 1970:133).

For Mackenzie education lay well beyond the confines of formal schooling and his work holds valuable insights for youth work, community development and citizen's rights. *State School* is a powerful indictment of what he described as the punitive and bureaucratic educational system in Scotland. He accused school-based education of brutalising both children and teachers in an alienating system that aimed for conformity rather than questioning and reinforced the hegemony of an unequal society.

For Mackenzie schools were centres of social control but they also held a potential to transform society. Society itself was in a state of uncertainty and flux. This flux was most evident in the ways young people who are already disadvantaged, lose hope and become disenchanted at an early age having been judged failures by the examination system. Full scale reform of both content and method was called for to prevent this disintegration. Arguably, this somewhat apocalyptic vision bears some resemblance to current government anxieties about young people's potential to undermine the fabric of society although the solutions proposed by Mackenzie are based on very different premises.

His optimism about social change through education was tempered by an understanding that elite groups with vested interests would undermine this by manipulating ordinary people into believing themselves incapable of taking control. To Mackenzie real learning took place in a climate of support

and mutual respect. His critique of formal education as a commodity in which knowledge remains the monopoly of 'experts' has strong resonances with Freire's (1976) notion of education as 'banking'. It also links with notions of schools as sites for the accumulation of 'social capital' by the bourgeoisie which Bourdieu identifies (1977) as a means of excluding other groups from power.

Mackenzie suggests that a 'full education' takes place through dialogue, discussion, and an engagement with the social, political and natural worlds that starts from the young person. Through such a process, learning becomes a shared enterprise between teacher and taught where curiosity spurs both on to find out more and to make sense of what is going on. In this scenario, schools could afford young people both a 'respite from pressure' and an opportunity to try new experiences and so work towards a more meaningful curriculum. A key element of this was the extension of the classroom beyond the school building and in particular finding ways to draw on the skills of people living and working in communities.

Mackenzie - a Scottish radical and an international thinker

Although an internationalist in outlook, reading and experience, Mackenzie was a peculiarly Scottish writer, teacher and radical thinker for his work is a continuing link to an alternative educational tradition in Scotland: that of Patrick Geddes, William Boyd and the freeschoolers of the twentieth century, John Aitkenhead and A.S.Neill. Mackenzie and Neill corresponded regularly on the challenges of bringing free school education to the state system (Croall, 1983).

In important respects, R. F. Mackenzie's own education represented that of the classic 'lad of pairs': he grew up in a working class family in the rural north east of Scotland, doing well at school and going on to shine at the local university. His railwayman father did overtime to pay his university fees, as he did for all his six children. Both parents viewed education as a means of escape from poverty and the narrowness of their own existence, being highly independent characters who inspired a critical take on the world. His father deployed a fierce intellect on the examination of biblical texts and bluntly informed his undergraduate son that he wanted to hear *his* opinions, not that of his professor. Mackenzie described his mother as a perfectionist, skilled in music, art and embroidery who, as a young woman, to the dismay of her family, had travelled across Europe as a ladies maid, the only option available to escape the confines of a small fishing community.

CLASSIC TEXTS REVISITED

As a teenager, Mackenzie spent hours with an anarchist railway clerk in his shack named 'Utopia' talking politics, history, literature and religion. This experience and his university studies confirmed his already critical attitude to formal education. After graduation, Mackenzie set off with a friend to bicycle across Europe seeing first hand the growth of fascism. He saw this trip as 'real education' grumbling that 'for four years of developing life we played with words and imagined we were handling realities' (Mackenzie and Diack, 1935:1). Their panniers held a bag of oatmeal for food, a tent, a box of books and a typewriter on which they recorded daily notes of their travels, many of which were later published. This set a lifelong habit of communicating experiences and developing ideas in order to challenge an academic history which he criticised for 'telling the stories of the generals and never the troops'.

His output was prolific embracing all kinds of media from books to newspaper articles with his work attracting attention from across the world. He was very generous with his time acting as a lecturer on citizens' rights for a welfare rights project, joining meetings of freeschoolers, and supporting a whole range of community based activity in Aberdeen in his years at Summerhill. In all this activity, he demonstrated the indomitable faith in human nature and the infectious warmth and humour that infuses his writing.

State School

In his introduction to the book, Mackenzie outlines his earlier experiences as a botany teacher at a free school in the New Forest. Knowing little of botany, he had been open about his ignorance with his students and found that the joint learning became a process of discovery which he describes vividly in a passage that typifies his engagement with children and with the natural world,

In those botany classes we were nearer, I think, to integrating education into a full enjoyment of life than I have usually been since. There was a full sensuous quality about it. There was drama in the discovery of the deadly nightshade; and one bright, bright day out in the Forest in wet ground coming on a group of sundews and watching them absorb the insects they had trapped.
(ibid: 8)

The school was run by the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry as an experiment which aimed to integrate new ideas in education with an understanding of the outdoors and with children's own interests. He describes activities at

the school as sometimes comical, 'a mixture of Red Indians and Freud'. He makes an important point which underpins his own later persistence and commitment in the face of ridicule and hostility,

Many people made fun of it at the time. The founders weren't unduly disturbed. I think they had emotional reserves enough to know that people who confine their philosophising to theoretical discussion are on safe ground, but that as soon as you try to put your own original ideas into practice the great gulf between the neatly turned sentences in which they are enunciated and the raw and insufficient reality is bound to make you silly. They were prepared to look silly, and go on...

(ibid: 8)

Braehead - the Coal Town

Buckhaven, on the Fife coast presented a strong contrast to the gentle setting of the woodland school. Mackenzie felt strongly that working class children should profit from the benefits of freeschooling: he reasoned that in a junior secondary, the pressure for examinations would be eased enabling the development of a more flexible curriculum. This could offer scope to interweave out of school and in school learning.

A.S. Neill of Summerhill was highly pessimistic about the potential for success, or even survival, in the state setting. He wrote to Mackenzie, suggesting that,

guys like you are the heroes that work inside the system with all the handicaps that never touch me,

and later warned that

...if you are a pioneer you have a lifetime of fighting all the dead people who are in authority. You have made your name and remember that the devils are scared of any guy who writes books.

(Croall, 1983: 21)

Mackenzie and a growing band of likeminded young colleagues who comprised a good proportion of the teaching staff, set about replacing a system based on the 'suspicious and drilled conscription for the machine' with a 'living education'. The book details a wide range of examples of work that developed, within this broad curriculum and relates these to issues that arose and to wider questions about the purpose of education. A range of opportunities were seized upon by the staff to stimulate and capitalise

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on the young people's interests:- these included the dilemmas for pupils involved in the new school council; pupils working with journalists to learn about news and then using the knowledge to produce a newsletter; the building and launching of a boat, lobster pots and fishing gear; innovative sex education programmes; learning about the law by querying a judge and observing courtroom work; gliding; music; and arts work. However it is in the description of work in the outdoors that the book really comes alive. The accounts of residential trips form some of the most powerful passages with vivid descriptions of the countryside, the small changes and great leaps made in the confidence and skills of students, and the opportunistic use made of local worthies and experts. A passage that captures the essence of this work documents a trip with which many youth workers may identify,

I think that almost unconsciously the pupils were learning a lesson you can't learn in the classroom, that in a Highland journey...the discomforts, the depression, the wet clothing, the spilt soup and the cold, are indissolubly bound up with the top of the morning happiness. You can't have one without the other
(ibid: 113)

The school was donated an old building by a company but it needed substantial work undertaken to make it safe. Over two years, Mackenzie argued with the council for support to develop the building as a residential unit. The dream of the Inverlair scheme collapsed due to the timidity of the council and Mackenzie deftly highlights the negotiations and contradictory attitudes of officials and councillors.

Mackenzie's rationale for the benefits of such a 'full education' was based on a conviction that education could offer powerful experiences for young people as they confronted the realities of growing up in Coaltown,

We want them to see at first hand the web of economic life, the interdependence of foresters, lock-keepers and railwaymen and paper workers and printers and the people who provide them with entertainment, build houses for them. And what we are looking for, for our pupils is that being as they are, 'displaced persons' for the Coal Town pit is likely to close down shortly..to give them an education which will help them to understand and endure and survive the Industrial revolution which is disrupting their lives and to choose wisely when they take their place in tomorrow's world.
(ibid:80)

In important respects then, Mackenzie was working with a notion of citizenship, but a citizenship which was based on recognition of the potential of young people rather than their deficiencies. Here his vision is couched in terms of survival in an uncertain and potentially hostile world. The actual transformation of society, envisioned earlier is here defined as a long term aim.

One of the strengths of the book lies in Mackenzie's ability to critically reflect on his own actions and mistakes, as in his account of trying to ban corporal punishment, a process which culminated in dissatisfied staff appealing successfully to the Director of Education to lift the ban. This excerpt also illustrates how his sure touch with children did not always extend to work with all staff, some of whom he viewed as too concerned with immediate, and to him, trivial problems, to the neglect of the wider social implications. On the other hand, many who worked with him, remain strong and convincing advocates of his approach, some having been convinced of the value of this through argument and discussion with Mackenzie. One such teacher commented later, that the system could not cope with Mackenzie as 'he upsets their certainties and questions their truths'.

Mackenzie was also adept at learning from interventions that failed or incidents where young people reacted negatively as for example, when, on one nature trip, school students destroyed a large amount of wildlife. This attracted a great deal of negative press attention which fanned some of the discontent already being expressed about his methods.

The conflict with parents at Braehead is closely analysed with an acknowledgement that he had neglected to work with them in any serious way, having focused his attention firmly on the young people. Nevertheless some interesting examples are given of discussions between parents and Mackenzie. Many of the former saw the emphasis on art and the casual approach to exams as evidence that their children were being cheated of a 'proper' education, however much the system discriminated against them. This demonstrates a tension concerning the school as a community resource. Mackenzie would have been horrified at the thought of the school being perceived as remote from the young people but appeared to place less importance on drawing parents into the processes.

The education authority was ambivalent about Mackenzie from the outset: proud to be seen to be promoting an experiment attracting national

attention but unwilling to back requests for practical experiments and fearful of substantive change. When difficulties arose, they tended to retreat and fall back on conventional responses. Subsequent closure of the school was vigorously opposed by Mackenzie and the strong staff grouping that supported him. Again Mackenzie analyses this as an example of systemic faults and as an element of a wider malaise. The lead up to this is clearly and rather bitterly summarised in the final chapters. Clearly these experiences tap into and explore enduring themes in Scottish and UK policy towards young people.

Current relevance

It is clear that some of Mackenzie's hard fought battles have now been wholly or partially won: for example, the outlawing of corporal punishment in schools; the inception of school councils; and the focus on socially inclusive education are now national priorities. However the underlying themes of Mackenzie's work remain central to current debates around the role of education such as the controversies about 'failing schools', standardising of education and the coercive nature of much schooling. The retreat into uniform, discipline and a standardised curriculum as solutions to the challenges facing education are all equally anathema to the kind of education promoted in *State School*. Debates over the appropriate balance of empowerment and control within social policy directed at youth, the nature of social exclusion and the purpose of education consistently retread the ground of *State School*.

For example, the concept of the 'new community school' is often presented in a highly ahistorical way. The work of R.F. Mackenzie illuminates serious ideological tensions underpinning these 'new' interventions as well as presenting evidence of earlier approaches which addressed similar issues albeit with a different concept of the relationship between learner and teacher.

The current rhetoric about partnerships also owes something to Mackenzie who viewed such linkages as actively involving children as participants in key decision making arenas including the curriculum. Thus school councils were not composed of the budding politicians, but open meetings in which all could have their say. Neither was the content just about deciding who should staff the canteen or coffee bar but about the nature and content of the curriculum. Anarchic, noisy and combative, such meetings offered a genuine taste of democracy and opened up important

questions about representation, accountability and democracy. Crucially such approaches were not seen as ends in themselves but experiments in democracy.

Much of the content of *State School* reinforces the significance of those youth work approaches which aim to develop genuinely negotiated agendas between staff and young people so that education becomes a voluntary activity rather than a compulsory chore. The benefits of a voluntary relationship in which mutual respect is built up and from which a negotiated agenda is possible, opens up the potential for both individual and collective learning. The emphasis on education as an enjoyable, even sensuous experience which builds on the interests of the young person and helps them reflect on their situation in a 'safe' context lies firmly at the centre of *State School*.

Mackenzie's introduction of a sex education programme which started from the concerns of young people themselves was genuinely ground breaking and must have raised considerable ire among the more conservative elements within the wider community. Current school based sex education is still criticised by young people for being designed to fit with professional discourses rather than their own needs.

This book is written out of a passionate commitment to young people, not with a mawkish sentimentalism but with a profound belief in their capacity. The polemical style of the book may obscure the development of some points but lends the overall argument an energetic tone. Inevitably the tragic unfolding of events around the closure of the school leads to a sober final chapter. However, he strikes a challenging if idealistic note,

They refuse to be patronised any more. The lesson of history is clear enough. The intellectual elites...will have to go. That means we shall have to start treating all human beings with the same respect. And from there it will be easier to find and tap a new emotional dynamic to put life and purpose and community back into a society which is at odds with itself.

Mackenzie after Braehead

On leaving Braehead, Mackenzie moved to Summerhill Academy in Aberdeen in the North East of Scotland. Here the local council initially promised both scope and support to develop his radical agenda within a mainstream secondary school. However, early on it became clear that political support for such a radical shift was ambivalent. Predictably, the

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issues of corporal punishment and discipline became key areas of contention, much of it being focused around a highly innovative guidance system. The arguments, the political loss of nerve and the eventual suspension are powerfully documented in Mackenzie's book, *The Unbowed Head*.

Mackenzie himself somehow continued to write throughout the debacle - replying to critics in the local and national press, setting out his own analysis in newspapers, journals and at conferences. As with all his work, the case attracted national attention much to the embarrassment of many officials in Aberdeen. More embarrassing still, the clarity of his reports to the Education Committee frequently tied politicians and educational officials into knots by exposing their double thinking.

What has often been forgotten is the strong support that Mackenzie commanded from many colleagues and some politicians, education officials, parents and the wider community. His charismatic approach convinced many initially sceptical of his approach, a feature that was recognised even by his opponents.

Many pupils at Summerhill were in no doubt about their loss: they organised a week long strike in support of Mackenzie. It is unfortunate that little attention, as yet, has been paid to young people's accounts of their experience of Mackenzie's Summerhill. However, Murphy (1998) records that shortly before his death, 200 ex pupils of Summerhill turned up for a reunion with Mackenzie and staff and recorded how they had been influenced by him in the bringing up of their own children.

In the aftermath, Mackenzie refused an offer by the Council to head up a special unit for disruptive pupils. It was clear he would secure little support to do anything other than 'patch up' children. He continued to discuss, to talk to students in community work courses about the educational content of their work, to lecture on education on citizens rights courses, to present papers at educational conferences and above all, to write. A.S. Neill's pithy letters to Mackenzie (whom he described as a 'bonny fechter') also reveal the depth of isolation both faced. For the rest of his life, Mackenzie continued to lambaste the punitive educational system and what he described as 'cosmetic changes' that he viewed as 'not even papering over the cracks'. But he also never ceased outlining alternative approaches, writing a final book, *A Search for Scotland*, in which he revisited many themes hinted at in earlier work.

The 1996 controversy over the Ridings school in Yorkshire provoked interesting comparisons with Braehead from Peter Preston in the *Guardian* (quoted in Murphy 1998; see also Clark 1998). Apart from this however, Mackenzie's legacy has been largely overlooked. For youth workers and community educators, Mackenzie's insights and principles validate the principles of education as a critical, reflective set of processes based on voluntary relationships and mutual respect. Restating the centrality of such an educational philosophy may be an important means of underlining the key role of good youth work practice.

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Simon Hackett

These two books cover important, but largely different, ground. Corby offers a review of the evidence base across different dimensions of child abuse, taking into account recent developments and the major shifts in thinking relating to child abuse and protection that occurred during the course of the 1990s. Skinner's book provides an exploration of how survivors of child sexual abuse (CSA) cope in the aftermath of the abuse and how this process can impact upon professionals who are supporting survivors.

Skinner's book is based on a small-scale qualitative study of survivors of CSA and their mothers, as well as teachers who have experience of dealing with CSA survivors. The book is structured clearly with an initial section exploring issues from the literature relating to mother-child relationships, followed by an analysis of how abuse impacts upon such perceptions. There is useful discussion of the well-established, but unfortunate, professional tradition of 'mother-blaming' in such situations. Skinner then analyses issues relating to the support of survivors and potential impacts arising as a result of the abuse experience. In so doing, she reviews a range of well-known and established theoretical constructs and research studies. The most interesting section of the book comes when the author presents the findings of her research and separate chapters are offered exploring the issues related by survivors, mothers and teachers. In total, Skinner presents the experiences of seven female survivors of CSA. Despite the small nature of the sample, Skinner respectfully gives voice to their experiences, linking these to the wider literature base and reflecting on her own processes and responses in the interviews. Some of the insights offered are very powerful. Skinner also notes the degree of resilience and courage associated with many survivors. This is an

important counter-balance to other deficit and problem-based analyses of adult survivors of CSA. In addition, Skinner offers the stories of seven mothers whose children were sexually abused. Their experiences demonstrate how important it is for professionals to understand that non-abusing carers also face a difficult process in coming to terms with their child's abuse, and that this process may include profound feelings of disbelief, intense guilt and experiences of multiple loss.

Skinner also explores the experiences of fourteen teachers, many of whom felt unsupported and unable to address the impact of dealing with abused children in their workplace. Such are the issues for some that they appear to be experiencing a degree of secondary traumatisation as a result of their work. In the final two chapters of the book, Skinner suggests a number of models which help to integrate the distinct issues described by survivors, mothers and teachers. She suggests that these issues are dynamic and makes a number of very helpful suggestions about how professional systems could be developed to better support those in the front-line in helping survivors.

Corby's book offers a broader theoretical analysis of child abuse, but there are some points of cross-over between the books, for example in the detailing of the potential consequences of child sexual abuse. Again, this book is well-conceived and usefully divided into distinct sections, covering such areas as historical perspectives, child abuse definitions and their impact on policy and practice, the incidence and prevalence of abuse, theoretical explanations and impact issues. Corby aims to summarise the knowledge base in respect of physical abuse, neglect and sexual abuse within the family and intends to provide a critically informed knowledge base, primarily for those working in child protection. This he does well. As Corby himself makes clear 'this is not a how-to do-it book' (p.5) and detailed guidance on practice responses are beyond the book's scope. Aside from a brief section on definition, there is also curiously little on emotional abuse. Perhaps because this is the most problematic and least researched area of child abuse, but for these very reasons its absence is conspicuous.

I would wish to highlight two aspects of the book that are particularly helpful. The first is the way that the author contextualises the whole debate on child abuse by tracing the historical development of childhood and understandings about child maltreatment right up to recent developments in

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our professional knowledge base and systems. The second is the concise way in which the 'causation' of child abuse is examined from a variety of theoretical standpoints. These sections constitute essential background reading for anyone new to the field and would be of particular value to students within the broad social care field.

As an introductory text, Corby's book offers an invaluable grounding. Its scope is ambitious and the writing and presentation clear. However, those wishing to move beyond an introductory level to a fuller understanding of the different phenomena underlying this book's broad-based approach to the complexities of child abuse would do well to follow the recommendations for further reading offered at the end of each chapter.

In summary, there is much in these two books that will be useful to students and practitioners who wish to develop their knowledge around issues and themes in the harm and maltreatment of children. With the current emphasis on evidence-based intervention in social care, Corby's book is a useful point of departure for those wishing to access the developing research base. In presenting survivors' experiences, Skinner provides a valuable, and much neglected user perspective.

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Matthias Finger and Manuel Asun

Adult Education at the Crossroads: Learning our way out

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2001

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pp 228

Ian Martin

This is an interesting, ambitious and iconoclastic book. One to be welcomed on all three counts, but especially – in these days when so much is written about the earning and yawning and so little about the yearning versions

of 'lifelong learning' – the last of these. Its iconoclasm derives from the authors' attempt to reinstate the work of Ivan Illich, that insistent prophet of the view that in so-called 'developed' societies what is posed as the solution is nearly always, in fact, part of the problem. This is the key inspiration and resource for 'learning our way out' of the ultimately self-destructive impasse of 'development' from above by harnessing adult education to an alternative project of re-humanising the world from below.

Historically – and it is good to see history being taken seriously – Finger and Asun locate their own interests and purposes very much within the radical tradition of adult education. This is the tradition, defined here mainly in North American terms, which they associate in recent times particularly – and not entirely uncontentiously - with Paulo Freire and Participatory Action Research (PAR) in which adult education is at the heart of the project of learning for social justice and political emancipation. Increasingly, however, this tradition - always marginal in relation to mainstream adult education - has been squeezed out by revamped versions of the pragmatism of John Dewey and co and the humanism of Carl Rogers and co. These respectable and supposedly apolitical traditions are inherently more adept at adjusting to the pressing - and, in some ways, promising - demands of the 'turbo-capitalism' and 'casino economy' of today's globalised marketplace.

And here, of course, is the essential irony: Adult education - and, in particular, adult learning - have never been more central to the demands of both the state and the economy. This is evidenced in the mushrooming of privatised forms of learning to learn, personal development, self-empowerment, education as leisure, human resource development, retraining and up-skilling etc, etc. Whatever the current vogue for 'lifelong learning' may mean, there is undoubtedly a good living to be made here.

So, in a sense, adult learning has come in from the cold. But come in to what? Come in, in the view of Finger and Asun (which I share), to compromise and collusion: compromise with the view that adult educators are merely the neutral facilitators of individualised packages of adult learning; collusion in the tacit claim of globalised capital that there is no alternative to possessive individualism, economic competitiveness and industrial-/commercial development. It is the rejection of such compromise and collusion which lies at the heart of the book's argument, and simultaneously constitutes the agenda it advocates for 'learning our way out' of the

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dead-end bind of yet more development. This places another account of adult learning, rooted in a revitalised tradition of radical adult education, at the core of a deeply subversive alternative project. This project is essentially concerned with rejecting the hegemony of a model of development which puts economic growth and competition above human well being, social justice and the conditions for – a word much favoured by Illich – conviviality.

As Lenin famously put it, what is to be done? To answer this question, we need three things: critique (what's wrong?), analysis (why?) and prescription (so what?). It must be conceded that this particular account is stronger on critique and analysis than it is on prescription. But this seems entirely reasonable to me: we need to be enabled, through arguments of precisely this kind, to assimilate, address and refine alternative ways of thinking about what has gone wrong and understanding why this has happened before we can begin, as a communal process and collective project, to grasp what to do about it. This is our responsibility as agents in history: what Freire called our 'ontological vocation'. It has to be worked on and worked out in our lives, our own and various vocations.

In my view, Finger and Asun help us to begin to do this in several ways. First, they reassert the moral imperative that should be at the heart of our work: either we are for human emancipation or we are against it. Second, if we are for it, we must see our educational work as part of it – whatever the consequences in personal, professional or academic terms. Third, we need to modernise and reinvigorate our intellectual traditions and our political positions – without abandoning them. What seems to be advocated in this respect is a radically reconstituted hybrid of political economy, critical pedagogy and anarchism as a basis for addressing the global through the local. Fourth, radicals in the rich North must begin, seriously, to learn from ordinary people in the poor South about how not only to resist social atomisation and ecological degradation but also how to rebuild human solidarity and common purpose. Fifthly, what all this means is giving the capacity to learn as central a position in the alternative project of 'learning our way out' (as a starting point for what has been called 'globalisation from below') as it has come to assume within the hegemony of the dominant, there-is-no-alternative programme of globalisation from above.

As an adult educator, I welcome this book as a refreshingly unfashionable attempt to, as Keith Jackson once expressed it, put 'adult education in

history' as distinct from writing 'histories of adult education'. On the other hand, it must be said that, despite its title, this text is more about the centrality of adult learning to this project than the role of the adult educator as an agent of it. My own feeling is that the latter, however out of joint it may be with these self-directed and postmodern times, is an essential precondition of the former.

Finally, for readers of *Youth and Policy* there is, of course, the question of how all this applies to working with young people in particular. This is not a question which I feel I can answer with any confidence – but I hope that some youth workers will read this book, and show that it does.

Ian Martin, *University of Edinburgh*

Richardson, L. D. and Wolfe, M. (Eds.)

Principles and Practice of Informal Education

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Lyn Tett

This book arises out of the YMCA George Williams College's distance learning BA in informal and community education, which incorporates a professional qualification in youth and community work. It is aimed at first year students, as well as a wide range of colleagues in the field: new workers in voluntary and local authority schemes, their trainers and managers; students and lecturers on other qualifying programmes; professional practitioners at all levels of experience. It is an edited collection of chapters exploring the principles and practice of informal education mostly in a youth work context and, very occasionally, in community and adult education. Its authors argue for an approach that is relevant to a number of professional fields and takes its identity from a way of working, rather than from a specific target group. Such work, it is suggested, is

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essentially educational and is based upon working with people, rather than working for them or on them.

There are four parts to the book. Part I begins an exploration of the methods and values of informal education and attempts to define what is meant by the term. It also explores what it means to be an educator, the characteristics of informal education and the origins of informal education theory and practice. The three chapters in this section provide a theoretical, practical and historical overview on which the rest of the book is built. Discussion of the values introduced here are expanded in Part II, where the nine chapters explore the core values and key elements which underlie informal education, the attitudes and values that make it what it is. The six chapters in Part III, 'Elements of practice', highlight different and distinctive features of professional practice. The chapters provide complementary perspectives on the main methods and processes of informal education and approach the question of 'working with' from different angles and bring out different aspects of the relationship between learner and educator. 'The aim of the section is to focus upon those elements of practice that are the basic building blocks of practice and those that invite careful thought or critical questioning' (p 123). The final part, 'developing professional practice' considers aids to professional development which workers can make use of in order to be effective and responsive educators. The main 'helps' discussed in this section are managerial skills; participative research; supervision; and evaluation. All of them involve workers joining with others to develop their own practice in different ways. It is suggested that opportunities for professional development will vary with the work setting, but 'these chapters provide a checklist of the support mechanisms which should be available to every worker. Such support shows a practical commitment to the value of educators as learners and to the principles of informal education as a whole' (p 211).

I found this book very patchy with some gems, a few stones and a range of rather boring, but worthy, contributions in between. Amongst the gems in the first part was Tony Jeffs' chapter on 'Historical perspectives on informal education' because of its thoughtful and challenging discussion of the 'sanctimonious humbug about the inherently liberatory and radical nature of informal education' (p 46). It also showed how a historical perspective could alert us to the inevitable conflicts around the aims, priorities and control of education. In the second part the diamond was the chapter by

Mary Tyler on 'developing professional practice' that was designed to clarify the concept of confidentiality. Having explored the meaning and nature of confidentiality for informal educators she takes us through a number of 'what if' scenarios in order to clarify values, individual and agency roles, the law, and the roles other people play in making appropriate decisions. She shows that confidentiality issues are complex and demanding but in ways that enable her readers to grow in confidence about their own integrity.

In part three I would like to single out two specific chapters by Mark Smith on 'place, space and information' and Jean Spence on 'activities'. In the former I was particularly interested in the sections on geographies of power and exclusion and what that means for informal education and the section on 'working so that spaces become places'. Smith points out that 'we work in physical surroundings and contribute to the interactions that are going on' (p 145) by being present in a direct way that connects with space so that we can communicate. The beauty of this chapter is that it raises questions about the taken-for-grantedness of place and space and shows how place 'is linked in subtle ways to the identities which we and others bring to educational encounters' (p 52). Spence's chapter also calls for the questioning of assumptions by asking her readers to take a more critical perspective on the use of activities in youth work as informal education practice. She suggests that 'activities are the framework around which the educational aspects of work with young people are structured' (p 171) so that they become the subjects rather than the objects of interventions. The final gem in the book is the chapter by Alison Tomlin on 'working with basic education students as researchers'. Firstly I liked it because of its careful analysis of the negotiations that take place between 'tutors' and 'students' around power and authority and secondly it showed the processes and negotiations that need to be undertaken if students are to become active co-researchers. It was also very refreshing after so many chapters that were set in youth club contexts to have a quite different scenario but with a detailed analysis that could be transferred to a variety of settings.

This book would be useful as a core text for first year youth and community work courses and I would recommend it for this purpose. For those who are not in this category I would suggest that it be best borrowed from a library, as it is better to dip into it rather than reading your way through it all. In order to live up to its sub-title 'learning through life' there

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needed to be more careful editing leading to a greater percentage of stimulating and exciting chapters.

*Lyn Tett, Department of Higher and Community Education,
University of Edinburgh.*

Amy L. Best

Prom Night:

Youth, Schools, and Popular Culture

Routledge, 2000

ISBN 0 415 92428 6

£12.99 (pbk)

pp 170

Peter Ian Asen

In *Prom Night*, Best brings the American prom into focus through the lens of cultural studies. Whether he loves the prom or hates it, no American youth would dispute Best's assertion that it is a culturally significant event. However, *Prom Night* is important not for its claim of the prom's significance, but for its detailed analysis of the different ways in which the event reflects dominant American culture and the power relations that shape it.

Best focuses on four major, sometimes interrelated themes in this work - the prom as a space where the white middle-class reinforces its dominant ideologies, through parents and school administrators in particular; the prom as a reflection of American capitalist consumerism; the prom as a feminine space that has greater meaning and consequences for young women than for young men; and the prom as a site of political power struggle and resistance for youth.

As an American college student, I find myself constantly comparing my 'college experience' to the culturally dominant stereotypes about the college years that my parents' baby-boomer generation has shaped. Best contends that American teenagers face a similarly pervasive set of ideas

and images that shape their prom experience. White middle-class society defines the prom as a rite of passage into a more refined adulthood, a heterosexual space, and a site for fairy-tale romance. Best considers the extent and implications of youth internalization of culturally dominant messages through the prom. When girls stigmatize each other for wearing loud dresses, they reflect the influence of bourgeois conceptions of 'taste'. When prom goers receive champagne glasses, it is a momentary reception into the high culture with which the white middle-class wants to associate adulthood. And when a high school prohibits same-sex couples at the prom, with the exception of gay students able to demonstrate to the school that they are 'truly' homosexual, it serves as a reminder that the prom is supposed to be a romanticized space, an affirmation of heterosexuality as the preferred sexual norm.

To Best, societal discourse about the prom is an important force driving internalization. Calling proms 'pre-weddings', and more generally using wedding-coded language to describe the event's significance, is part of a broader effort of using the prom to subvert teenage sexuality with romantic ideals. Adults work to deny teenage sexual agency by presenting the prom as a potential space for adult romance, and prom-going youth are usually more than happy to claim adulthood for themselves. In a culture where they are rarely taken seriously, and even more rarely respected, teens understand that becoming adults, even only for one night, can be very beneficial to the way that parents and even peers perceive them.

Because the prom is a representation of the dominant discursive framework, many students decide either that the event is not for them, or that they should challenge its hegemonic foundations. This is where the prom becomes an outlet for political energies. In one of the book's more fascinating and in depth segments, Best looks at the experience of two African-American young women in organizing a prom at their racially diverse, urban high school. Serena and Katy put together a prom in a school where most students either consciously or unconsciously consider the prom a white space, even though the student body is only (also) 25 percent white. Their attempts to create a racially democratic prom, with regard to music in particular, prove very difficult and bring the pervasive but often hidden race and class tensions to the surface. While the pair is successful in raising prom attendance amongst students of color, and bringing the myth (perpetuated by the school's principal) that the prom is the 'ultimate

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celebration of togetherness' slightly closer to reality, their efforts take a heavy personal toll.

Best bases her study primarily in fieldwork that she conducted at four American public (no private institutions were included in the sample) high schools over the course of two years. The schools differ in racial, ethnic, and class composition, curricula and location. Best attended a prom at each of the four schools, and, in addition to speaking informally with dozens of different students at the prom or during school hours, conducted lengthy interviews with twenty-three students from a variety of backgrounds. She also analyzed a number of films that include the prom in their plot, as well as prom-related websites and magazines. It is her interviews, short segments of which she distributes liberally throughout the text, that are the most illuminating aspects of Best's research. Consistent with the subtitle of her concluding chapter, 'Learning to Listen,' Best carefully considers her interviewees' statements, and bases her conclusions directly on the information they provide. When she extrapolates, she does so within reason, and always with a foundation in the words and deeds of youth themselves. Thus, while *Prom Night* is both theoretical and academic, it is also clear, fairly accessible, and empirically sound. In the context of Best's work, the most everyday statements made by high school students (such as one young man's assertion that the prom is 'a girl conspiracy') come together to support a vision of the prom as a culturally meaningful event.

Best concludes the book not with hopes of eliminating the prom altogether, but rather envisioning a future in which students of all race and class backgrounds can democratically shape their own proms without subjection to the relations of power that typify America. She sees it as incumbent upon teachers and school administrators to provide a space where political challenge of the prom's dominant ideologies can take place, and recognition of the true diversity amongst students can occur. The hope is that one day diversity will not simply be a concept that teachers, administrators, and students pay lip service to, but a means of real cooperation and understanding. As a site where so many white middle-class norms and values converge, and a proven political battleground for youth, the prom is a perfect place to give the project of youth multiculturalism a meaningful start.

Peter Ian Asen is a student and labor activist at Brown University in the United States.

Gina Ingram and Jean Harris
Delivering Good Youth Work:
A Working Guide to Surviving and Thriving
 Russell House Publishing, 2001
 ISBN 1 898924 97 X
 £11.95 (pbk)
 pp 152

Sean Harte

In a time of seemingly constant shifts and transformations in the policy and practice of those working with young people *Delivering Good Youth Work* is a timely addition to accoutrements of the youth work practitioner.

In a way that is accessible to many, whether of limited experience in the field or a veteran of many years, *Delivering Good Youth Work* provides a framework with which we can better understand our personal motivations within the workplace. More practically it enlightens us to simple yet effective techniques which may vastly improve the quality of work which we deliver, whilst minimising the stresses and pressures we inevitably encounter in our daily work.

Whilst the book claims to be equally suitable for first-timers, volunteers and sessional workers, as well as those in full-time and managerial positions, the flavour of the text lends itself to a position somewhere between these extremes. Whilst the language and structure of *Delivering Good Youth Work* are indeed suitable for any reader, some level of youth work experience is required in order to fully appreciate and interpret the potential contained within the text. Four thoughtfully constructed sections provide a firm basis for personal exploration and practical improvement and specific encounters of the nature described upon which to reflect must ultimately lead to a more productive learning experience for young people.

Section One serves as a brief, yet fascinatingly intuitive account of the current position of young people within British society and the changing role of youth work in this context. Whilst far too short to be beneficial in itself, it serves as the perfect introduction to what follows.

The following section gives the reader a chance to explore what is understood by youth work, why it is important, and how it can be undertaken effectively. Seven short chapters explain in simple terms the importance of the work we carry out; why it is imperative that we

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understand and are able to describe this as professional practitioners; and how we can deliver good youth work in clear and simple terms. This chapter would certainly be invaluable to a new or inexperienced worker, whilst not entirely superfluous to a more seasoned worker.

Section Three describes strategies for effective self-organisation, including guidance on time management; stress management; defining and maintaining boundaries; and developing support networks. This section is especially useful in minimising the time spent on the many trivialities and bureaucratic manifestations which often limit the time available for what we describe as 'real youth work'.

The final section provides mechanisms for managing others, including chapters on supervision, staff development, knowing your organisation and interagency working. Whilst practical and maintaining the youth work theme, this section is probably the most limited in use as much of it is beyond the scope of a new or part-time worker, whilst a full-time worker or manager is likely to require something more in depth. Still, it is a sound overview with some clearly described action points for improved practice.

The information contained within *Delivering Good Youth Work* is both thought provoking and practical. Whilst the level of theoretical content would not lend itself to direct quotation for the student on an academic programme, the reflective perspectives and perceptive case studies should certainly assist the professional development and daily practice of any worker in this field. Indeed, as a worker in a new post, I found many useful strategies and observations to improve the quality of delivery and reduce the daily stresses and frustrations encountered at work.

To read *Delivering Good Youth Work* cover to cover would do little justice to its enormous potential. Instead it is best served in bite-sized chunks and savoured over time, gifting the reader time to reflect on the knowledge accumulated and to develop arrangements for the practical implementation of this learning. Indeed the subject matter of *Delivering Good Youth Work* lends itself almost perfectly to a structured training programme for a youth work staff team. Many of the suggested mechanisms for improving and consolidating good youth work could be taken and used within such a programme with little or no preparatory work.

The authors of *Delivering Good Youth Work* have made a miraculous job of condensing a plethora of useful practical tools, covering a range of youth work skills, into a little over 150 pages. This is a daring feat, and one that the text passes with distinction.

The only criticism I have of *Delivering Good Youth Work* is a minor frustration and comes from a very personal opinion. Whilst succinctly discussing the role and purpose of youth work, the reader is offered the now common foundation of the 'organic' youth work curriculum. Without elaborating upon the potential barriers and limitations that present to educators tied to a curriculum, whether organic or otherwise, we can fall into the trap of delivering a narrow range of educational opportunities to an equally narrow range of young people. I would have liked to see this area explored in more detail, however the size and scope of this text may ultimately make this impractical and unrealistic.

Whether or not *Delivering Good Youth Work* will live up to its claims to being a practical handbook for new workers, experienced managers and students and an 'essential support to you and your work with young people' remains to be seen. What it is however is a very readable and extremely useful tool for improving your work and the work of those around you. It offers simple guidance without being patronising, and provides a structured way to analyse, develop and improve your work with young people. I'm sure it will be providing help to many workers for some years to come.

Sean Harte is a fulltime youth empowerment worker with Middlesbrough Council.

Philip Bean

Drugs and Crime

Willan Publishing, 2002

ISBN 1 903240 36 0 (pbk)

ISBN 1 9032240 37 9 (hbk)

pp 312

Margaret Melrose

This is a timely and useful book given the current government's stated intention of breaking the links between drugs and crime. It provides a comprehensive overview of many of the issues associated with drugs and crime and raises important questions about the clarity and direction of the links between them. The author asserts that research that claims to demonstrate that crime rates rise as drug use increases 'may lack credibility' because in such research, crimes committed by drug users tend not to be compared with a control group of non-drug users. The book acknowledges that some types of drug use are more associated with crime than others and recognises that many drug users do not commit crime, apart of course from the crime of consuming illicit substances. Throughout the book, however, the term 'drug users' appears to refer to chaotic drug users or to those with drug addictions who, it has previously been suggested, are responsible for a great deal of acquisitive crime (Bennett 1998).

The book also provides a critical examination of the theoretical assumptions informing the drugs and crime debate. The author argues that existing theories of drug use, are for the most part, inadequate for theorising the drugs-crime link. He proposes that in order to understand this connection it is necessary to appreciate the social context in which drug use occurs. The book also examines the sentencing of drug offenders and provides an overview of facilities for dealing with drug offenders within the criminal justice system. It suggests that the most positive opportunities for breaking the drugs-crime connection are provided by a probation order with a condition of treatment. The discussion of sentencing raises some important questions about the sort of drug policy we should be pursuing as well as about policing. For example, 'How is it that most drug offences are for the possession of a small amount of cannabis?' (P.46).

The role of coercive treatment for drug offenders and mandatory drug testing are also examined in this book and the author provides a trenchant discussion of the ideological differences between drug treatment agencies and the criminal justice system. He suggests that the dichotomy between

coercive versus voluntary treatment is unhelpful and is critical of treatment agencies' opposition to coerced treatment. According to the author, the crucial factor in determining the success of treatment is the length of time the drug user is exposed to it rather than the means by which they are brought to it. He argues that there is need for rapprochement and greater collaboration between treatment agencies and the criminal justice system.

The author goes on to explore the role and use of Drug Treatment and Testing Orders (DTTOs) and Drug Courts (established in Scotland and Northern Ireland in 2001) and explores the question of what impact these new provisions are likely to have on the drug problem. The author makes it clear that in his opinion, drug courts would be more effective in tackling the drugs-crime connection than DTTOs. He suggests that Drug Treatment and Testing Orders are 'a weak carbon copy' of American drug courts and argues that they are 'lacking certain features necessary to make the system work' (p. 76). Thus, according to the author, DTTOs will fail to break the drugs-crime connection and suggests the time and effort that has been devoted to developing DTTOs should have been directed elsewhere.

The discussion of trafficking and laundering explores some central features of drug trafficking and describes the processes by which money from trafficking is laundered as well as international measures that have been developed in order to prevent it. This, and the discussion of policing drug markets, makes it clear that in order to tackle the drug problem it is necessary to disrupt supply at local, national and international levels. In terms of policing, the author argues that disrupting drug markets through low level policing is more effective in tackling the drugs problem than tackling the 'Mr. Bigs' who may be involved in trafficking and supplying drugs. The book also explores the role of police informers in successful policing of drug markets. It is only as part of this discussion (the use of juvenile informants) that any special attention is given to the issue of young people and drug use. This is surprising given the phenomenal rise of drug use amongst the young over the past decade (President of the Council 1998, Parker et al, 1998, Parker et al, 2000).

Towards the end of the book, a chapter is devoted to the issue of 'Women, drugs and crime' in which the author acknowledges that 'rarely in this book has reference been made' to the issue of gender (p.163). Personally, I would have preferred to see the issues covered in this chapter integrated into the discussions in the rest of the book rather

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than 'tagged on' at the end. The chapter leaves the impression that throughout the rest of the book, we have been concerned only with (adult) male drug users and drug offenders. Overall, however, this book makes an important contribution to the drugs-crime debate and will prove invaluable reading for anyone interested in, or concerned with, the contemporary problems of drugs and crime.

Margaret Melrose, Senior Research Fellow Department of Applied Social Studies University of Luton.

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Maria Ruegger

Hearing the Voice of the Child: the representation of children's interests in public law proceedings

Russell House Publishing, 2001

ISBN 1 898924 82 1

£16.95 (pbk)

pp 149

Anna Whalen

The creation of a unified service, the Children And Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) in April 2001 was the catalyst for this publication. The contributors to the book include practitioners, solicitors, a barrister, a judge and academics, which, in the main, makes for a well-balanced and interesting read.

Bringing together previously separate services, CAFCASS includes Guardians ad litem (now Children's Guardians), Court Welfare Officers (now Children and Family reporters) and the Official Solicitor's Department.

The editor suggests that the difference between the status and role of children in public and private proceedings have been highlighted as a result of these changes. In civil or private proceedings, usually in divorce and ensuing contact matters, children have no party status, although the Court Welfare Officer needs to ascertain wishes and feelings. In public law proceedings, where, for example, the State is seeking a care order, children have party status and a Guardian is appointed to represent the child's best interests. However, if a child disagrees with the Guardian, they can appoint their own legal representation if they are deemed competent to do so.

The lack of party status for children in private proceedings is an area that is likely to change. The final chapter describes some of the proposed changes, which will give Court Welfare Officers similar duties as Guardians, including having regard to the Welfare Checklist (Section 1, Children Act 1989), carrying out investigations and obtaining professional assistance where necessary. There is a general sense from several contributors to the book that the creation of CAFCASS is not only giving explicit impetus to the consideration of whether children should be granted party status in private proceedings, but is re-kindling debate about children's involvement generally.

The relationship between the right of a child to participate in decision making about themselves and their right to protection was a recurrent theme. Chapter 8 is the most useful and challenging, in terms of the ethical and practical issues relating to children being involved as a party in public proceedings. Written by a solicitor, it debates the way in which solicitors use their professional values and judgement to assess whether or not a child is legally competent. This is always a thorny area, open to interpretation, somewhat vague and nebulous. The chapter did not reach any clarification – an impossible feat, but did describe the dilemmas legal representatives face, in the form of a detailed list, which illustrates the complexity of the task, in terms of balancing a number of factors.

Perhaps the complexity of the dilemmas regarding competence may explain the seeming reluctance on the part of Guardians and solicitors to pursue with children the option of having their own representation, (as opposed to that offered by a Guardian and the solicitor they appoint for the child). This seems to be very much the exception rather than the rule. Research discussed in Chapter 4 backs this point up. It may well

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indicate the highly skilled work Guardians do with children in order to represent their best interests. However, in Chapter 8 another reason was put forward, in the level of inter-dependence within the relationship between the Guardian and solicitor. The author suggests a child is less likely to be encouraged to seek independent representation due to this relationship, as this could throw a spanner in the smooth running works between two professionals. This does not just imply patronage but professional convenience, potentially at the expense of a child's wishes and is surely an area that needs further exploration in a service which places children at its centre. The author proposes that there should be a pre-determined age (twelve) at which a child would be presumed competent to participate in proceedings to the extent they wish to.

Several contributors make reference to the use of expert witnesses and urge a review of the impact their use can have on the long-term outcomes for children. The use of expert witnesses has led to long delays in proceedings and more intrusive medical or psychiatric assessments of children. The editor of the book points out that courts should be asking why the evidence already presented is inadequate before jumping to the conclusion that an expert witness is needed. In Chapter 7 a judge gives cautionary credence to the place of expert witnesses in proceedings, but suggests that sometimes public money would be better spent on giving the family support and therapeutic services.

The impact of the Human Rights Act 1998 and the interplay between this, the Children Act 1989 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are outlined using European case law in Chapter 10. Respect for family life, protection from degrading and inhumane treatment and the right to a fair trial are all Articles within the Human Rights Act that the judiciary and legal representatives are taking account of in proceedings involving children.

One chapter, which did not link effectively with the rest of the book, covered the issue of trans-racial placements, attachment, identity and the welfare of children. Although the author had experience of being a Guardian, the chapter did not give enough context regarding the potential role of the court, Guardians, children's participation or any possible changes due to the creation of CAFCASS.

The overall impression left by the book is that change is afoot due to the establishment of CAFCASS and the Human Rights Act. The assumption

that children are passive and not competent to take part in critical decisions about their lives is one that has had its day. Representing children is not just about advocating their best interests, but routinely assessing competence and giving them the choice to directly have a voice and role in proceedings.

Anna Whalen works for Hull City Council.

Stuart C. Aitken

**Geographies of Young People:
The Morally Contested Spaces of Identity**

Routledge, 2001

ISBN 0 415 22395 4

pp 212

Martin Young

In one way, this book is more about adults than it is about children. As reflected in its title, Aitken's book is concerned with how the adult world has historically constructed various moralities of childhood which have essentially excluded children from the production of their own space. As such, the book is reflexive, and critical of the social constructions of childhood which have stemmed from moral dilemmas and 'panics' about childhood identities in a globally restructuring world. It is also a very personal book, in which the author attempts to locate himself squarely within the framework of the moral relationships between adults and children. The book speaks with an adult voice to adults. It is not a book which claims to use voices of childhood or attempts to describe the lived world of children. This is not to suggest that the author is not concerned about the wellbeing of children in contemporary society, he most definitely is. Indeed the book is intrinsically altruistic in its orientation; a well argued, compassionate, and cogent plea for a reorientation from the problematisation of youth towards a re-evaluation of the adult relations that morally reconstruct young people to their detriment.

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The starting point for the book is a critical analysis of previous western constructions of children and the moral, cultural, political, and spatial contexts within which children have been situated. Chapter 2 presents a wide-ranging discussion of scientific, developmental, structural, and constructivist interpretations of 'the child'. It concludes that these discourses have disembodied children by largely omitting the difficult issues of corporeality and sexuality. The author argues that '(W)hat is needed is a consideration of how the nature of childhood is embodied and sexualised p.60'. This consideration establishes the platform for the rest of the book.

Chapter 3 explicitly identifies the ways in which sexuality has been historically ignored in scientific discourses about childhood. In particular, it argues that the notion of the child has been morally appropriated by adults to describe their own inner selves, constructing the child as adult 'insideness', creating a psychological legacy of an inner self in the form of a child's supposedly asexual body. It is this appropriation, this moral construction of the child, which has been translated into real-world power relationships that are directly proportionate to age, an argument elucidated in Chapter 4. The fundamental point made here by the author is that self-serving moral appropriation of the child by the adult world has tended to marginalise both space and embodiment as aspects of childhood.

This point is extended in Chapter 5 through an exploration of how childhood is increasingly materialised, commodified, and exported as part of western global culture. The author highlights the links between economic restructuring and the lives of children at the local level though the presentation of several case studies. He argues that while childhood was once geographically and historically specific, global restructuring through relocation and disinvestment has unhinged local practices from global production, and in the process has globalised notions of the child by removing local connectedness. This local unhinging of production and reproduction have reconstructed the child as somehow different, yet highly flexible, consumers to fit the needs of global capitalism. The notions of morality once located at the local scale, are now global. This global export of the changing nature of childhood serves primarily as a political focus which constructs children as dangerous and problematic - the focus of a moral geography appropriated for larger political effect. This is most evident in the 'non-childlike'

behaviours discussed in Chapter 6. Acts of violence by, and towards, children are appropriated into the political realm and become emotively charged, intensifying the moral assault on children.

The book concludes that globalisation has helped establish a new moral geography which defines childhood as a separate, exclusive category of existence and which has resulted in spaces that are designed to regulate children's behavior in the moral terms derived from adult interpretations. Put simply, children's space reflects adult notions of childhood. The author riles against this moral geography. His well developed, absorbing, and often dense argument calls for an acceptance of children's identities and notions of justice and rights that are not theorised out of mechanical notions of discrete individuals who possess essential characteristics and forms. In other words, monolithic adult moralities that ignore bodies, sexuality, and transience do not help solve complex problems. The actual problem resides in how *adults* imagine children and their relationships to them based on their own mythical, nostalgic framework of childhood. Put simply and geographically, children are not allowed to produce their own space.

As a reviewer with an interest in behavioral and cultural approaches in geography I found the book absorbing, reflected in the fact that I spent a lot longer reading it and summarizing the author's arguments than I expected. I have no doubt that it will be of particular interest to most human geographers as, by mapping the moral development of the child, it implicitly maps recent changes in geographic thought. It is theoretically strong and appears to be primarily directed toward an academic audience. As mentioned earlier, the readership may have expected more direct input from children, but this would be to misread the intent of the book. Most importantly, Stuart Aitken's work is a call to the adult world to reassess our ideas of childhood and their implications for children's empowerment, particularly those around the production of space. Specifically, it asks academics to ask how their own approaches may serve to perpetuate unhelpful moralities which exclude or redefine children to their detriment.

From this perspective, the book is relevant not only to academics and policy makers, but to anyone with an interest in contemporary youth issues. It represents a challenging wake-up call to adult society generally by asking '...that young people are left alone to discover a morality that

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is not derived from adult moral panics' (p. 180). This, from my perspective, is the fundamental contribution of the book. It explicitly, convincingly, and forcefully re-centres the 'problem of youth' away from the moral world of the child towards the moral world of the adult. The problem is an adult one, and so are the solutions. Achieving them will require a close examination of our self-serving moral constructions of childhood.

Martin Young, *Research Fellow, Department of Sociology,
University of Plymouth.*

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We also encourage the submission of the final text on computer disk saved in 'text/ASCII' format (please enclose adequate instructions for our typesetters). Contributors should adopt the house style of the journal laid out below:

Single quotation marks should be used unless quoting within a quote, where double quotation marks should be used. Indented quotes do not require quotation marks but where a quote is presented within an indented quote, single quotation marks should be used. Abbreviations that have attained common usage can be used (e.g. USA) but those which are less well known should be spelled out in the first instance with the abbreviated form following in parentheses, e.g. British Youth Council (BYC). The abbreviated form can be used thereafter. Tables, graphs and diagrams should be set out clearly and included in the relevant place in the text. Subheadings should be clearly marked and underlined.

References should be set out in the Harvard system. Thus, the author's name, date of publication and, if necessary, page number should be included in parentheses in the main text, for example, (Smith, 1984:10). All references should be listed at the end of the article, with the title 'References', in alphabetical order by author's surname and including publication details.

Thus, for a book:

Banks, S. (ed) (1999) *Ethical Issues in Youth Work*, London and New York, Routledge.

For an article:

Hall, S. (1995) 'Grasping at Straws: The idealisation of the material in liberal conceptions of youth crime', in *Youth & Policy*, No 48: 49-63.

And for a report:

The Thompson Report (1982) Experience and Participation, CMND 8686, London, HMSO.

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

Submissions which are insensitive to equal opportunities issues will not be considered for publication.

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